

Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2015

'NUH
DUTTY UP
JAMAICA'

FALMOUTH NEEDS
EXPANSION

RECORD
TOURIST
ARRIVALS,
EARNINGS

DOMESTIC TOURISM
HELPING TO SUSTAIN
LOCAL ATTRACTION

CHUKKA GOOD TIME!



Domestic tourism helps sustain CHUKKA

Corporate clients flock the local attraction



A pretty pose from some members of the Cornwall Regional Hospital team who visited Chukka Good Hope in 2014. **Inset:** Members of the Cornwall Regional Hospital team enjoying every moment of Chukka Good Hope.

Janet Silvera
Senior Gleaner Writer

WESTERN BUREAU:

A RECENT multimillion-dollar expansion to Chukka Good Hope in Trelawny has resulted in the attraction receiving a boost from the domestic tourism market.

Several corporate entities are flocking to the local attraction for team-building exercises, retreats, staff and family fun days, instead of hopping on an aircraft for another Caribbean destination or North America.

In the last six months, more than 7,400 Jamaicans employed to companies such as the Jamaica Money Market Brokers, Rainforest Seafoods, National Commercial Bank, The Gleaner, Wray and Nephew, Sagicor and Carreras, have opted to use the Trelawny attraction for group outings.

“Although we have a number of Chukka attractions on the island, the most popular among Jamaicans currently is Good Hope because of the diversity it offers,” Chukka’s chief executive officer, John Byles, told *Hospitality Jamaica* last week.

Byles noted that the groups range between 32 and 1,200, the latter being the largest number they can accommodate.

“We cater to all ages and all sectors. We have something for

everyone, including a 9,000-square-foot aviary of indigenous and exotic birds, a swimming pool and children’s play area, adult challenge course and a Colonial Village.”

In fact, the Colonial Village features an Appleton Estate Rum Bar, Jablum Coffee House and Walkerswood Jerk Hut, where guests can see, smell, touch and taste locally manufactured products.

The attraction also recently introduced new park passes offering something for every guest visiting, “whether you’re seeking adventure, culture or leisure”, said Byles.

The activities are supplemented with bounceabout, gem mining and horse and carriage, which he said are favourites among the children who visit.

For adults, Byles said there was a full range of nature adventure activities intertwined in the 250-year history that the property boasts.

“This includes ATVs, dune buggies, zip line adventures, river tubing, and the great house and plantation tours,” said Byles.

The Chukka CEO declared that domestic tourism is helping to sustain Good Hope, pointing out that Trelawny is perfectly situated in almost the middle of the country, and as a result, Jamaicans coming from either end of the island benefit from this.

Byles’ optimism is shared by



Rainforest Seafoods staff arriving for a day of fun.



Children of staff at Rainforest Seafoods equipped with their safety gear before going swimming at Chukka Good Hope.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Face painting is one of the activities offered for children who are part of a large corporate group.

Rainforest Seafoods' chief executive officer, Brian Jardim, who in a testimonial recently spoke of the experience exceeding his and his staff's expectations.

Rainforest took 1,000 staff members to the attraction last October.

"The Chukka team was a delight to work with – from their attention to the smallest of details, their response to all of our questions and concerns, and their efforts to accommodate the diverse needs of our group. We were treated to a great day filled with delicious food, engaging entertainment and a wide range of activities from zip lining to river tubing. I can highly recommend Chukka for corporate gatherings. The Rainforest team will certainly be back," he said.

Other Chukka attractions doing reasonably well with locals are the signature Horseback Ride and Swim at the White River Valley in St Mary, the Catamaran and Dunn's River Experience.

"Occasionally, locals book the catamaran for parties and wedding receptions," said Byles.

Brides, he said, have had their 'trash the dress' with the horseback ride, going to cliff side of Chukka Farms in Ocho Rios. They have also hosted several weddings at Good Hope and the Cranbrook location in St Ann.

As it relates to team-building exercises, Byles explained that the companies usually visit with 20 to 60 of its team members for activities such as branding, contact tubing and sponge war.

"They are placed in a closed area and are required to push each other, the idea is not to be pushed to the edge of the pool. It shows them how to win as a team," said Byles.

Team-building exercises have been a staple at the attraction for the last six years.

janet.silvera@gleanerjm.com



Relaxation at its best. Other members of the NCB Group making the best of their day at Chukka.



Food time for the Rainforest Seafoods staff.



A member of The Gleaner Company team gets ready to go zip lining.



National Commercial Bank staff getting ready to ride the zip line.



A Gleaner representative checking out the Challenge Course, which is suitable for both adults and children. It is an obstacle course suspended in the air.



The Wray and Nephew tasting classes are always a hit.



Falmouth Post Office.

Falmouth needs expansion

Karrie Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

A MID GROWING concern over the diversion of millions of tourism dollars from the cruise shipping town of Falmouth, Trelawny to other resort areas, stakeholders are renewing calls for an urgent expansion of the town to facilitate improved commercial activities.

Currently, the plans that are on the agenda to facilitate the town's expansion include a removal of the vendors' market and the transportation centre from their current locations at the interior of the town to the outskirts, heading away from Falmouth towards the direction of Martha Brae, along Market Street.

According to Garth Wilkinson, Falmouth's mayor, these plans have been around long before the 2011 opening of the town's cruise shipping pier. However, Wilkinson claims that due to inept marketing of Falmouth as a tourism destination, the plans for expansion never materialised, as tourists were diverted elsewhere.

"What we want to do is move the town in a particular direction going



PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA
 The Courthouse in Falmouth.

towards Martha Brae for ease of commerce. Moving the market would be the precedent for everything else because we could not even declare the town a resort town until we move the market," Wilkinson said.

"When Falmouth pier was first opened back in 2011, the then minister of transport and works, Mike Henry's negotiations were to get the tourists to move from Falmouth to Montego Bay or into Ocho Rios. They marketed Falmouth as 25 minutes from Montego Bay and 35

minutes from Ocho Rios. Falmouth was not sold as a destination, and we lost out on the initial visitors.

"What we are grappling with now, all of that money was in place in 2011. In fact, the commitment that was given to the parish council was that the market and the transportation centre would have been relocated before the pier opened, but it was never honoured," the mayor added.

With Falmouth now said to be bursting at its seams largely due to

an influx of vendors coming into the town to harvest its tourism opportunities, Dr Lee Bailey, Montego Bay businessman and operator of Caribbean Cruise Shipping and Tours, told **Hospitality Jamaica** that swift action was needed to improve the town's appeal to visitors so locals can in their own right benefit more directly from the cruise business.

"A whole series of issues needs to change because, currently, the people in Falmouth are not directly benefiting from the huge number of tourists that are going there," Bailey said.

"No town has ever experienced that large number of tourists in Jamaica that is being exposed to Falmouth at the moment. On any given day, you have up to 12,000 visitors, including crew. Anytime you can have the ratio of tourist matching the population, persons should benefit significantly, indirectly or directly."

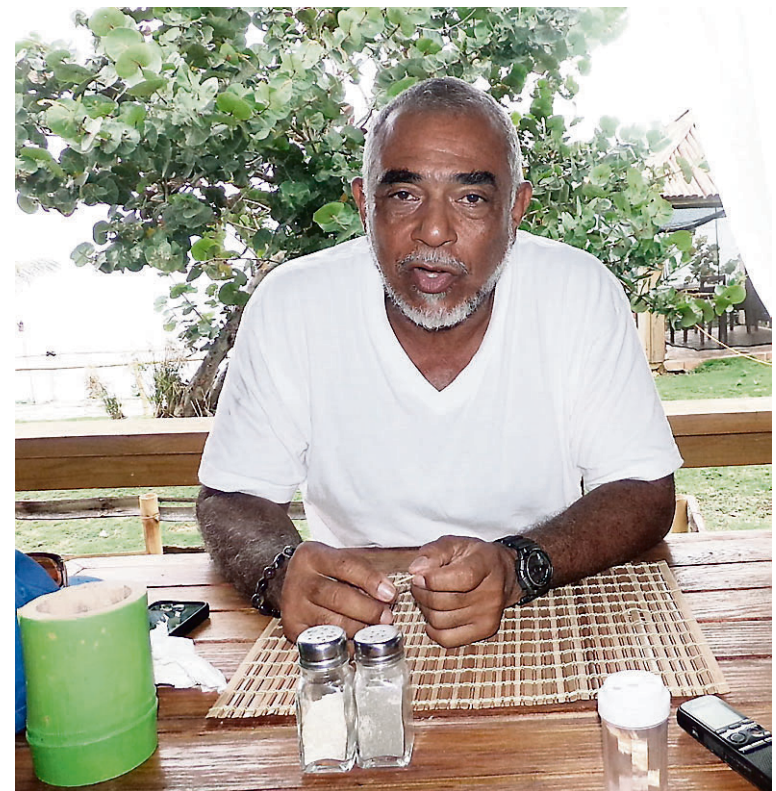
Meanwhile, Wilkinson shared a vision to not only have the town of Falmouth appealing to tourists, but also to the local population, which

has grown tremendously within the last four years since the pier opened.

"Over 4,000 homes have been added to the parish over the past four years, and all these households in Holland Estates, Stonebrook and Florence Hall don't come into Falmouth to shop. They prefer to go all the way to Ironshore or Montego Bay, so we have to find a way to attract the persons who live in our parish to actually do business in our parish," Wilkinson said.

Siding with the mayor, Dr Bailey pointed out that it was also very important to discuss all developmental plans for the town with the residents of Falmouth prior to their enactment. He is also of the view that the current market site should be preserved for its historical value.

"As far as that market is concerned, it's a historical site and should have a large museum in there and entertainment on a daily basis. However, they are not to attempt to do this without the people of Falmouth involved in it; the people have to buy into it, this is very important," he stressed.



Errol Hanna

At left: Entrance leading to the Cliff Hanger.

Reviving tourism in the east

Gareth Davis Sr

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

HOMETOWN BOY Errol Hanna is pursuing his life-long dream of generating interests in East Portland, the parish where tourism started.

Hanna is investing in the construction of vacation homes and cabins to attract stopover visitors and honeymooners.

The Portland businessman, who purchased the Rass Craig property in 1992, which comprises seven acres of beach-front property overlooking the Caribbean Sea, encountered many challenges including a sliding dollar before deciding to kick-start the long-overdue development.

“Portland is dear to my heart,” he stated, adding, “It is also the most beautiful parish islandwide with its lush vegetation, pristine beauty, and friendly people.”

This property is probably the most picturesque and it is neatly situated on a cliff. The first block of vacation homes and rooms is under construction, and upon completion, 17 rooms will be added to the already 450 or so rooms that are available in the parish as it relates to occupancy.”

And with the opening of Cliff Hanger Restaurant, Lounge, and



One of the log cabins at Rass Craig.

Grill in August 2014, the local people, including business operators and hoteliers, along with tourists, continue to flock the facility, while partaking in fine dining, socialising, and enjoying the ambience.

“This is a true example of fine dining at an upscale facility in Portland,” commented former minister of information, Daryl Vaz, who visited Cliff Hanger recently, accompanied by his wife, Ann-Marie.

Vaz added, “This is a property enriched by its natural look and the use of local resources, including bamboo, which is quite visible on its construction. The service is impeccable and the food is great. The lawn is captivated by its well-preserved vegetation, and for me, it is now one of the most sought-after tourist attraction site in Portland.”

Another high point for the Rass Craig property is its skilfully constructed log cabins –

resembling a family home, with a swimming pool and a bar area for those inclined to savour the many alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The cabins, which are constructed using a variety of local wood including blue mahoe, pine, teak, and cedar, are preserved so as to adequately combat the salty air from the nearby sea.

With a staff complement of approximately 35 persons, including construction workers, ground staff, maintenance, kitchen

staff, waiters and bartenders, the operations at the Rass Craig empire has been fully endorsed by hoteliers who have dined at the facility, including Gordon Townsend of Bay View Villas and Spa, Marlyn Goofe of Simple Natural Resorts, and David Hemmings, operator of Seaside Villas.

Hanna pointed out that a total of 70 rooms are to be constructed. “Three other blocks will be constructed, thus adding another 53 rooms to the 17 that are currently under construction.”

According to him, rooms are badly needed in Portland, but the present road condition, which is in a deplorable state, especially East Portland, does not augur well for tourism, therefore, the basic infrastructure needs to be improved as it relates to road, light, and bushing of the roadways.

The units will comprise one, two and three bedrooms fitted with bathrooms, and this will create further job opportunities for at least 25 additional local residents.

“Our staff is highly trained in tourism and hospitality management, which allows them to relate to guests efficiently. Additionally, we cater for weddings and receptions, special events, and other functions,” said Hanna.

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Time to look beyond the numbers

VISITOR ARRIVALS to the Caribbean are again increasing. This is good news, but not the whole story.

As has now been widely reported, preliminary figures collated by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) in their recent State of the Industry Report showed that a total of 26.3 million visitors chose the Caribbean for land-based vacations in 2014. This was a 5.2 per cent increase over the 25 million who travelled to the region the year before.

According to CTO, the best performing Caribbean destinations, in terms of numbers, were the Dominican Republic with a 9.6 per cent increase to 5.1 million visitors in 2014; Aruba, which was up by 9.5 per cent to one million arrivals; and Cuba, up by 5.3 per cent to just over three million travellers. Jamaica's stay-over arrivals increased by 3.6 per cent to two million visitors.

The figures do not include cruise ship arrivals, which jumped by eight per cent in 2014 to 24 million, with the cruise destinations showing the greatest growth being The Bahamas, Cozumel, the Cayman Islands, St Maarten, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico.

Although the figures demonstrate that at last a stable region-wide tourism-led recovery is underway, the headline figures tell us little about what parts of the industry are prospering, whether it has returned to profitability, or the extent to which Caribbean hoteliers, service providers, or the Caribbean economy are benefiting.

MODEST IMPROVEMENT

What appears to be happening is despite an only modest improvement in the global economy, visitors are getting their appetite back for the Caribbean. This appears to be because disposable income is growing again, particularly in the traditional markets in North America and Europe, as well as in new feeder markets in Latin America. It also coincides with the opening of important new gateways like Panama City and a six per cent increase in airlift to the region as the carriers slowly move back into surplus.

Particularly noticeable in 2014, and reflecting, for instance, a greater willingness of the middle class to return to long-haul travel, was the significant growth in arrivals in 2014 during the lower-cost summer period, when visitor numbers almost doubled on those the year before.

That said, Caribbean tourism is an industry crying out for greater public statistical analysis.

David Jessop

For instance, what the CTO statistics, as important as they are, do not reveal in any detail is whether, for example, the heavy room rate discounting after 2008 has receded, whether the yield per bed night has increased to pre-2007 levels, and whether the increase in visitor arrivals is happening rapidly enough to return the industry to long-term profitability.

The CTO did report that an analysis of data provided by Smith Travel Research, the US company which tracks the overall performance of the hotel sector, revealed that Caribbean hotels earned more revenue in 2014, that room occupancy rates improved slightly, and average revenue per available room was up 5.7 per cent. However, it did not indicate how this was spread across the industry or if these averages are enough to enable older or tired Caribbean properties to undertake the upgrades and training that some so badly need.

The figures also do not indicate the types of properties where visitors are now staying.

Over the past five to 10 years, there has been a dramatic growth in chain hotels across the region, in boutique hotels aimed at upscale visitors, and in the numbers of rooms available in condominiums, villas or apartments.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that chain hotels, boutique hotels, and city centre hotels, in the case of Jamaica and Trinidad, are doing well, while in destinations like Barbados, villas and condominiums are proving particularly popular and drawing visitors away from more traditional properties. If this is correct, it suggests that some hotels in the region may not be prospering or able to take advantage of the upswing in arrivals.

Speaking after the CTO had announced the 2014 tourism arrivals figures, the organisation's chair, Richard Sealy, Barbados' minister of tourism, noted that the Caribbean's tourism industry was vital for the creation of opportunities for the people of the region and critical to the promotion of economic development.

His message is an important one. As the industry recovers and as stability returns, it is now so necessary to look beyond the arrival figures.



FILE

Tourists enjoy the beach in Negril, Westmoreland.

Record tourist arrivals, earnings for the Caribbean

THE CARIBBEAN welcomed a record 26.3 million tourists in 2014, a 5.3 per cent rise over the previous year. These visitors spent US\$29.5 billion, itself a record.

The chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), Richard Sealy, and the secretary general, Hugh Riley, along with the CTO's director of research, Winfield Griffith, announced the record performance at a news conference streamed live to a global audience from the CTO headquarters today.

"Last year, we received more visitors than ever before, recording our fifth straight year of growth as a region, and visitors spent more money in the Caribbean than they ever did before," said Sealy, also Barbados' minister of tourism and international transport.

"There was strong demand throughout 2014, and I am particularly pleased with our performance during the summer period when our growth rate was almost twice that of the summer of 2013," he added.

The 26.3 million visitors represent 1.3 million more than in 2013, itself a record year for the Caribbean. These visitors contributed a record US\$29.5 billion to Caribbean economies, a 3.9 per cent rise over the US\$28 billion that visitors spent in 2013.

"With a strong year for air travel, a positive performance by the accommodation sector, solid

growth in cruise visits, and faster-than-expected rise in stay-over arrivals, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation is pleased to report that the state of Caribbean tourism is sound," stated Riley.

The US continues to be the region's primary market, with nearly 13 million Americans – just under half of the total arrivals – to the region. Canada rallied from a flat performance in 2013 to post a 5.7 per cent increase, while Europe topped five million visitors for the first time since 2008, registering a 4.6 per cent increase over 2013.

AIRLINE SEAT CAPACITY

"There's no doubt that political and economic conditions, increased airline seat capacity, improved airport facilities, increased room stock, as recognised hotel chains established themselves in our destinations, and new initiatives in the marketplace all contributed to this success," Riley added.

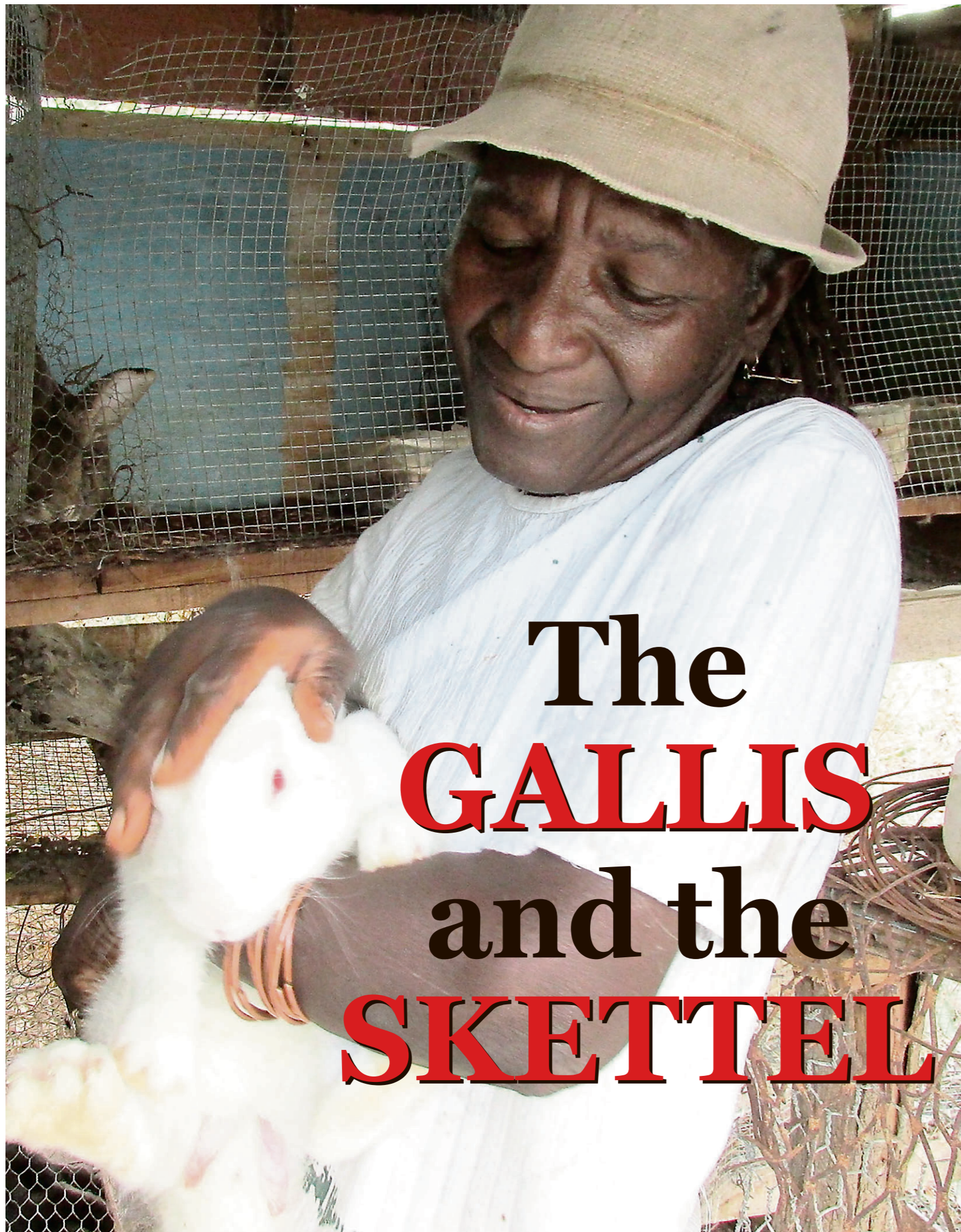
The 5.3 per cent rise which the region recorded was above the global growth rate of 4.7 per cent announced by the United Nations body, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, and nearly twice the predicted two per cent to three per cent growth.

According to Griffith, leisure travel is showing steady demand again as the economies in the main markets continue signs of resurgence. This heightened demand significantly benefited the Caribbean and is evident in the record number of visitors.

Share the Love



18 YEARS AND OVER. ENJOY RESPONSIBLY



Dorette Abrahams caresses Bully Buck, the 'gallis'.

The GALLIS and the SKETTEL

Rabbit breeder Dorette Abrahams of Albion Heights, St Thomas, is a spiritual person, who is an ordained Yoruba priest.



TO REACH Dorette Abrahams at her Albion Heights, St Thomas location, I had to walk over two steep inclines up a hill.

The first one was manageable, but the second one gave my calves a massive workout. Frankly, I didn't mind; I need the exercise. And then the view of the sea was compensation for my hard work.

I had gone to chat with Abrahams about her rabbit-rearing business, but I was not prepared to hear about the social and sexual habits of rabbits, which, at one time were popular pets here in Jamaica. I remember people going around searching for the Spanish Needle plants to feed rabbits.

I also remember people saying rabbit meat was excellent for weak-blooded people, and there was this joke about how a Chiney man described a rabbit: "Labbay, long hay, short tay, fava poo, but no poo," it was claimed he said. Translation: "Rabbit, long ears, short tail, looks like a puss, but not a puss." And, of course, rabbits have the reputation for breeding as if there were no tomorrow.

And so, when describing how fertile these cute and cuddly creatures are, Abrahams went into a sarcastic depth by saying even when they are already pregnant, they can be impregnated again. Thus, because of their penchant for multiple pregnancies, the males and the females are kept in separate compartments.

When Abrahams sees it is time for mating, the does are brought to commingle with the bucks, and then returned to their 'yard'. There is no shacking up, no overpopulation, no famine. The pregnant ones are kept on the 'maternity ward'. When it is time for delivery, the expectant mothers



Male rabbits are said to bite off each other's testicles in response to unwanted advances.

pull out their fur to make beds for their naked babies.

And although males and females are separated, that doesn't stop 'Bully Buck', from finding ways and means of finding the females. He is the 'gallis' in Abrahams' rabbit community, and has to be heavily monitored. When **Hospitality Jamaica** visited, he was alone in a cage with a female. The satiated ones were crouched beside each other, moving only their noses.

There was a little nip on Bully Buck's nose, seemingly obtained in the throes of passion. They do have their violent moments, especially when a little miss is not in the mood or playing hard to get. Yes, just as with humans, these Leporidae have their moments of pretentiousness. And then the next moment, especially when they are in heat, everything is all noisy and bedlam.

They also have their 'gastronomic' moments, if you will. For in their mating rituals, the bucks have a habit of sniffing and tasting a certain delicacy that the does possess. It's as natural as natural can be, and the does are not complaining, neither are Eryka Badu or Millie Jackson. If you are old enough to know what I am talking about.

And where there is a gallis, there is a 'skettel', that unchaste, loose and 'generous' female. In Dorette's

rabbit kingdom, there is one. She, who wants to go all over the place, sharing the love. Like Bully, she will find a way out of her confinement to be with the boys. So she is kept in a separate hutch, fortified to prevent her from escaping when nature calls.

But of all the stories and myths about rabbits I have heard, this particular one is the most interesting, laughable, perhaps. So, here goes. The male kittens (young rabbits) are kept by themselves. When they reach puberty and their hormones are raging, some attempt to get intimate with the others, and that is when violence rages on four legs.

They who are not into being 'jumped' by their brothers turn around and bite off their brothers' testicles, castrating them. Sometimes, the mangled testicles are left dangling.

"What I do when I notice it, I don't cut it off, and nature itself heals it, and they go on living contentedly," Abrahams told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

The stories and the candour with which Abrahams narrated them gave me much laughter, and I came away thinking we humans are so different from these long-eared creatures, but we are so alike. It's a life of comfort and pleasure these rabbits lead, but I'd rather be me.



Some of Dorette Abrahams' male (buck) rabbits.



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS
Rabbit manure, such as that in these bags, is very nourishing to the soil. Is it because the rabbits themselves are so fertile?

Canadian visitors flock to Jamaica in record numbers

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) is pleased to announce that 2014 was a hallmark year for Canadian visitor arrivals to the destination. A record 419,898 Canadian visitors was tallied for 2014 (January to December), an increase of 5.2 per cent over 2013. This figure is the highest number of annual Canadian visitor arrivals recorded to date.

“We are thrilled to report our best year ever in terms of Canadian visitors to Jamaica,” said Philip Rose, regional director of Canada for the JTB.

JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD

“It is clear that Canadians love Jamaica and continue to visit year after year as well as tell their friends about their experience.”

Rose expressed gratitude for Jamaica’s travel partners and credited them with much of this success.

“We couldn’t reach these impressive numbers without the hard work and dedication of our travel agent partners who recommend and sell Jamaica to their clients on a daily basis. In addition, we count on our tour operators, airlines, resorts and attractions partners to continuously deliver an unforgettable experience to visitors.”

Jamaica is easily accessible via non-stop flights from most major Canadian gateway cities. Alluring sunscapes, lush mountain

backdrops, friendly people, spicy flavours and island beats make Jamaica the vibrant heart of the Caribbean and one of the top destinations for Canadian travellers. Jamaica is truly unique, with her gifts to the world including reggae music, fine rum, exquisite coffee and jerk seasoning. The island is also home to the widest variety of attractions in the Caribbean, from stunning waterfalls to cycling tours in the Blue Mountains, to some of the region’s best golf courses.



CELEBRATING REGGAE MONTH: Reggae royalty, Marcia Griffiths, is one of this year’s headliners for Reggae Month. Known as The Queen of Reggae, Marcia gave a mesmerising performance during one of the many live concerts commemorating Reggae Month in February. Reggae Month highlights the impact of reggae on the island’s social, cultural and economic development. Organised by the Jamaica Reggae Industry Association, the month-long event includes concerts, festivals and seminars.



The Marley brothers (from left) Ky-Mani, Julian and Damian were sublime in tribute to their father and late reggae icon, Bob Marley, at the commemoration of the patriarch’s 70th birthday. The brothers were among an impressive list of reggae artistes who gave scintillating performances to honour the life and times of the reggae legend on February 7. Dubbed Redemption Live, the Digicel-sponsored event was held at Kingston’s waterfront and featured Judy Mowatt, Marcia Griffiths, I-Octane, Freddie McGregor, Tessanne Chin, Richie Spice, Capelton and Iba Mahr.



KUDOS TO NEGRIL INTERNATIONAL VOLLEYBALL CLASSIC: Some 10 teams participated in the Negril International Volleyball Classic, held at the Long Bay Beach Park 1, recently. Participants included teams from Brazil, Norway, the United States, Canada, Colombia, and Jamaica. The team from Canada, featuring Canada’s number-one Olympic Beach Volleyball team member, Dr Josh Binstock, and his teammate, Steve Delany, were the winners in the male category. The duo of Junita Manhall and Patricia Olesen copped the female category. Team members are shown above with Granville Morgan (right), sales representative the Jamaica Tourist Board. The event was sponsored by Jamaica Sport, an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment.



PHOTO BY BARRINGTON FLEMMING

Leader (Manager) of the Year Shereen Facey-Thelwell (second left), events manager at Secrets Resorts and Spa, accepts her gift of a 46-inch flat-screen television. Presenting from (from left) are Emilio Huhn, general manager; Andrea Allie-Thorpe, human resource director; and Deryk Meany, resident manager.

Governments recognise benefits of visa facilitation

VISA FACILITATION has experienced strong progress in recent years, particularly through the implementation of visa-on-arrival policies, according to UNWTO's latest **Visa Openness Report**. This largely reflects an increased awareness among policymakers of the positive impacts of visa facilitation on tourism and economic growth.

According to the report, 62 per cent of the world's population was required to have a traditional visa prior to departure in 2014, down from 77 per cent in 2008. In the same year, 19 per cent of the world's population was able to enter a destination without a visa, while 16 per cent could receive a visa on arrival, as compared to 17 per cent and six per cent in 2008.

The report also shows that the most prevalent facilitation measure implemented has been 'visa on arrival'. Over half of all improvements made in the last four years were from 'visa required' to 'visa on arrival'.

"Visa facilitation is central to stimulating economic growth and job creation through tourism. Although there is much room for improvement, we are pleased to see that a growing number of governments around the world is taking decisive steps in this regard," said UNWTO secretary-general, Taleb Rifai.

Countries in the Americas and in Asia and the Pacific have been at the forefront of visa facilitation, while Europe and Middle East have more restrictive visa policies. Overall, emerging economies tend to be more open than advanced ones, with South-East Asia, East Africa, the Caribbean and Oceania among the most open sub-regions.

"UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, and easier visa procedures will be crucial to attract these travellers, especially tourists from emerging source markets like China, Russia, India and Brazil," added Rifai.

Tourism figures continue upward trend

Front-desk agent is Secrets' Employee of the Year

Barrington Fleming
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

JAMAICA'S TOURISM industry continues to log impressive arrival figures deep into the winter season with the month of January recording a seven per cent increase in stopover arrivals.

Paul Pennicooke, director of tourism, disclosed the figures while addressing the 2014 Staff Awards of the Secrets Resort and Spa recently, which was held under the theme, Dazzling Divas, Dashing Dudes – Better than the Rest.

Pennicooke said the fact that the country had to be grappling with stringent International Monetary Fund conditions had many thinking that the outlook for the industry in 2014 was bleak and that growth was only a pipe dream.

"It was to the credit of workers in the industry as well that the industry saw growth of over seven per cent in visitor arrivals to the island in 2014. Stopover visitors increased by 3.6 per cent and cruise arrivals went up by 12 per cent. The momentum has continued into 2015, with the



A smiling Phillipa Hutchinson (second left), front desk agent, is surprised and happy to be the recipient of a 46 inch flat screen television set and trophy after copping the Employee of the Year Award for Secrets Resorts and Spa recently. Making the presentation are (from left) Emilio Huhn, general manager; Andrea Allie-Thorpe, human resources director; and Deryk Meany, resident manager.

preliminary figures indicating that the month of January saw a seven per cent increase in stopover arrivals, and in the first week of February, we had a 7.3 per cent increase in visitor arrivals."

Pennicooke said as a destination,

Jamaica still had a lot of work to do, but indicated that there was a turning, based on the positive performance in the past year.

Meanwhile, Phillipa Hutchinson, front desk agent, was the toast of the awards, copping the coveted

Employee of the Year title and the 46-inch flat screen television that went along with it.

"I was so surprised; honestly, I never imagined it would have been me. A lot of other persons have worked just as hard, so I was not thinking that I had actually been considered so highly. It's a great feeling," Hutchinson said.

Shane Myrie of Housekeeping was the runner-up, while Shreen Richards of Food and Beverage took the third-place spot.

Shereen Facey Thelwell, events manager, took the Leader of the Year title.

The awards featured the inimitable Ashe Ensemble, who excited with a pleasing rendition of Fantasia's *The Other Side of the Rainbow* and a medley of Jamaican songs, aptly dubbed, Hit Me with Music.

The entertainment fare also included John Davis, a violinist from England, who soared on the wings of classics with a wide-ranging repertoire, included traditional Jamaican folk songs, songs from the movies and John Legend's hit single, *All of Me*.

Hotel foundation accepting scholarship applications

CARIBBEAN STUDENTS and industry professionals are encouraged to apply for a scholarship from the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association Education Foundation (CHTAEF) so they can pursue higher education or professional development in the tourism and hospitality field. Scholarships are awarded with support from CHTAEF sponsors including Virgin Holidays, Interval International, FirstCaribbean International Bank, Johnson & Wales University and Florida International University.

CHTAEF is accepting applications for its scholarship programme until March 30, 2015. Applications are available in English and Spanish via: caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/CHTAEFapplication.php or by contacting the local hotel association in the applicant's country. Applications must be submitted with the approval of the applicant's local hotel association in order to be considered.

Scholarships are awarded for study at any approved college or university including, but not limited to, the University of West Indies and local community colleges throughout the Caribbean.

Scholarship recipients will be advised of their approval status, and if accepted, the amount of their award no earlier than May 25, 2015.

"Education and training are essential in order to be successful in any work field and through our scholarship programme, CHTAEF is offering students and professionals financial assistance to pursue their careers in the hospitality and tourism industry," said Richard S. Kahn, chairman of CHTAEF.

"Since 1987, we have awarded approximately US\$2 million in scholarships and grants to applicants, and we have observed many successful scholarship recipients build exemplary careers in the tourism and hospitality industry," said Kahn.

In 2014, CHTAEF awarded US\$136,308 in scholarships to 29 Caribbean nationals pursuing a higher education or professional development in hospitality and tourism after receiving more than 60 applications.

CHTAEF awards worthy Caribbean nationals who demonstrate a strong commitment to the hospitality and tourism industry with scholarship money to enhance or further their expertise. This includes academic tuition scholarships, short-course professional development tuition scholarships, work experience placement opportunities, and grants for tourism and hospitality teachers for furthering their education or to gain industry work experience.

Contact:

foundation@caribbeanhotelandtourism.com or call 571-436-4386 for more information.



Sandals Foundation team members from the Ocho Rios region, along with community members, assiduously rid the beach of more than 100 bags of garbage.

'Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica' Sandals Foundation cleans Fisherman's Beach

IN SUPPORT of the Jamaica Environment Trust's (JET) recently launched Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica campaign, the Sandals Foundation cleaned up Fisherman's Beach in St Ann's Bay, taking away more than 100 bags filled with garbage.

"The Sandals Foundation carries out beach clean-ups as part of our efforts in preserving not just our surroundings on land, but the marine ecosystem as well," said Heidi Clarke, director of programmes for the Sandals Foundation.

"We commend the Jamaica Environment Trust for the steps they're taking to raise awareness of the destructive impact that improper waste disposal has on our country. We support the Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica campaign and call for everyone to do their part in keeping our environment clean."

The Sandals Foundation team, comprising 70 volunteers from Sandals Grande Riviera, Beaches Ocho Rios and Sandals Royal Plantation, as well as members of nearby communities, came together last Friday to remove the refuse which made the Fisherman's Beach area a major eyesore. Volunteers spent the afternoon gathering debris which had flowed through the drainage system on its way to the beach.

Councillor Desmond Gilmore, mayor of St Ann's Bay, said he was happy with the large turnout of volunteers and the pride shown by members of nearby communities.

"What I have seen here today is pretty amazing," the mayor said.



Sandals team members from the Ocho Rios region, along with community members, pose with more than 100 bags of garbage collected from the Fisherman's Beach.

"The Sandals Foundation has made a step forward and demonstrated to the country and the local community what good corporate citizenship is all about. It is up to Jamaicans to stop littering our island."

Speaking on behalf of the Sandals Foundation, Lyndsay Isaacs noted: "The Sandals Foundation is committed to playing its part in support of the Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica campaign. It is not just about cleaning up garbage once it's there, it's about health and safety, continuous and proper waste disposal, and using the receptacles provided," Isaacs noted.

Michael Johnson, who journeyed to Fisherman's Beach from Steer Town to assist the Sandals Foundation team, said

he was grateful for the assistance and pledged to take back the message of the importance of garbage disposal to his community.

"The Sandals team is not just here once in a while, but they are a big part of the community. We thank them for their efforts and hope that more companies replicate what they are doing," Johnson said.

The Sandals Foundation's largest beach clean-up effort is in support of the annual International Coastal Clean-up Day, the largest one-day volunteer event in the world. In 2014, the Sandals Foundation coordinated 10 sites in Jamaica and removed close to 2,500 pounds of waste and debris.



Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (centre) discusses plans to upgrade the Old Harbour Bay Beach with Member of Parliament for South Western St Catherine, Everal Warmington (right) and Mayor of Spanish Town Councillor Norman Scott. The occasion was a tour on February 11 of Old Harbour Bay Beach and other redevelopment projects in St Catherine being funded by the Tourism Enhancement Fund.

First international tourism expo in the Caribbean

THE PUERTO Rico Tourism Company announced that ETI – Expo de Turismo Internacional, the first international tourism expo in the Caribbean, will take place at the Puerto Rico Convention Centre, May 13-16, 2015. The inaugural international tourism expo, ETI – Puerto Rico, is designed to showcase the beauty, sports, nature, adventure and gastronomic experiences available throughout the Caribbean and beyond, bringing together members of the tourism industry from across the globe.

“In planning for this event and with input from local and regional organisations such as the Caribbean Tourism Organisation and the Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association, we are confident that this event has the potential to be a mainstay on the international calendar of tourism events,” said Ingrid I. Rivera Rocafort, executive director of the Puerto Rico tourism company, organisers of ETI.

The Puerto Rico Convention Centre is the largest and most technologically advanced business conference venue in the Caribbean.

The centre is located in the heart of San Juan on the Isla Grande peninsula, near the world-renowned city of Old San Juan.

As the US travel market’s top-selling destination, “the Caribbean has long required an annual event tailored specifically to travel agents”, said Rivera.

“The fact that Puerto Rico acts as a hub for the Caribbean with air and sea access to most islands makes it an ideal location for this inaugural tourism expo,” she continued.

The four-day event will include group meetings, social and cultural events, field trips, workshops, destination trainings, keynote addresses and more, while the Exhibit Hall will be open for two days to travel trade participants and one day to consumers. ETI – Puerto Rico will feature pavilions from the Caribbean and beyond, providing tourism boards, hotels, suppliers, tour operators, airlines and others with direct access to more than 1,000 travel agents from the US, Central and South America and Europe, exposing them to new destinations and attractions.

Additional information is available at www.etipuertorico.com.

Bahamas now official home of the Swimming Pigs

THE BAHAMAS is now the official home of the Swimming Pigs. Visitors to the islands are happily embracing the unique and special experience to swim with the pigs on the uninhabited island of Big Major Cay, which is home to these special animals. The swimming pigs join the vast opportunities of aquatic activities already popular with visitors, from snorkelling with tropical fish and sea turtles, to shark and eel sightings, to scuba diving.

The family of pigs, dubbed “adorable” by tourists, locals and media, reside on Big Major Cay, located in The Exumas, a family of 360 islands, or cays, in The Bahamas. They have become incredibly popular to Bahamians and visitors alike. The pigs, though feral, are exceptionally friendly, running from under the shade of almond trees to greet tourists that bring them treats. They’ve also learnt that crews from passing yachts will dump excess food in the sea for them as well. The pigs live

freely on the sandy beaches, and after basking in the sun for hours, swim in the surf.

It is unknown how the pigs originally came to live on Big Major Cay as they aren’t native and the island itself is uninhabited. Popular lore suggests that they were dropped off by a group of sailors who wanted to come back and cook them; or that there was a nearby shipwreck and the pigs swam to safety.

FRESHWATER SPRINGS

However it was that they came to be, they are able to easily survive in part as Big Major Cay is blessed with three freshwater springs from which they are able to drink, as well as the generosity of Bahamians and tourists feeding them.

“As a region known for providing visitors with the most beautiful beaches, lavish hotels and resorts and fine dining, the islands of The Bahamas are very proud to be the official home of the Swimming Pigs,” said the director general of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Joy Jibrilu.

“Providing visitors with this once-in-a-lifetime experience by interacting with these wonderful animals is just one more thing that distinguishes The Bahamas. We’ve already introduced thousands of visitors to ‘Pig Beach’, and we look forward to welcoming thousands more in the years to come. These animals are now as intrinsic to the Bahamian experience as any other gem visitors will discover when visiting,” she concluded.

Visitors can book their trip to Big Major Cay for their opportunity to swim with the pigs through a variety of excursion vendors on the islands. Guests staying at Royal Plantation Island at Fowl Cay can take a boat directly to the island. From mainland Exuma, there are various boat excursions to satisfy every individual’s cruising desires. The three main excursion companies are Staniel Cay Area Boat Tours, Four C Adventures, and Exuma Cay Adventures. More information regarding the available excursions can be found by visiting bahamas.com.

Beaches Turks & Caicos to host World Travel Awards 2015

THE ‘OSCARs of the travel industry’, the World Travel Awards has announced Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort Villages & Spa as the host of the World Travel Awards Caribbean & North America Gala ceremony 2015.

Hundreds of industry leaders are expected to gather at the world-class resort for the event, which will take place on October 17, 2015.

Beaches Turks & Caicos is the perfect host for the ceremony, offering four magnificent villages, boasting the architecture and ambience of Italy, France, the Caribbean and Key West; a 12-mile beach lapped by clear turquoise waters, and some of the industry’s leading event facilities in the Caribbean.

Announcing the decision, World Travel Awards

president, Graham Cooke said: “I am delighted World Travel Awards will be returning to Beaches Resorts, and in particular, to Beaches Turks & Caicos. The team at the resort allowed us to host one of our most successful events ever when we last visited in 2012, and I look forward to being reunited with our friends there later in 2015.”



COOKE

Beaches Resorts is no stranger to the World Travel Awards, having been recognised as the World’s Leading All-Inclusive Family Resort Brand for the last 17 years, while parent, Sandals Resorts International, claimed the title of World’s Leading All-Inclusive Company for an unprecedented 19th time in 2014.

“It’s an honour to host the annual World Travel Awards once again,” said Gordon ‘Butch’ Stewart, chairman of Sandals Resorts International.



Cheryl Holdworth's butter products made of seeds and nuts.



Freshly picked, sweet strawberries from Fitzroy Mais' farm at Content, St Andrew.

PHOTO BY PAUL WILLIAMS

Make UJIMA natural-produce market an option

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WITH THE prevalence of lifestyle diseases that lead to death, more and more people are turning to healthier living, including ingesting food that is not processed or nourished by synthetic chemicals.

Organic or clean food is now the food of choice for many people, but finding a place where such is sold can be a challenge.

However, for Kingstonians, it is now not so challenging. For a while now, there has been the UJIMA Natural Farmers' Market, held every second and fourth Saturday at 22 Barbican Road, where under the theme, Feeding Your Mind, Body and Soul, clean food farmers from different parts of Jamaica come together to offer fresh produce, and fruit juices.

The fresh produce, including ground provisions, fruits and

vegetable, are from the fields of St Thomas farmers. The term natural is used because no manmade chemicals were used in the cultivation of the crops. In addition to foodstuff, there are naturally dyed fabric, natural ingredients for skin, hair products, costume jewellery and artwork made of seeds and other natural materials.

The market is an extension of Source Farm's One One Coco Project in which farmers go through an intensive training programme after which they apply what they have learnt in their own fields.

The farmers' market gives them an opportunity to sell their natural produce.

According to Nicola Phillips of St Thomas' Source Farm Foundation and Ecovillage, the organisers of the One One Coco project is manifold. First, there is



From left: Romario Powell, Dwight Shirley, of The Source Farm, and patron Mickeela Brown enjoying coconut chips produced by The Source Farm in St Thomas.

the matter of meeting the growing demand for clean food.

“We need more farmers growing items using less costly inputs such as fertilisers and chemicals,” she said.

“For years people who have health issues have been seeking a place where they can find clean food (fertiliser and pesticide free). The market will create a place for people to come and get access to items that sustain a healthy lifestyle,” Phillips told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Then there is food security. With more farmers, there is more food security on the island. She argued “We import over US\$1 billion worth of food items into Jamaica and only export US\$275 million according to the Ministry of Agriculture. This is not a sustainable practice, especially when we have a 12-month growing season.”

There is also the need to transfer knowledge from old to young farmers, thereby creating employment for the youth. Phillip said the project is a “great strategy for getting young people on the land doing productive work that will earn them a good livelihood. Selling directly at the market gives them a retail sale price for their items.

“If they sell it to Coronation Market, for example, they will only sell something for \$20-30 per pound, and if they sell directly to the customer, they will get the full value, which is often twice the amount. Farming in Jamaica is the only place where the farmer pays retail for their input and sell back items less than wholesale. How can we get anyone to go into farming using that unfair methodology?” Phillips asked.



Fresh vegetables and greens from Durgas Den Farm in St Ann.



Carol Miller of St Andrew demonstrates how she was going to bite into this natural-ingredient bread baked by the Bread Lady of John's Town, St Thomas.

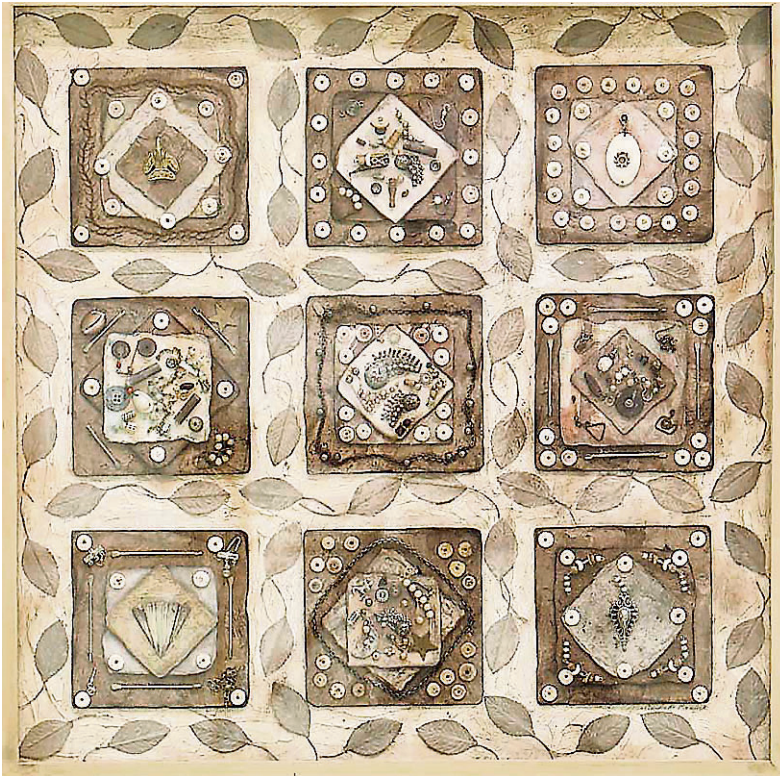


PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

A range of natural products including laundry soap and fabric softener from Cory Breniesen's Rae Studios in John's Town, St Thomas.



Julie Chin of White Hall Farm in St Thomas is a regular vendor at the UJIMA Natural Farmers' Market at 22 Barbican Road, St Andrew.



CONTRIBUTED

Annabella Proudlock's 'Out of My Closet' (2012, mixed media collage). This piece was also on view in the 2012 National Biennial.



Harmony Hall

PHOTO BY PIETER POUPEYE

National Gallery pays tribute to Annabella Proudlock

THE NATIONAL Gallery of Jamaica pays tribute to Annabella Proudlock, artist, collector, art patron and gallerist, who passed away on February 14. She was the managing director of Harmony Hall and a former board member of the National Gallery of Jamaica.

Proudlock was born in Wales and worked as a fashion model in London before she moved to Jamaica in 1966. She worked with Operation Friendship for many years, initially as a basic school teacher and later as a fundraiser who developed a line of products that included Christmas cards, notelets and calendars. The latter involved reproductions of Jamaican art and it is while working on these projects that she became closely associated with several artists, including Mallica 'Kapo' Reynolds.

She also started producing her popular Annabella Boxes –



From left: Annabella Proudlock, Barrington Watson and Joseph A. Matalon at the National Gallery in 1999.

handcrafted cedar boxes decorated with Jamaican art reproductions.

In 1980, Annabella acquired a 19th Century manse, Harmony Hall in Tower Isle, St Mary, a building that dates from 1886 and was originally the great house of a small pimento plantation and later a Methodist rectory. Together with a team of friends which included future husband, Peter Proudlock,

Graham Davis, Ben Eales and Dawn Scott, who designed the beautiful fretwork, the building was restored and Harmony Hall gallery opened its doors in 1981. Harmony Hall was declared a national monument by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust in 2003.

Harmony Hall represents a revolutionary gallery concept in the Jamaican context with its

strong focus on the self-taught intuitive artists, its active involvement in craft development and its engagement of tourist and local art audiences. The annual Harmony Hall intuitives and craft fairs that were held at different times of the year were, and still are, much-anticipated events on the local art calendar. These initiatives were spearheaded by Annabella, who worked closely with the artists and craft producers to develop and promote their work and to unearth new talent. She received a Silver Musgrave Medal in 1992 for her 'Outstanding Contribution to Craft Production'.

ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST

Annabella was also an accomplished artist best known for her shell collages. She had a solo exhibition of her work at Bolivar Gallery in 2013 and regularly exhibited in the National Gallery of Jamaica's Biennial exhibition, most recently in 2012.

Veerle Poupeye, the National

Gallery's executive director, remembers Annabella as "an impeccably generous person with a strong moral centre and a wonderful sense of humour and a consummate professional who made a very tangible contribution to the development and promotion of art and craft in Jamaica".

She added: "Annabella was one of the National Gallery's longest serving board members and always provided sound technical and policy advice. She was one of the Gallery's most committed and enthusiastic supporters, and we are very touched that she joined us for the opening of the 2014 Jamaica Biennial, at a time when she was already quite ill. It was a true privilege to have known her and to have worked with her."

The board and staff of the National Gallery of Jamaica extend their deepest sympathies to Annabella's husband, Peter Proudlock, her children, Sebastian and Jessica Ogden, and her many friends.