

FLANKER DIGEST

Community Dancers for National Festival

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By Franceika Clarke

The Flanker Peace and Justice Centre's Performance and Creative Arts Group is poised for national honours after winning gold in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) St. James Parish Festival dance finals. This was the group's debut appearance and by all indications they are a force to be reckoned with. In addition to copping gold for their reggae dance performance and a chance to compete at the national finals, the group also won silver for their other dance entry in the folk category.

The parish finals, which were held on May 2, 2009 at the Calvary Baptist Church Hall in St. James, saw a number of groups from all over the parish competing for local honours and a chance to compete in the national finals. JCDC began in 1963 as the Jamaica Festival Commission, with a mandate to develop and promote the creative talents and cultural expressions of the Jamaican people. Its function is also to ensure that the nation's cultural heritage is preserved and sustained for the benefit of future generations.

In the years since its inception, thousands of Jamaicans have benefitted from its programmes in dance, traditional folk forms, speech and drama, music, culinary arts, fine arts, photography and literary arts. The St. James parish competition keenly contested and put on display many talented youngsters (groups and individuals). The Flanker youths were however the first to take the stage (folk dance) and despite the nerves and anxiety, performed exceptionally to secure the silver medal.

The group's second performance was a different story. Having overcome the initial jitters, the dancers

took to the stage with their reggae dance moves and blew the competition away. The audience and the judges were amazed as the shouts and applauses took over the church hall. The orange and green colours of the costumes gave added flair to the moves and were also commended by the judges. The judges made mention of the professionalism of the group who were the only set of performers to reach the event on time and displayed exemplary organisation and discipline.



Mrs. Joan Munroe-Green who is the Youth Peace Facilitator at the Centre and the coordinator for the Performance and Creative Arts Group, also had high praises for her troops as this was their first such outing. She is confident that dancers will do well at the national level even though she expects the competition to be much tougher. The finals will be in June and the dancers are eager to bring their talent to the national stage. She also expressed confidence that the Centre will turn out more entrants in next year's festival especially in light of the success they have just reaped.

Teacher's Day Luncheon *Keirn Thomas*

The Flanker Peace and Justice Centre was among the many institutions that organised special activities and events to honour the island's teachers on Wednesday May 6, 2009. Teachers' Day is one of the activities staged by the Jamaica Teachers' As-

sociation (JTA), to celebrate Education Week, which is being held under the theme: 'A Transformed Education System: the Path to National Development'. The week observes the contribution of teachers to the education system, and, by extension, nation building.

As a special Teachers' Day gift, the Centre treated its teachers and volunteers, as well as the teachers from the Grant's Basic School in the community, to a Luncheon at the China House Restaurant on the Montego Bay Hip-strip. The aim of the Teachers' Day activity was to show appreciation to educators for their valuable contributions to education and outstanding work in molding the youths of the community.



The afternoon was filled with speeches and commendations from the management of the Centre as well as invited guests and patrons. Food and laughter was in no short supply as the gathering reminisced on the challenges and successes they have experienced during their tenure as teachers and care givers to some of the youngest and most impressionable minds in the community. The range of classroom experience from 20 years to a little as 6 months, gave added excitement to the stories shared at the function.

Mrs. Marilyn McIntosh-Nash, director of the Centre and Board Chairman of the Grants Basic School, thanked the teachers and volunteers

for their service to the children and the community, especially during these trying times when teaching and volunteering is not the most lucrative of options. For their part, the recipients were very grateful for the recognition and the opportunity to get some time away from the classroom to relax and unwind.

COMMUNITY ROUND-UP

Girls' Day –The Peace and Justice Centre in collaboration with Sandals Montego Bay held its inaugural 'Girls' Day' event on May 30 on the grounds of the Centre. Ms. Nathelie Taylor, P.R. Director for the region, and other staff members facilitated the days' activities which included motivational talks, self esteem, etiquette and life skills exercises specific to females.



Twenty-five young ladies participate in the day's activities and were very happy for the initiative that clearly addressed their specific concerns.

Mother's Day Forum – The Peace and Justice Centre held its annual Mother's Day Forum on May 10, in recognition of the mothers of the community. Guest speaker Mrs. Veronique Seivwright was among the list of speakers to pay tribute to the mothers in attendance. The event also saw performances from the Centre's performance and creative arts group, as well as a myriad of activities catering to the needs of the honourees. The mothers were feted and pampered as a show of gratitude for their commitment to family, and special recognition was given to those who have mothered generations of grandchildren and great

grandchildren.



Fathers should not be jealous as word on the street is that the Centre is planning an even bigger activity for you all... make sure you're ready.

Customer Service Training for Staff and Volunteers – On May 22, the first in a series of training in Customer Service was held at the Centre. The workshop was facilitated by Ms. Heather McDonald, training manager of Sandals Montego Bay.



This training will qualify the staff and volunteers for a HEART certificate. This is the first in a series of programmes slated for the staff and volunteers of the Centre as part of its mission to ensure that the most efficient and professional service is offered to the public.

Labour Day – Labour Day 2009 activities were not as flamboyant as in previous years. Community members generally scaled-up their domestic duties with a focus on their gateways and/or streets. However, members and volunteers came together to give the Peace and Justice Centre a new paint job.

National Security Minister Tours Community – Minister of National Security, Dwight Nelson made a tour of the community of Thursday May 27, 2009, to get a firsthand look at some of the conditions affecting safety and security in the commu-

nity. The visit was facilitated by the Flanker Peace and Justice Centre and was a precursor to the Crime Consultation Meeting held later that evening at the Montego Bay Civic Centre. The minister was very impressed with the work of the Centre and the role it has played in managing the development pursuits of the community and the reduction of violence in the area.

JSIF making moves in Flanker – The Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) has signed off on two major Civil Works contract for the community. They are Flanker Community Centre and the Flanker Zinc Fence Removal Phase 1. While the work has not started, contractors are in place and the implementation phase is expected in due course. Share Con Limited is the contractor for the Community Centre while FLANCO-DAC will take charge of the Zinc Fence Removal project. Also of note is that the pending completion of the road work in the Red Dirt section of the community. This project is close to 95% complete and by all accounts has already impacted positively on the aesthetics, as well as the moral of the area.

Fogo and Seaview – It is 'as you were' for both community teams as they will be playing in the same parish league come next season. Fogo has managed to avoid relegation to remain in the senior league, while Seaview was defeated in the semi-finals of the division one competition to once again miss out on a chance of promotion. By all accounts the Fogo team showed the grit and determination that brought them success two seasons ago to take themselves; while Seaview on the other hand was stopped in their tracks by some questionable refereeing decisions. We are firmly behind our community teams and will be back to support them in their quest next season.

Flanker Digest is a monthly publication with the aim of reporting on the issues and activities in the community. It is a free newsletter edited and compiled by the Youth Crime Watch of Flanker under the auspices of the Flanker Peace and Justice Centre.