



Kingston, Jamaica

For Immediate Release

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Literacy Changing Lives in Point Hill

Scotiabank funds Diagnostic Reading Centre

Almost a decade ago, the children of the Point Hill community were suffering from lack of special educational opportunities, resulting in approximately 50 percent of nine and ten-year-olds in primary schools unable to meet the Ministry of Education's literacy standards in 1999 and 2000. Years later, a dream of making a change became reality with immense financial assistance from the Scotiabank Jamaica Foundation to create today's Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre – an institution established to improve the functional literacy level of students at the Point Hill Primary & Junior High School and the community.

Located in an impoverished rural community, the Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, which seeks to raise literacy rates in Point Hill and communities surrounding by providing educational opportunities to needy citizens. These citizens range from Kindergarten learners to illiterate adults.

The Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre employs three teachers with education qualifications who tend to children with learning disabilities. These teachers have worked through the worst to ensure they provide students with the greatest gift- a solid primary education. To finance these teachers, some of whom are dependant on their salaries, the Scotia Foundation had contributed \$7.5 million over a three-year period to the Centre.

As one of the many educational organizations to receive greatly appreciated financial assistance from the Scotiabank Jamaica Foundation, Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre has succeeded in maintaining a population of up to 90 students annually. Since the start of the Scotia Foundation's assistance in 2003, the literacy rates of Point Hill students have jumped from fifty seven percent to an amazing seventy five percent in 2007; three students have applied for teacher training college; and the Centre was also capable of taking on three adults who are unable to read. In the summer of 2005, the centre moved to greater things by establishing annual Summer Literacy camps. The Literacy camps were done for those students who were unable to pass the Grade Four Achievement Test. More recently, the Scotia Foundation has furthered the progress of the Reading Centre by funding a digital copier/printer.

It has been a long and bumpy road for the Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre. Hurricanes, violence in nearby communities, and financial difficulties resulting in poor health of students and a fall in attendance rates, were among the hurdles put forward to the Reading Centre. Despite these bumps, the involvement of the community, dedication of staff members and alumni, and the generous contributions from the public have aided in making the Centre what it is today. "We are more than happy to be able to assist the Centre, and would continue, as best as we can, to be a part of the incremental development of the Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre," says the Scotiabank Jamaica Foundation's Director of Public Affairs, Mrs. Joylene Griffiths Irving. The Scotiabank Jamaica Foundation continues to be a part of the betterment of Jamaica's education system by contributing to various individuals, scholarly organizations, and institutions.

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