

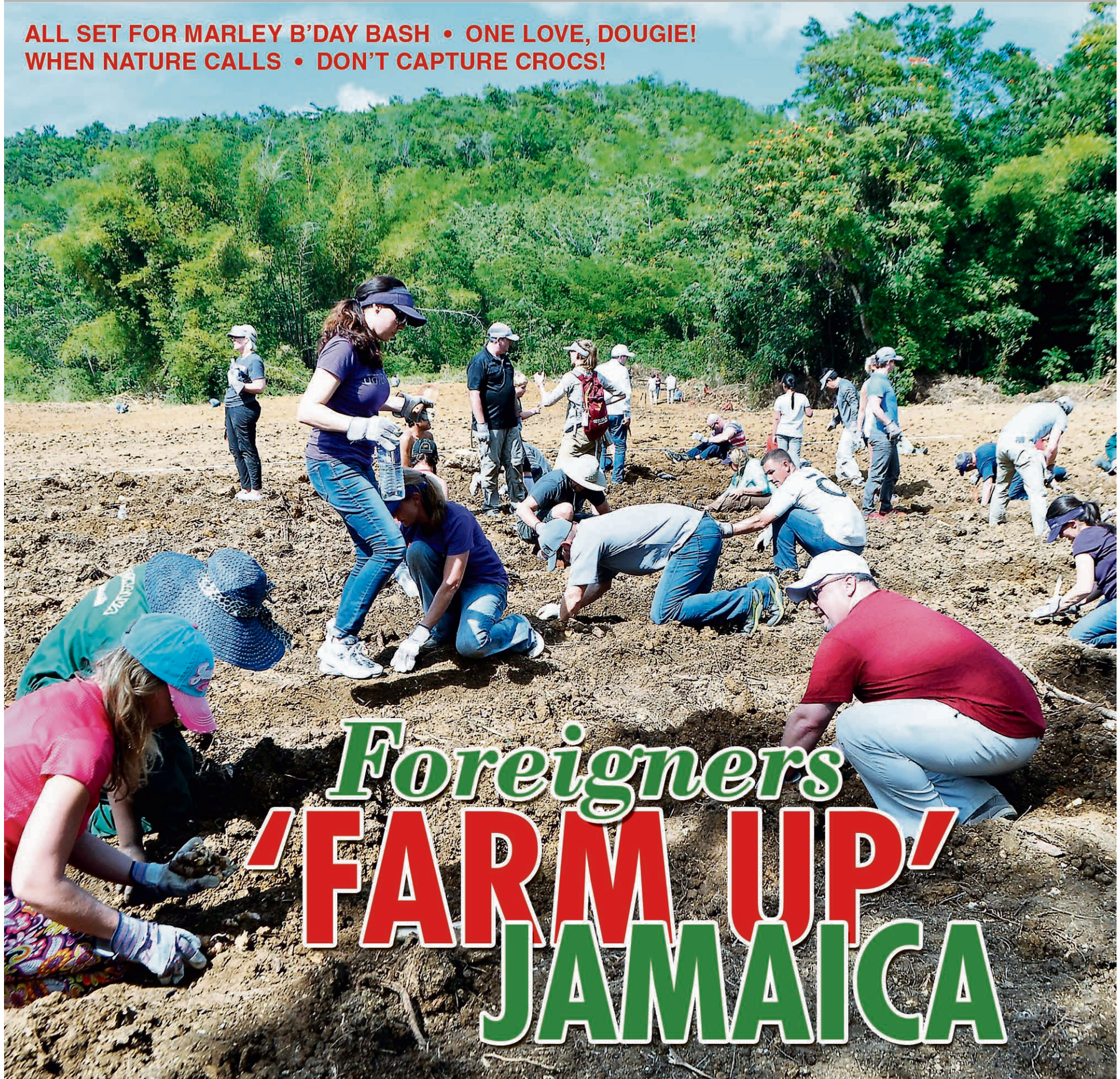
The Gleaner

HospitalityJamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2015

ALL SET FOR MARLEY B'DAY BASH • ONE LOVE, DOUGIE!
WHEN NATURE CALLS • DON'T CAPTURE CROCS!



Foreigners
'FARM UP'
JAMAICA

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

IN WHAT is being described as innovative social responsibility, some 640 tourists have planted 10 acres of ginger for the export market as part of the Farm Up Jamaica Plant Sup'n initiative.

The ginger already has a market with doTERRA, an international seller of essential oils. doTERRA is based in the New York Tri-State area of the United States.

"After learning that Farm Up Jamaica hosted 37 students from the Northeastern University who came to Jamaica last year and planted Scotch bonnet peppers, it led them to the idea of farming as a social responsibility mission for their distributors to carry out," Farm Up Jamaica's Neil Curtis told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

"We decided that ginger was a good crop to farm because the company was producing ginger oil," added Curtis.

According to him, when doTERRA received Farm Up Jamaica's sample of Jamaican ginger, and tested it, they were convinced that they could produce world-class ginger oil from it.

"When the deal was finalised, doTERRA agreed to bring 640 of their distributors to plant ginger through Farm Up Jamaica's Plant Sup'n initiative.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The farming visitors, who stayed at Hyatt Playa resort in Montego Bay during their stay on the island, came from a wide section of the USA.

Having the visitor experience widened and unique has become a popular trend among many countries in Europe.

Some visitors are allowed to feed goats, cows, participate in community tourism and enjoy a number of countries, with a difference.

Curtis was quick to point out that this endeavours was not a fad.

"In fact, most of the visitors who came on this initiative will tell you that farming was the highlight of their visit. It gave them a chance to interact with real people and to do an activity that will help sustain the local community. Internationally, farming is a growing trend, and as more people become conscious about the environment, initiatives like this will expand exponentially," he said.

The farmlands they worked are located in Westmoreland, and the trip to the area was as eye-opening as the 140-acre land that they watched being ploughed.

The 40-minute ride from Montego Bay to the farm took the visitors up Long Hill Road, along a spectacular view of Jamaican culture and agriculture, while driving through the rural



PHOTOS BY DAVE RODNEY

During a lunch break, Allyse Sedivy (left) and Jennie Plant from Utah sample Jamaican jelly coconuts that they used to accompany their Jamaican box lunch.

Farm Up Jamaica Plant Sup'n initiative producing world-class ginger



Visitors to the island help in the planting of ginger.



communities and passing many farms, mostly orange groves.

The ginger will be ready for harvest in 10 months, and doTERRA has agreed to purchase all that is reaped for the manufacturing of ginger oil.

Curtis said there were no immediate plans to invite other visitors who are already on the island and may be looking for an attraction of this nature. However, there would be more projects like this in the future.

Farm Up Jamaica is a diaspora non-profit organisation formed to help reduce the importation of foreign food into Jamaica and increase the island's exports, Curtis told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

"Our farmer-assistance programme helps farmers achieve this by advancing all the necessary material and labour to accomplish each task."

The organisation is run by Curtis, who is the chief executive officer; Daihana Martinez, secretary; Naala Royal, director of marketing; Robert Clarke, director of media and communication; Harold Franco, director of international relations; and

Alcides Curtis, co-founder.

doTERRA, Curtis said, will continue to buy ginger from their farm. Farm Up Jamaica also farms onions.

"Ninety per cent of the onions in this country is being imported," Curtis lamented.

As it relates to getting help from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Farm Up Jamaica CEO said whenever they need help, the ministry assists. However, they currently employ student graduates who are in training and operate a profit-sharing system with them.

"We inspire them to become entrepreneurs," said Curtis.

The company also farms Scotch bonnet peppers because Jamaican pepper is being produced by other countries that are using the title, 'Jamaican Scotch Bonnet Peppers, product of Dominican Republic'.

After only a year and a half in existence, Farm Up Jamaica aims to make a change in the way Jamaica does business, even if it means importing the visitor experience.

janet.silvera@gleanerjm.com



Gregory Cook (left), co-founder and executive vice-president of doTERRA; and Neil Curtis, founder and chairman of Farm Up Jamaica, pose for the camera at the end of a very successful day of planting Jamaican ginger on a newly minted farm in Haddo, Westmoreland.



PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA

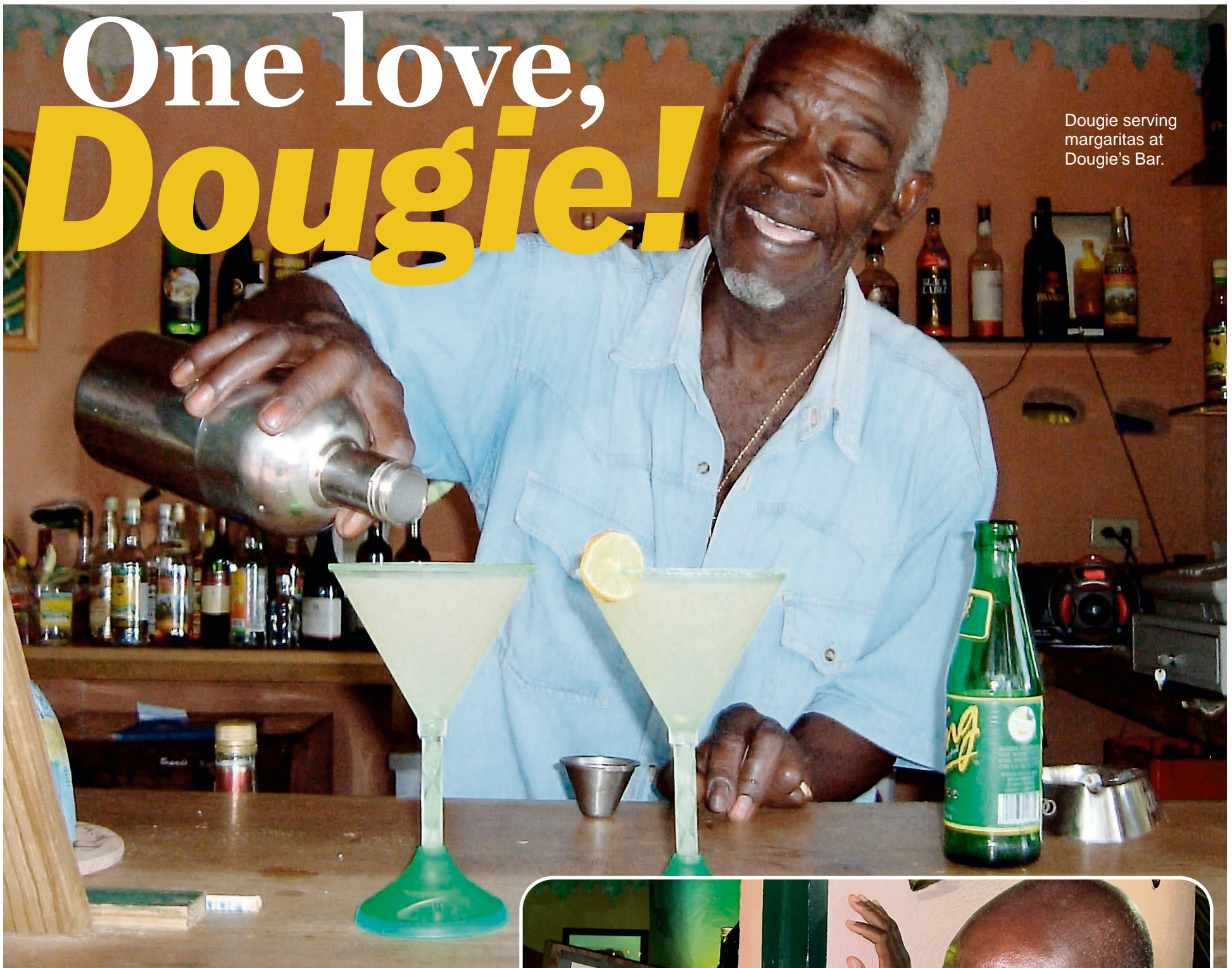
Kingston City Run's Maurice Bryan and the Jamaica Tourist Board's Karlene Shakes at the combined MoBay City Run/Kingston City Run booth at the Miami Marathon in Miami recently.



Reggae Marathon's Diane Francis and the Jamaica Tourist Board's Christopher Wright promoting the Negril event at the recent Miami Marathon.

One love, *Dougie!*

Dougie serving margaritas at Dougie's Bar.



DOUGLAS 'DOUGIE' Turner and I have known each other since I was 18 and he was 15. He came to work for the Densham family, my parents, who had a small farm in Mandeville. Dougie was young, strong, handsome and capable of doing anything that was required.

Among the things he did was look after the dairy cattle, put them out to graze, bring them in for milking, pasteurise the milk, lug the heavy containers to the road side to be collected, dipping and branding, and he also filled the silo with napier grass and molasses.

He also caught and groom the horses and went to Santa Cruz on Saturday afternoons to saddle up and prepare for polo.

He worked in the garden – planting, weeding, watering and ever so gently handling the rare and delicate magnolia blossoms on their way to the flower show.

He mowed the huge lawn with the push lawn mower and helped my father in his carpentry shop.

Then he would accompany us to Treasure Cot in Treasure Beach and lend a hand to everything there. He, however, put his foot down about going fishing. Dougie and sea,



Dougie accepts a plaque at his 70th birthday celebration.

nuh 'gree.

He cleaned and polished the new, bright red Farmall Tractor and the dilapidated cars we drove, including the Willis Jeep.

And you would think that when it rained he could take some time off, but no, Dougie was in the kitchen polishing the brass and silver. At parties, he was always on hand, passing around his famous rum punch and coconut crisps.

There are probably a million other things I have forgotten. My mother needed him so often that when she called out: 'Dougie!', the parrot, Oliver heard and could imitate her exactly, and many a time Dougie was called when my mother was nowhere in sight.

At 23, I married Perry Henzell and moved to Kingston and then Runaway Bay, and for many years, Dougie was lost from view.

In 1991, I bought this little property (Jakes at Treasure Beach) because I happened to be here when my niece, Kerstin Whittaker's husband, and father, Delroy Whittaker, pointed out the land was for sale.

I immediately pricked up my ears, as my parents, Joyce and Basil, having died, and I had just sold the old house in Mandeville. When I learnt the price and found it was the exact amount of the cheque for the down payment, I knew it was meant to be and bought the piece of land that goes from the lily pond behind the kitchen to the wall behind Dougie's Bar. I was just going to make a beach cottage for us, like daddy had done with Treasure Cot, when I realised Treasure Beach needed a restaurant. I had always pictured myself owning one. This meant I would have to move out of the tiny four-room house that is now the lobby. I built two bedrooms.

Only thing left to do was to find the right person to work for me in the restaurant. I did a quick flip through my roller desk mind and decided there was only ONE possibility – DOUGIE! Where to find him?

After countless quests, I found him in a shop, Homelectix, in Mandeville. Dougie was a very successful salesman selling fridges. We were delighted to find each other again. So after a bit of preamble I said to him: "Dougie, you know what? I have just bought a piece of land in Treasure Beach near Treasure Cot. I want to have a restaurant and bar there, and I want you to come and help me." Dougie was a little taken aback.

"I'll have to ask Bernice" (his wife), he said.

"I will get back to you." And he did. And he came. Bernice gave the go-ahead.

So Dougie came, he cooked, he



Dougie cuts his 70th birthday cake.



Dougie gets and embrace from an admirer, Maisie Allen.

cleaned, he served bar, he washed up, and in other words, he lent his hand to anything that needed doing. In the meantime, I had workmen outside making the patio, the shower and the building that is now the bar. The pool was dug in two phases. Once, I stopped a front-end digger that was going down the road and said, "On your way from work will you stop – I need a hole dug." And so it happened, but it was never finished. It was just a very large hole in the ground and there it remained for a year or two until trees started growing out of it. The same thing happened again. I stopped another front-end loader and said: "I have a hole and I need it dug deeper and wider," and finally, the pool was finished.

In the meantime, the bar and restaurant was flourishing. I had got my 'Tavern Licence', as it is still so quaintly called in Jamaica. I could now serve rum and beer, and then the day came when wine was added to the menu. Wine glasses were set out, and our first order came from a group of French who sat near the back. I remember the only dining area was in the front under the bamboo roof – so I was a bit shocked to see a lady calling me over. Wine never having been served before, Basie had only poured one careful 'shot' in the bottom of her wine glass and left! Things like that.

EXTRA ENVELOPE

We closed Mondays. Our daily earnings would be kept in little envelopes labelled from Tuesday to Sunday. One time, I got sick and had to leave for Montego Bay, where Jason (Jason Henzell) was for about a week. Dougie came to see me there and presented me with the little envelopes. There was one marked 'Monday'.

"But we don't open on Monday," I said.

"Oh, but we do now, since you left," said Dougie.

I was very shy. And you know, on opening day when the first guests were walking up the driveway, I ran into the sea and swam straight out, and it was left to Dougie to greet them and make them comfortable. I have come a long way since then and learnt that the people who are attracted to Jakes are like-minded people and potential friends – all of you!

So Dougie, let me put it this way – I couldn't have done it without you. You are my oldest and dearest friend, and although you will only be gracing the back of the bar on special occasions from now on, I know you will still be on the seat in the corner where you always prefer when things are slow, and you will be around greeting the guests and reminiscing with me as always.

One love, Dougie!

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Free Wi-Fi access at hotels

IT IS hard to imagine a more extraordinary example of a major hotel chain getting it wrong, but that is what Marriott International managed to achieve last month, when to almost universal condemnation from customers and the media alike, it continued to argue that it was right to block the free provision of some Wi-Fi hotspot services to customers.

The back story is that in early 2013, a participant at a function at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee reported to the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that the Marriott-run convention centre was stopping guests from linking to mobile hotspots using their own Wi-Fi-enabled devices. This involved the hotel in some way jamming access for those customers who were using the hotel's conference facilities, while indicating at the same time

David Jessop

THE VIEW FROM EUROPE

that it was possible for them to log on to the hotel's Wi-Fi system for what reportedly was a very high fee.

The FCC said that this was unacceptable and that no hotel or public place should intentionally disable public hotspots while suggesting that users could pay a fee for access to a private network.

In response, Marriott said that it was trying to prevent cyber attacks, that it intended only to disable the personal Wi-Fi of those attending conferences or conventions, and that its approach did not cover hotel rooms or lobbies where guests

could connect freely.

In the end, Marriott paid a US\$600,000 federal fine for jamming Wi-Fi services, said that it would stop the practice, claimed it would listen to its customers, and would not in future block guests at its convention centres from using their personal Wi-Fi devices at any of its managed hotels.

CONSEQUENCE

But then, amazingly, Marriott, together with the American Hotel and Lodging Association petitioned the FCC to reconsider its rules. The consequence was to bring yet more criticism from customers and representations to the FCC from global IT giants including Google and Microsoft who were opposed to the petition.

Marriott, presumably embarrassed, now says it will not try to block hotspot use anymore, but has not formally withdrawn its petition,

leaving uncertainty as to what may happen at some future date,

Apart from the extraordinary short-sighted decision and public-relations disaster, the chain's decision to effectively take on a whole class of customers, irrespective of whether there really were cyber security issues involved or not, has drawn attention to the act that hotel users are increasingly angered by any charge at all for Wi-Fi, regarding it as an out of touch attempt by hotels to find a way of charging often outrageous sums for a service that everyone knows the real cost of, and which ought to be built into core operating costs.

For almost all travellers, Wi-Fi is as essential as having towels in the bathroom. Being able to communicate for business reasons or with family and friends has become an everyday life component.

Moreover, the rapacious approach by the major telecommunications

providers and networks in relation to roaming charges is making the traditional use of mobile phones less viable, just at the moment when in North America, Europe and parts of the Caribbean, chains of coffee shops, bars, and many airports, have begun to provide Wi-Fi services for free, or at the most for the price of a cup of coffee or a beer.

Somewhere along the line, some hotel chains appear to have lost the plot.

Personally, I now make a point of only staying at hotels where the basic Wi-Fi is free or linked to a loyalty card.

Marriott and other chains, or any other hotel in the Caribbean or elsewhere, that cannot understand the need for travelling for visitors to be able to communicate at no additional cost, deserve to see customers vote with their feet by staying elsewhere.

Tourism Linkages Speed Networking event a major success

MINISTER OF Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill has lauded the first-ever Tourism Linkages Speed Networking Event, as a landmark venture. The event, which has been hailed as a major success, saw representatives of nearly 200 supplier and buyer companies meeting to discuss business opportunities and negotiate contracts.

Delivering the keynote address for the opening of the event at the Half Moon Conference Centre on January 21, McNeill said, "The large turnout was a gratifying demonstration of real commitment to the concept of backward and forward linkages, which we all realise can make a great contribution to the development of a truly sustainable tourism sector."

He saw the event as a vehicle for local suppliers of goods and services to open the eyes of purchasers, and the public in general, to the wide variety of services and fine quality products that are available in Jamaica.

Businesses offering a wide range of goods and services participated in the networking event, including suppliers of craft, toiletries and guest amenities, chemicals and cleaning products, cosmetic and spa products, furniture, bedding, food and beverage, uniforms, printing and packaging, construction, training, ICT, electrical, meat and fresh produce.

The organisation of the Speed Networking Event was spearheaded by the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, the Jamaica Manufacturers'

Association (JMA) and other key partners.

"We have recognised for a long time that it's not enough to bring visitors here, what we want is when they come they consume products that are produced in Jamaica so those earnings can benefit more Jamaicans, and by extension, the local economy," said Dr McNeill.

The minister also expressed the view that the collaboration and teamwork fostered by this partnership between the public and private sectors, through the ministry's Tourism Linkages Council, was a model which could be replicated throughout the society.

CREATIVE IDEA

He congratulated those who worked very hard on the event, singling out the JHTA and its president, Nicola Madden-Greig, "for not only coming up with this truly creative idea, but for following through with energy, enthusiasm and efficiency."

Madden-Greig said the day marked "a historic and significant milestone for Jamaica as we continue to forge new partnerships and linkages towards strengthening and showcasing Brand Jamaica."

She said the JHTA recognised that "for us to continue to not only do well, but to truly thrive, having a positive view to change and innovate is critical to us maintaining a competitive advantage, and this must be reflected in the local products and services that are available to us in order to exceed the expectations of our clientele."

According to Madden-Greig, the venture



CONTRIBUTED

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (second right) is joined by president of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, Nicola Madden-Greig (centre), in greeting participants in the first-ever Tourism Linkages Speed Networking event, staged on Wednesday, January 21 at the Half Moon Conference Centre in Montego Bay. Pictured from left are: general manager, Grand Lido Negril Resort & Spa, Enrico Pezzoli; purchasing manager, Blue Diamond Hotels & Resorts, operators of Royalton White Sands, Jesus Leon; and Logistics & Sales Coordinator, GK Foods & Services, Melva Campbell.

was more than a sales event, "but also a marketing research platform where local companies seek to understand the changing needs of international products and how they can produce authentic Jamaican products and services to satisfy the increasingly discerning technology driven and savvy traveller."

Terming it a red-letter day, JMA president, Brian Pangelley, expressed appreciation to McNeill and Madden-Greig for their lead

role in ensuring that the event was a success. He also had high commendations for the Tourism Linkages Hub which is housed in the ministry, the manufacturers, and the JHTA team for their exemplary work.

The other entities which partnered to host the event are Sandals Resort International, the Rural Agricultural Development Authority, Jamaica Promotions Corporation, and the Jamaica Business Development Corporation.

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DURAN DOBSON

Iberostar Rose Hall Employee of the Year

Mark Titus

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

LIKE HE did last year, 25-year-old butler, Duran Dobson, topped the coveted Employee of the Year award at the Iberostar Rose Hall Grand's Public Relations Employee Awards ceremony at the Montego Bay based resort on Sunday.

The annual event which is in its fifth year, recognises outstanding performers in the public relations department of the Spanish-owned facility, which is ranked as the 11th best all-inclusive hotel in the world.

The elated Dobson, who also walked away with the Employee's Choice Award, told *Hospitality Jamaica* that the award from his peers meant a lot to him, even as he paid tribute to fellow butler, Dwayne Bernard.

"To win this (award) a second year is tremendous, but to be recognised by your peers is an even greater feeling," said Dobson, a resident of Bethel Town, Westmoreland.

"I want to say thanks to management for giving me the opportunity to serve ... and to Dwayne (Bernard), who has been my partner since I started working here."

"It is all about hard work and dedication," continued Dobson.

"This is what I love doing so, it is

very easy for me to be focused. And as the guest speaker challenged us earlier, I hope that one day I will be running the hotel."

In his keynote address, Montego Bay's mayor, Councillor Glendon Harris, challenged the employees to continue striving for excellence.

"We hope that in time, this industry will provide the kind of remuneration which will allow all the workers to be able to continuously develop themselves educationally and stay current in the field of hospitality and tourism management," the mayor said.

"While you commit yourself to the job you do, it is critical that you also always seek to improve your lives in uplifting and meaningful ways. Regardless of your career choice, you must always strive to increase your skills and knowledge of the industry you work in," Harris added.

Among the list of awardees were: Nataki Ramsay and Andre Reid – Rookies of the Year; Lisa-Ann Henry – Turned Up Award (most improved); Tamara Clarke – Most Innovative; Shane Hill – Extra Push Award; Syrecca Tucker – Most Independent; Shirlian Graham – Team Spirit Award; Donovan Ontroy – the Special Star Award; and Okeine Lewis – Attendance Award.



Rookie of the Year winner, Nataki Ramsay entertained.



Most Improved (Turned Up Award) employee, Lisa-Ann Henry (left) accepts her certificate from public relations assistant manager, Jodene Burgess.



Employer of the Year Doran Dobson is congratulated by co-worker, Dwayne Bernard.



Employee of the Year, Doran Dobson is presented with his award by assistant general manager, Angelee Thompson.



Tamara Clarke (left), Most Innovative Award winner.



Donovan Ontroy, Shining Star Award winner, strikes a pose with PR assistant manager, Jodene Burgess.



Joint Rookie of the Year winner, André Reid, receives his award from assistant PR manager, Jodene Burgess.



Shane Hill accepts the Extra Push Award from assistant public relations manager, Jodene Burgess.



Guest speaker, Councillor Glendon Harris, mayor of Montego Bay is presented with a gift by PR manager Jo-Dane Russell.



Joint Rookie of the Year winner, Nataki Ramsay (left), accepts her gift from PR assistant manager, Michelle Grossett.



Christopher McKnight (left) and Demar Patterson.

Patterson & McKnight: Dedicated to gardening

Karrie Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

IT TAKES a team of two dedicated gardeners to maintain the celebrated grounds of the Catch a Falling Star hotel in West End, Negril, which thrives with a host of meticulously landscaped flowers and fruit trees.

Integral to this beautiful garden setting is head gardener, Demar Patterson, who has worked at Catch a Falling Star for over six years. He is assisted by Christopher McKnight, who recently completed his first year on the job.

For both Patterson and McKnight, spending their days surrounded by plants is more than just a job; it's an experience that brings them tremendous satisfaction. In fact, both declared to *Hospitality Jamaica* that nothing gives them more serenity and a sense of achievement than from watching the seedlings they cultivate, grow and develop into mature plants.

"I love to watch plants grow, I love to bask in the beauty of them," Patterson said.

"I take great care in cultivating and caring for all the flowers you see here, and I enjoy when people look at them and appreciate their beauty."

McKnight's love for plants, which dates back to childhood, is best described by the gardener as being innate.

"From I was a young boy, I have been in love with flowers. There was always a garden at home, so I guess it's a natural bond that I have with plants. I enjoy taking care of them and I especially love to see the garden clean and free of weeds," he said.

A typical work day sees both gardeners maintaining the hotel's walkways, designed throughout the garden, along with pruning and watering the flowers which consist of bougainvillea, shoeblack, morning glory, cluster palm and willow. They also engage in periodic fertilising and weeding, as required.

Sharing tips on how they care for the plants, in particular bougainvillea, the passionate gardeners cau-

tioned against over-watering this plant, explaining that this would adversely affect its growth.

"Bougainvillea doesn't love too much water; it blooms best in dry weather, so when setting it, use only a small amount of water, as too much water will kill it. Bougainvillea also needs lots of sunlight, as that is what makes it bloom," Patterson said.

But while some may view gardening work as sub-standard, Patterson and McKnight remain steadfast in their chosen career field and are further of the opinion that such view point is misguided.

"Such persons don't know how therapeutic and comforting plants can be to the human mind," said Patterson. "Caring for plants is much like taking care of a baby, watching them grow, it's the same thing. We come in the mornings and we water, prune and maintain them and watch them grow."

BEING GENTLE

Added McKnight: "Caring for plants teaches us how to love, as loving flowers and taking care of them is just like taking care of your woman or your wife. If you are not gentle with your wife, you will not be able to be gentle with flowers, because they are very gentle and so they require particular care. You have to love doing it, and when you love it, then you can see the beauty of them."

In addition, both men declared that their gardening work has enabled them to provide for themselves and their families in a way that has been very rewarding, both currently and futuristically. Patterson told *Hospitality Jamaica* that he is now in the process of completing the construction of his own home. He also said that one day, he hopes to achieve his own plant nursery.

Though McKnight has not yet embarked on a similar construction journey, he definitely sees it as a possibility for the future.

"I love my job, it enables me to take care of my family and motivates me so I can reach better levels in life," he said.

JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD

Ja, UK to celebrate Bob Marley's birthday

JAMAICA AND the United Kingdom are set to stage a series of events to celebrate what would have been Bob Marley's 70th birthday on February 6.

The late iconic reggae star Bob Marley will be remembered in Jamaica with a landmark concert. Famous for worldwide hits such as *No Woman No Cry* and *One Love*, Marley will also be honoured by fans from across the world with a musical tribute to the man who dedicated his life to reggae music.

In Jamaica, activities to mark the 70th anniversary of Bob Marley's birth will take place on February 6 at the Bob Marley Museum on Hope Road and Tuff Gong Studio on Marcus Garvey Drive. The day's activities will include symposiums on reggae music and reggae jam sessions with Chronixx, Kabaka Pyramid and No-Maddz.

Stars from the world of music will come together on February 7 at Kingston's waterfront to continue the celebration in honour of the music legend's contribution to reggae. Three of Bob Marley's sons – Stephen, Damian and Kymani, will headline the free

concert, with other music legends including the likes of Tarrus Riley, Marcia Griffiths and Lauryn Hill set to perform to the crowds.

SOCIAL-MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, Marley's home for many years in the 1970s, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) is launching a social-media campaign asking persons to share details of how they plan to celebrate the reggae star's birthday. Persons who will be travelling to Jamaica to commemorate his birthday are asked to submit pictures showing individuals wearing rasta wigs in his honour, videos of future reggae stars singing Marley's songs or even those playing his albums, *Legend* and *Exodus* will be accepted. Participants can submit their entries by emailing Jamaica@mccluskey.co.uk or tweeting @JTBUK using the hashtag, #BobMarley70.

These celebrations form part of the annual month-long celebration of Reggae Month It's Kingston for February. The activities aim to use reggae music and its cultural significance to attract visitors to Kingston.

For more information, visit www.VisitJamaica.com.

Connor MacLeod and Jamie Biluk to participate in Jamaica Fat Tyre Festival

MANY VISITORS head to Jamaica for relaxing beach vacations; however, more and more visitors are heading to the island for adventures on two wheels. The mountain biking experience in Jamaica continues to develop, thanks to a company called Singletrack Jamaica (formerly SMORBA) and their Jamaica Fat Tyre Festival.

The Jamaica Fat Tyre Festival has been running since the mid-1990s. The festival is a weeklong, laid-back roots, rock and rum tour running from February 16 to 22 this year. The week starts with a 'Bicycle Bash' kick-off party in Ocho Rios and then travels along various trails across the island, including the Blue Mountains and along the Dunn's River.

In addition to steep terrain, there are a number of other factors that make riding in Jamaica such a unique experience. There are interesting and varied trails, stunning scenic vistas, and a true local experience with trails going right through smaller towns and villages.

North Americans and Europeans have been some of the biggest supporters of Jamaica-mountain biking. Several Canadians, particularly visitors from British Columbia, attend the Fat Tyre Festival and return year after year. This year, videographer Connor MacLeod and Jamie Biluk will be participating. Jamie is a long-time professional Canadian downhill mountain bike racer. He has won numerous downhill races and is a three-time Canadian National Downhill team member. Connor is an accomplished



CONTRIBUTED

Riders take to the trail during the 2014 staging of the Jamaica Fat Tyre Festival.

mountain bike videographer who has worked with some of the industry's top athletes. He has participated in the Fat Tyre Festival before with the BC Bike Race crew and is looking forward to this year's festival.

"Jamaica has fantastic mountain biking trail networks across the island," said Jamaica's director of tourism, Paul Pennicook.

"Mountain biking events like the Jamaica Fat Tyre Festival or a custom tour with Singletrack Jamaica offer a unique way to experience our island's spectacular scenery, flavours and culture."

Visit www.singletrackjamaica.com for more details.



Congratulations Sunshine Girls!

There was much celebration at the National Indoor Sports Centre in Kingston on January 13. Jamaica's national Netball Team, the Sunshine Girls, outclassed the English team in a 2-1 victory during the Supreme Ventures Sunshine series. The win moves the Sunshine Girls into third place, ranking them ahead of England and behind number-one ranking Australia and second place New Zealand. Jason Hall (right), deputy director of tourism, cruise, events and attractions at the Jamaica Tourist Board; and Maureen Smith (left), Jamaica Sport coordinator, are pictured with Sunshine Girl goal shooter, Romelda Aiken, following Jamaica's 57-47 victory over England. Jamaica Sport was a sponsor of the series.

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ALL IS now set for the 23rd staging of the Bob Marley Birthday Bash which gets underway in the resort town of Negril, this Sunday, February 1.

The weeklong celebrations, which mark the 70th birthday of the late reggae icon, will be held, as usual, at the MXIII Lawn in Negril's West End.

"We are a bit late in terms of putting our posters out because we were finalising our line-up that had taken so long to put in place. But we are finally there, and I think we are going to have a very good Bob Marley 70th," promoter of the event and owner of MXIII, Clive 'Kubba' Pringle, told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

"We have a good lineup. It is a week of celebrations starting from the first (of February). On the first, we have the Rastafari Nyahbinghi Night, with the different drummers and we also have this young lady, Mamakaffe, from Africa. Our special guest will be Luciano, who will be doing his performance in the Nyahbinghi style.

Night two, Monday, February 2, has been dubbed Funky Reggae Party, with likes of Gabre Selassie and Lee Tafari.

"What makes it different is that they will be playing music on vinyl. We are trying to keep it original," Pringle explained.

According to him, the third night tagged, Tribute Night will feature the Jamaica-Canadian Contingency, a six-artiste group based in Toronto; Empress Minott; Harry Chapman, among others. Veterans Night follows on February 4, and will comprise a musical showdown between two of reggae music's legends – Leroy

All set for Bob Marley Birthday Bash



FILE

From left: Ryan Morrison, Lenox Lewis and Clive 'Kubba' Pringle at the 2013 Launch of Bob Marley Birthday Celebrations, held at the Negril Yatch Club.

Sibbles and Cocoa Tea. He said Sibbles will be presented with the Bob Marley Birthday Bash Lifetime Achievement Award on that night.

Bands Night will follow on Thursday, February 5 and will feature the Gladiators Band with Droop Lion and also the One Drop Roots Band with I-Wayne. Exile di Brave, Zema and the Rock Top Band completed the line-up.

The event will culminate on the

sixth, which is the birthday of the late king of reggae, who was affectionately known as 'The Gong', a night which Pringle said will be among the event's most memorable.

"They were here 23 years ago, and they will be here again on that night – that's Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt. Lutan Fyah, Anthony Cruz, Mackie Conscious and a few others (will be performing)," he said.

Pringle told **Hospitality Jamaica**

that hotels in Negril were already having a windfall from the upcoming event, as historically, many reggae-loving tourists book their vacations around the period of the celebrations.

"Most of the hoteliers don't want to admit it, but the bash basically makes Negril's bookings increase. All hotels basically are full during that period – the first week of February. And I am not saying everyone is coming to the bash, but

what they do is try to come here during that period. So it helps as well," he said, adding that Couples Resorts are now the event's official hotel sponsors.

Pringle said those set to benefit from the event include Jamaican artisans and craftspeople who have been invited to sell authentic Jamaican products. He said the event is not only a musical festival, but a holistic cultural experience in Jamaica's 'Capital of Casual'.

"Bob Marley Birthday Bash is a cultural experience; The music is positive and we offer variety. We will be having some of the best fine arts people from Kingston. We will be having a fine arts exhibition each day from noon. And we also will be having a glass-bottom boat carrying our visitors from their hotel on the beach right to the beach next to MXIII. They can come, shop see the different variety of stuff on display," Pringle said.

"For the Bob Marley Birthday Bash, for the past five/six years, Ryan Morrison (of Kush Art) has headed the art exhibition, and we have a slogan, 'Mek a Jamaica'. The idea is that we allow only authentic Jamaican products to be sold here during the bash. We have been doing this 23 years and we see, for the last couple years, people in Kingston have been doing it."

claudia.gardner@gleanerjm.com

Date announced for SOTIC 2015

THE CARIBBEAN Tourism Organisation (CTO) and the Curaçao Tourist Board have announced the dates for the region's leading tourism forum, the State of the Industry Conference (SOTIC) 2015.

Curaçao will host SOTIC from October 21-23, 2015 at the famous World Trade Centre in Willemstad, bringing together senior industry decision-makers and interested partners to address the biggest concerns and opportunities for Caribbean tourism.

"We are very pleased to have Curaçao as our host in October and we look forward to the excellent Dutch-Caribbean hospitality and experience which Curaçao offers to our

regional and international delegates," said Hugh Riley, the CTO's secretary general.

"This year, the conference will rise to a new level, with the involvement of the UN World Tourism Organisation and the World Travel and Tourism Council. The roster of speakers will be impressive, to say the least."

Riley explained that there are greater benefits to the conference beyond the intense dialogue on the latest trends and challenges in global tourism.

"Just as important as the depth of the dialogue at SOTIC is affording our member countries the chance to showcase their tourism product to international and regional audiences. It also injects tourism revenue directly into their

economies through our delegates visiting restaurants, attractions, hotels and shopping centres, which is a major objective for us when planning these initiatives," he added.

"For that reason, special partner packages for SOTIC are being arranged in Curaçao."

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The CTO and Curaçao have already begun planning a programme that will include current issues – some controversial and vexing – as well as opportunities for substantially enhancing the Caribbean's tourism sector.

"We are very focussed on re-strategising our tourism industry, so we have been participating very actively in the CTO confer-

ences. Organising and hosting SOTIC is a positive sign that we are coming up with new strategies for our industry," said Stanley Palm, Curaçao's minister of economic development, the government ministry responsible for tourism.

"We are very multicultural, and we will definitely try to show that during the conference."

The CTO State of the Industry Conference brings together some 300 tourism industry leaders from the 30 member countries of the CTO, as well as representatives of the regional and international private sector, academics, media, students, travel trade partners and other industry stakeholders from within and outside the region.

The Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

PRESENT-DAY JAMAICANS are the descendants of the people who came here after Christopher Columbus first arrived in 1494.

They were the Europeans, the Africans, the Chinese, the Indians, the Syrians, the Lebanese, etc. There are also the descendants of the Tainos, who were the people living here when Columbus arrived.

The people who came brought with them their own political, social, racial and religious perspectives. Principal among those were the Jews, who were literally driven out of Spain by the Spanish Inquisition. Thus, the heritage of the Jamaican people is a composite of those of the many peoples who came.

Yet, different racial and religious groups tend to observe and highlight their heritage and story in their own way, and separately from the others. A case in point is the Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica located at 32 Duke Street, Kingston, where the synagogue, The United Congregation of Israelites, is located.

FASCINATING STORY

The brainchild of Ainsley Henriques, this multipurpose hall was established in 2006.

“Why is it a heritage centre? Because ... when I was a little boy, nobody knew the history of the Jews in Jamaica, and now that I am a little older, I think I know a little bit more. It’s been a fascinating story to understand who we are, and it’s an interesting story for me ...,” Henriques told a group of volunteers from the United States on Sunday, January 18.

They were in the island cataloguing Jewish graves.

It is a very interesting place, indeed, which helps to tell the social and religious history of the Jews in Jamaica, and their contribution to national development. It consists of archives, a reference library, an exhibition hall, displays, and huge pictures of ministers and past presidents of The United Congregation of Israelites.

Among the presidents are some well-known Jamaicans including David M. Sallas; Stanley Motta; Sir Neville N. Ashenheim; Leslie Roy Mordecai; and Henriques, the current chairman of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

David Sallas was from the Sallas family after whom Sallas Market, immortalised in a Jamaican folk



A section of the exhibition hall at the Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica located at 32 Duke Street, Kingston.



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

In the Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica, at 32 Duke Street, Kingston, Ainsley Henriques (left) briefs some of the volunteers from the United States who were in Jamaica last week to catalogue Jewish graves.

song, was named. Incidentally, according to Henriques, the original Sallas Market sold grass for horses to eat, and not food for people. Horses were the main form of transport at one point in our history.

Stanley Motta, formerly of Stanley Motta and Company, was a prominent figure in many facets of life in

Jamaica. Sir Neville N. Ashenheim was Jamaica’s first post-Independence ambassador to the United States. Leslie Roy Mordecai made a significant contribution to the Scout movement, and in 1965, he was awarded the Bronze Wolf, the only distinction of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, awarded by the World

Scout Committee for exceptional services to world scouting.

Among the displays are artefacts from various areas of Jewish life in Jamaica. Among them are a huge scroll of the Torah, and artefacts from the Neveh Shalom Synagogue which was established along Spanish Town’s Monk Street in 1704, in addition to a



On one of the mercantilism storyboards. There is a picture of African people cutting sugar cane. It is to be noted that the Jews were the first to introduce sugar cane cultivation technology in Jamaica shortly after they arrived here in 1530.

Jewish market, and many Jewish shops. This synagogue was built by Sephardic Jews, and is regarded the first such Jewish synagogue in the Western Hemisphere.

The exhibition hall consists of colourful storyboards on which pictures and texts of the various spheres



Some of the displays at the Jewish Heritage Centre.



The Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica, located at 32 Duke Street, Kingston.

David M. Sollas was from the Sollas family after whom Sollas Market, immortalised in a Jamaican folk song, was named. Incidentally, the original Sollas Market sold grass for horses to eat, and not food for people.



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

Volunteers who were in Jamaica last week to catalogue Jewish graves pore over a birth, death and marriage register at the Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica.



Capturing aspects of plantation life in Jamaica was the Jewish artist Isaac Mendes Belisario. At the Jewish Heritage Centre of Jamaica, there is a section of a wall on which prints of some of his works are affixed. The prints include sketches of John Canoe, a popular character in the annual Christmas parades in which enslaved Africans participated.

of life in Jamaica to which the Jews have made significant contribution, such as commerce and trade, manufacturing, law, medicine, religion, etc. On them are bits and pieces of very interesting information such as the ones below: "One of the earliest Jewish doctors was Amos Henriques, who became chief medical officer to the Turkish Medical Corps at the time of the Crimean War ... and Lewis Ashenheim, the first Jew to graduate as a doctor from Edinburgh University, is buried in the Falmouth Jewish Cemetery."

On one of the mercantilism storyboards, there is a picture of African people cutting sugar cane. It is to be noted that the Jews were the first to introduce sugar cane cultivation technology in Jamaica shortly after they arrived here in 1530. Enslaved Africans, some owned by Jews, were put to work on plantations, some

of which were owned by Jews, along with slave ships.

Also capturing aspects of plantation life in Jamaica was the Jewish artist, Isaac Mendes Belisario. A section of a wall, on which prints of some of his works are affixed, is in his honour. The prints include sketches of John Canoe, a popular character in the annual Christmas parades in which enslaved Africans participated.

The Jewish story then is tied up with the stories of the other people who came. More about the Jews can be acquired from visiting the synagogue and the memorial garden, located beside the synagogue. In the garden are huge horizontal headstones that were brought there from the site of the first Jewish cemetery in Kingston, established in 1714 between North and Charles streets, and Love and Mark lanes.



LAST SATURDAY was another day when I left Kingston bursting with excitement.

Nature was calling me once again, this time to Durgas Farm in the Orange Hill section of Breadnut Hill in St Ann. It's an organic farm operated by Lise and Michael Alexander. It was out of the blue that I got an electronic invitation to tour this farm, and I didn't waste a moment in accepting it.

I have a personal and professional interest in organic food, as I have a condition called Gut Fermentation Syndrome. My body does not easily process certain foods. And I am allergic to gluten. This I didn't know until a few weeks ago. The mystery of my

lifetime of gut discomfiture was partially solved. Wheat products are the problem, and I need to stop consuming such.

It is well in sync with my desire to change my lifestyle. I started with the wrestling camp I visited at the very beginning of the month, and which I wrote about in the last **Hospitality Jamaica** publication. Since the wrestling camp, I have been jogging and walking at least four times a week and doing some light workouts. So to Durgas Farm I headed to see what I could use to help replace wheat in my diet.

But I was also happy because I love the rural outdoors and fresh air, and I got the feeling I would climb some hill. But my excite-

ment turned into dismay, when shortly after the vehicle I was in pulled out. I suddenly felt nauseous and uneasy. And I heard sounds, rumbling sounds coming from my belly.

STAFF PARTY

Oh yes, the punishment for my sin of disobedience had started. For the first time since my 10-year professional association with The Gleaner Company, I had attended a staff party the night before, and ate stuff that I perhaps should not have had. Now, something was mumbling and grumbling inside of me, dying to get out. There were cramps, queasy feelings, and a whole heap of strange sounds.

The only thing I could do was



Outside showers at Durgas Farm in St Ann

to hope that nobody could hear the cacophony emanating from deep within. I was so uncomfortable, and I blamed myself for

being greedy, licky-licky and 'low bite'. And to be honest, I really am not. I only eat food because I have to live. I am not obsessed



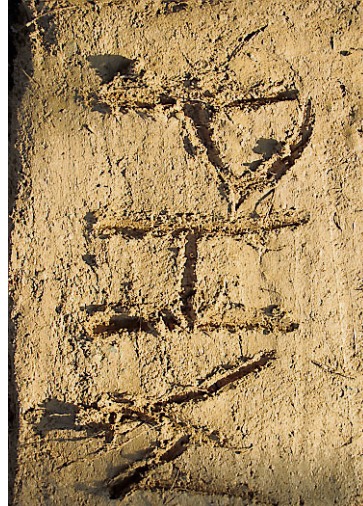
Ganorvin Swaby (left) and Mario Vecerra Luna turning natural manure (compost) on the Durgas Farm in St Ann on Saturday.



An outdoor toilet at Durgas Farm in St Ann.



One of the cottages on Durgas Farm at Orange Hill, Breadnut Hill, St Ann.



A brick made of clay, sand and coir, all natural materials.

with food, I don't dream about food, and I don't quarrel over food.

Yes, there are times when I indulge, like at the party, but I am really not avaricious. And it seems like food doesn't care much for me either. So, as soon as I had started, I stopped beating up on myself. But I still need to get very disciplined and completely avoid toxic food.

All along the journey, I just hoped the rumbling didn't get more intense, and it didn't. When I reached my destination I was relieved, some of the cramps had gone, and sure enough, I had to walk over two hills before I reached the farm. I met Lise and then it was time to embrace the verdant ambience. I really liked the place, perched on a hill, where the sea can be seen at points. Cottages made of natural materials were scattered over, giving the place a sort of village appearance.

There were some people waiting for the tour, and others were on their way.

The tour commenced with a discussion about permaculture and



People mixing sand and clay with their feet to make cob bricks at Durgas Farm on Saturday.

organic farming. The more the discussion progressed, the more I learned about how important it is to grow food with nutrients for humans. The tour of the farm itself was quite enlightening. It showed how much simpler, life could be if we use the things that nature has given us. It also demonstrated, especially to me, that a change of lifestyle requires a complete change of mindset.

Another thing that I will always remember is the importance of certain creatures we regard as pests. They are very important as food to other creatures, for the provision of nutrients to the soil, and by extension, to plants.

Whether we like them or not, flies, bees, wasps, worms, snails, slugs, bugs, etc, might be more useful than we think. And of faecal matter, human and animal? They, too, have soil-enrichment properties, which are safer than man-made fertilisers.

After a meatless lunch, there was a demonstration of how to make cob bricks with sand, coir and clay, all natural materials. There was so much to learn in one day, so I intend to return. I must change my diet, and nature will definitely call me back. Thanks to Lise and the other tourists for a most educational day.



Freshly baked bread from the cob oven at Durgas Farm.



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

Lise Alexander showing a 'tourist' how black soldier flies breed to make larvae to feed chickens at Durgas Farm in St Ann.

Granville All-Age to benefit from Sandals Foundation/RONA Inc partnership

LEADING CANADIAN distributor of hardware and home improvement products, RONA Inc, has partnered with The Sandals Foundation to carry out renovations at the Granville All-Age School in St James.

Following last year's RONA and Sandals Foundation project, which saw Montego Bay's historic Boys and Girls club refreshed and its efforts re-energised, RONA Inc this year pledged more than US\$5,000 towards the project.

Established in 1951, the Granville All-Age School has an enrolment of more than 860 students and is located on Chambers Drive in the Granville community.

On February 5, more than 100 volunteers from RONA along with the Sandals Foundation will carry out volunteer work. Several sections of the facility, including the restrooms, infant school and drinking fountain, will receive fresh coats of paint. Volunteers will also install new fencing, carry out landscaping and see to the building and installation of new benches at the school.

"We are so pleased to once again host this dedicated group of volunteers that have pledged both their funds and their time to upgrade another facility for our children here in Jamaica," said Heidi Clarke, director of programmes for the Sandals Foundation.

"Our volun-tourism opportunities are expanding rapidly, providing travellers to the Caribbean a chance to connect to both local people and our culture, while bringing great benefits to local communities. The experience, when coordinated well-established relationships that go way beyond the day of volunteering."

This project and partnership with RONA reflects the Sandals Foundation's ongoing commitment to education and youth development in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. The Sandals Foundation actively supports education by providing infra-structural support, scholarships, teacher training and early-childhood stimulation initiatives.



Elegant corridor

Tourism and Entertainment Minister Dr Wykeham McNeill (right); Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining Phillip Paulwell (second right), and executive director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Clyde Harrison (left), discuss plans to transform sections of the thoroughfare leading to the Norman Manley International Airport; from Mountain View Avenue along Windward Road to the Harbour View Roundabout into an elegant corridor, with officials from the National Works Agency (NWA). Explaining the work to be undertaken by the NWA under the project are Andrew Sturridge, project manager, NWA (second left), and Stephanie Bromfield, highway planner, NWA. The occasion was a community consultation which was held at the Windward Road Primary and Junior High School recently, to discuss the project. Paulwell, who is also member of parliament for Kingston East and Port Royal, highlighted that the meeting was the first in a series of consultations. The project will see the development of an elegant corridor similar to that created in Montego Bay and will include the reconstruction of sidewalks, the widening of roadways and drainage improvements. Residents welcomed the initiative and put forward numerous suggestions.



NEPA urges public not to capture crocodiles!

THE NATIONAL Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) is appealing to members of the public to desist from capturing or harming crocodiles.

Recent reports of residents in Whitehouse, St James attempting to capture a crocodile is of concern. The American Crocodile, which is one of Jamaica's protected animals, is typically docile, but can be aggressive when harassed.

Crocodiles are protected under the Wild Life Protection Act and it is an offence to have a crocodile or

any part of the animal in one's possession. Anyone found guilty of these offences are liable to a fine of up to \$100,000 or 12 months' imprisonment.

Members of the public are urged to call NEPA at 1-888-991-5005 or 754-7540 if crocodiles are seen in areas outside of their natural habitat where they may pose a threat to human activities or if they are being captured, harassed, harmed or the meat is being sold. Reports may also be made to 119 or the nearest police station.