

Sewing The Seeds Of Support

Jamaicans In The U.S. Find New Ways To Give Back

26420AC

New York, New York – March 23, 2007) – The American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ) launches the Diaspora Giving Program, a form of collective philanthropy. The new initiative, utilizing giving circles, identifies Jamaican nationals, visitors and long-time friends of the island interested in tapping into their own network of friends and relatives with an interest in supporting the people and island of Jamaica.

"The establishment of this program is an important step in mobilizing a community with an emotional connection to the island and presents a tremendous opportunity for those displaced from Jamaica or with an interest in Jamaica's sustained future to give back in a real way," said AFJ Chairman and Former US Ambassador to Jamaica, Glen Holden. "It is a shared commitment to improving Jamaica's future."

The AFJ and Diaspora members work together to raise funds to be utilized by Jamaican communities and charitable organizations.

This program, conceived as a way to incorporate Jamaican Diaspora members living in the United States into the philanthropic community serving Jamaica, is off to a running start with the Friends of Kensington Fund.

Jamaican Karen Johns has taken the lead and has spearheaded the Friends of Kensington Fund in honor of her birthday. The fund has been created to support the residents of her hometown of Kensington, Portland in Jamaica. Ms. Johns, along with the AFJ, has recruited the support of her loved ones across the United States to raise close to \$7,000 USD that will be used for renovations to the community center including the construction of a computer training room, the creation of a scholarship fund and support of the Kensington Methodist Church, a cornerstone of the community.

For Ms. Johns, this has been a great opportunity to give back to her hometown, re-establish a link and at the same time mobilize her circle of friends and family to contribute to an initiative she has been passionate about for some time.

"I find myself still closely tied to my homeland and the fund allowed me to engage over forty of my friends here in America with my hometown in Jamaica."

It did not matter if the gifts were small or large; every little bit helped," reports



Karen Johns

Karen Johns on her participation in this program. She continues to say, "It has been a very gratifying experience to go back to my hometown and share with the children there the generous gifts of my friends. It also teaches them an important lesson, not to forget where they come from.

You don't have to be rich to contribute – you just have to care."

AFJ Executive Director Keisha Phipps encourages persons to participate. "The AFJ's priority is to expand funding opportunities for Jamaican charities. The Diaspora represents a tremendous force. Without your support, it's just an idea.

With your participation we can truly demonstrate the power of the diaspora and magnify your philanthropic contributions," she said. The AFJ Diaspora Giving Program invites others to create a fund of their own and leave a lasting legacy.

The program is milestone driven and participants are invited to fundraise from their network of family and friends and earmark funds for local causes on the ground.

The AFJ prepares materials to be distributed to the interested individual's network showcasing the project, and donations can be made online or by check.

The AFJ also manages the fundraising and ongoing reporting requirements. For more information on the Karen Johns Fund, please visit www.theafj.org/karenjohns.

To find out how to contribute to the AFJ or for individuals looking to create a fund through the Diaspora Giving Program, please contact Keisha Phipps at 212-626-6883 or info@theafj.org.