

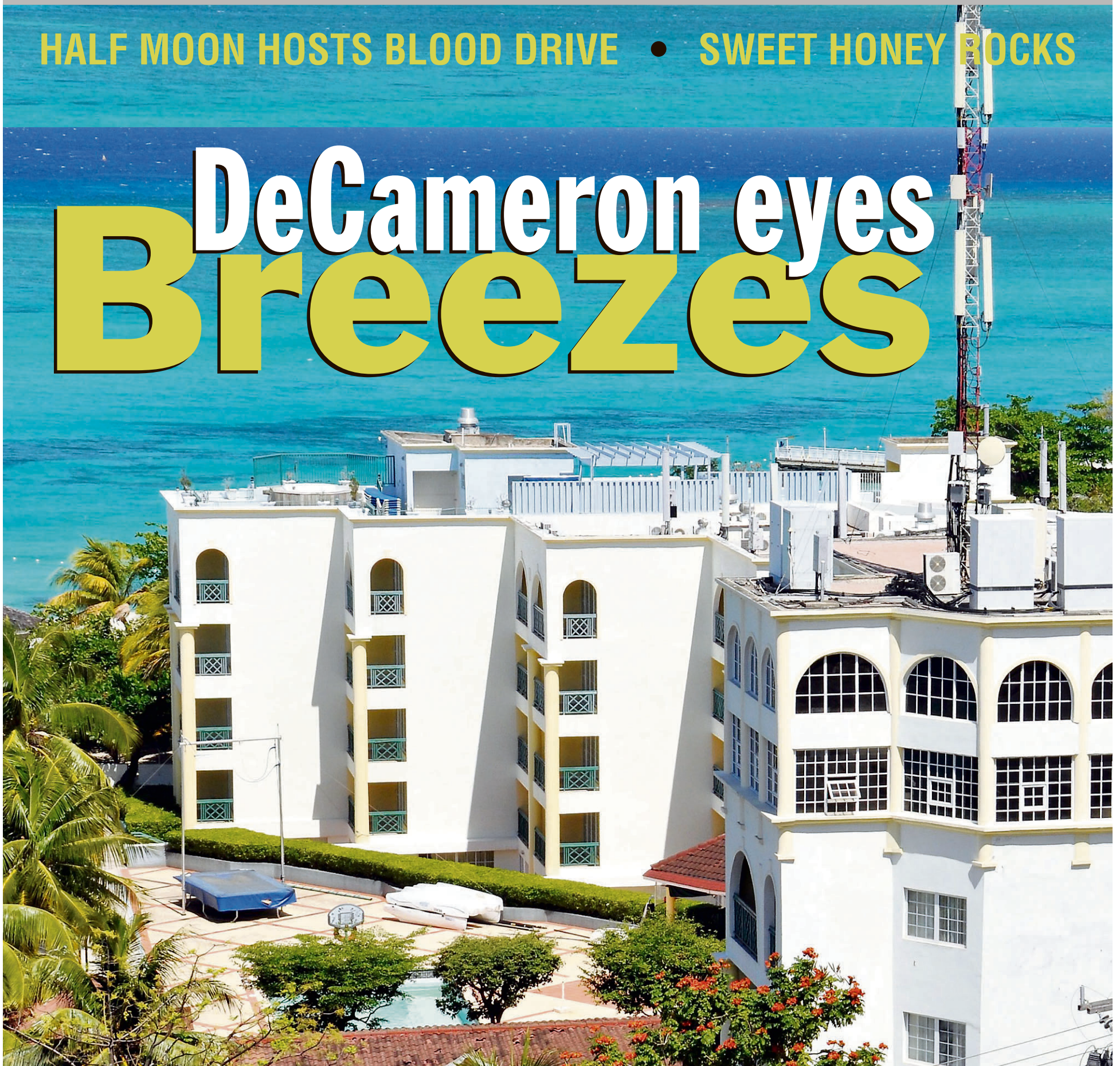
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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

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DeCameron eyes Breezes



THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Privileged access at a price – is this morally right?

By David Jessop

AT ALMOST every industry seminar, experts from marketing and social media companies make clear that travellers, especially in valuable higher spending demographic categories, are seeking the authentic and an experience when they travel.

However, a relatively new allied global development in tourism is starting to attract criticism and raising questions about whether visitors should be able to take this further by buying unique experiences in places and buildings of historic significance.

What has been happening is that wealthy travellers are not just seeking the authentic sense of where they are visiting, but rather, as a part of their vacation, they are intent also on acquiring knowledge and having a unique experience

that only they and their companions can ever share.

With this in mind, a small number of specialist tour operators have been negotiating with the owners of private houses, historic sites and governments for special arrangements that enable very small numbers of visitors – sometimes just individuals – to enter areas usually closed to the public or which can only be seen from a distance.

Thus, at the Alhambra Palace in Granada in Spain, it is now possible for a privileged few to visit at night when the majority of tourists have departed. In Egypt, too, a small number of privileged and invariably wealthy visitors accompanied by leading Egyptologists can see areas within the Great Pyramids, which

are still being explored and excavated. A similar situation exists in other great cities in parts of Venice, and even it seems so at the Vatican.



JESSOP

What is happening is that historic places that are closed are now being opened to a small and very select few following often complex negotiations. This often involves lengthy periods of discussion with government or the responsible authorities to enable, for instance, the private viewings of artworks not on public show in some of the world's greatest galleries and museums, such as the Hermitage in St Petersburg, Russia.

According to reports, it does not end there. The Chinese authorities are giving consideration to allowing small numbers of visitors to stand

in a closed area on the floor alongside the terracotta warriors.

A further related development involves visitors being offered as part of their tour a personal introduction to a political figure or being entertained to dinner by an important international figure, such as the former leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, leading British or US politicians, or the world's leading academic experts on a particular subject.

RETIRES BECOMING GUIDES

Another such approach involves retired political figures and former ambassadors becoming guides to small numbers of visitors on tours in, for instance, Russia, China and Cuba. This involves the individual concerned not just giving a series of talks during the tour, but also being available for what one brochure

describes as “more informal conversations along the way”.

No doubt, this is good business, but it seems to suggest that close access and encounters with culture, history and even retired political leaders may soon only be available at a price to the privileged elite. It offers, too, potentially, the spectacle of political leaders being willing to discuss issues in private that have never been explained fully to electorates.

Privileged access at a price brings other potential dilemmas relating to equity that are rarely, if ever, considered by governments or the industry. That is whether it is philosophically, politically or even morally right to allow very wealthy individuals to have access for a fee to locations or individuals that others might only ever see on television or dream about meeting.

So far, this approach is hardly known in the Caribbean, where the possibilities are admittedly fewer, but it has interesting and thought-provoking implications for any Caribbean destination that might seek to broaden what it has to offer to visitors.



Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (third right) shares lens time with the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) European representatives at the Jamaican Embassy in Berlin, Germany, ahead of a meeting on Tuesday, March 3, to get updates on European source markets. Pictured (from left) are: JTB representative for the Netherlands, Hans van Wamel; JTB representative for Italy, Brian Hammond; JTB's German marketing representative, Cristian Meuter; representative of the Jamaican Embassy in Berlin, Chevannes Barragan de Luyz; director of tourism, Paul Pennicook; JTB's director of Continental Europe, Gregory Shervington; and JTB representative for Spain and Portugal, Marc Meister. McNeill and Pennicook were in Germany to attend ITB Berlin, the world's leading international travel trade show, held from March 4-8. More than 10,000 exhibitors from around 190 countries and regions, including Jamaica, presented their innovative products and services to the more than 110,000 trade visitors who attended the five-day event.

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

HOSPITALITY JAMAICA has been reliably informed that Dominican Republic hotel operator, DeCameron, is eyeing the former SuperClubs Breezes resort, which has been closed for the last five years.

The 124-room resort, which is owned by the National Investment Fund (NIF) and the National Commercial Bank Pension Fund, forms part of a series of investments DeCameron plans for the ailing Gloucester Avenue Hip Strip.

Sources close to the deal said DeCameron will be forced to pump US\$2 million into refurbishing the property which is being sold for approximately US\$6.5 million by the NIF. The money to complete the refurbishing is expected to be taken from the asking price.

DeCameron has plans to construct an additional 150 rooms to its existing 266-room Montego Bay property on lands located at the popular Cornwall Beach (old Jamaica Tourist Board lands), which it has already taken over. The acquisition of Breezes would see it owning more than 600 rooms on the Hip Strip.

The news comes at a time when the St James Parish Development Committee (PDC) sounded a call to action for life to be returned to the strip, which was once the lifeblood of several businesses.

Although the PDC called for more European Plan hotels, this will not be the case for Breezes, which operated as an all-inclusive resort for 14 years. All the DeCameron properties in Jamaica are run as all-inclusive.

PLAN OF ACTION

At one of its quarterly meetings in 2014, PDC chairman Gerard Mitchell called on Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill to use his offices to initiate discussion with all the stakeholders on Gloucester Avenue with a view of putting in place a short-, medium- and long-term plan of action to restore this important centrepiece of the tourism product.

“The PDC notes with concern the number of closed properties on Gloucester Avenue and the dilapidated structures that mock this once proud Mecca of Montego Bay tourism,” said Mitchell in his appeal, noting that his board, in its drive to generate more jobs and economic growth in the parish, was urging the minister to do what is necessary to have these properties open for business.

“Of immediate concern is the

DeCameron eyes Breezes



Fantasy Resort

PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA



The Hip Strip along Gloucester Avenue in Montego Bay, St James.



Gerard Mitchell

closed Breezes Resort, of which Government has majority shares through the NIF,” said the PDC.

The other hotels the St James PDC stated remained closed were the Fantasy Resort, 119 rooms; Vista Ambassador, 100 rooms; Casa Blanca, 49 rooms; Coral Cliff, 22 rooms; and the Montego Bay Beach Resort, which is located at the airport roundabout, 57 rooms.

According to the PDC chairman, the time has passed for talk, and that action is needed now to bring back more than 400 rooms along this corridor. He highlighted the benefits of having the hotels reopened.

“Five hundred to 1,500 jobs would be generated both directly and indirectly; revenue to the city; the Government would also benefit from the reopening with the application of a variety of taxes such as GCT and room tax; an estimated 800 additional guests would find rooms on the Hip Strip and patronise the local restaurants, clubs, bars and beaches, as well as the Harbour Street and Old Fort craft markets. More visitors waters down the harassment opportunities ... less visitors increases harassment,” he said.

He also pointed out that this would also increase general safety of the area and the real estate value for all properties along and behind the Hip Strip.

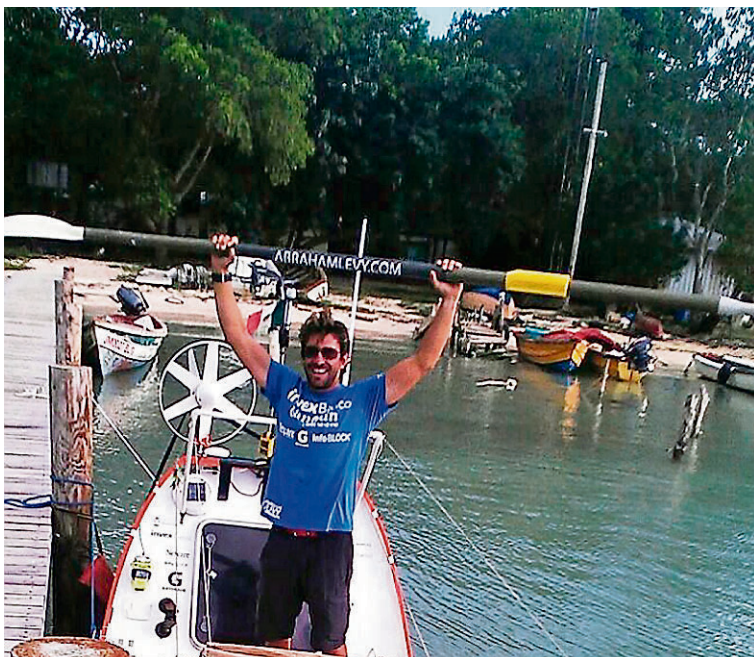
Checks made by **Hospitality Jamaica** revealed that plans are far ahead to revitalise Fantasy Resort as well, with hotelier Tricia-Ann Bicarie at the helm of the proposed renewal.

Bicarie’s father, Dennis Morgan, owns the Fantasy, and with the job she has done with bringing his Sea Gardens resort back into the spotlight, he has handed her the Fantasy project.

Another resort on the strip is back on the market – the recently refurbished Gloucestershire Hotel is also being sold at an asking price of US\$6.25 million, executors for the late hotelier John Sinclair told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

FILE

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Abraham showing off his paddle.



Abraham in his boat at Belmont in Westmoreland.

Fate brought me to Jamaica – Abraham Levy

Karrie Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WHEN MEXICAN adventurer Abraham Levy departed Spain for Mexico in his row boat; a stopover in Jamaica was not a part of his plans, but as fate would have it, strong winds propelled him to the shores of Belmont in Westmoreland, where he spent two days basking in the warm hospitality.

"I didn't plan to stop in Jamaica, but the winds were pushing me strongly from the south to the mainland, so I decided it was a good idea to stop, and I am glad I did. I have been welcomed with open arms by the people, and I have also gotten an opportunity to learn about Jamaica's marine conservation efforts, which I plan to offer my assistance with in the near future," Levy told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Levy, who started his expedition last November, is on a mission to become the first person to row across the Atlantic Ocean from the port of Palos de la Frontera in Huelva to Mexico. He is scheduled to arrive in

his homeland no later than the third week of March. While most persons would be fearful to undertake such an adventure, Levy said he is intrinsically motivated and strongly believes in following his dreams.

"My biggest fear from all of this is leaving my dreams for tomorrow as we don't know if we are going to be here tomorrow, so we have to live our dreams today," he said.

"I am happy I am able to experience this. There is a world of possibilities out there and many opportunities to live your dreams. I spent six years looking for sponsorship and to find a way to make it happen, so for me, my biggest satisfaction is to do the things I love to do."

WORST-CASE SCENARIO

Levy confessed that his worst-case scenario would be to fall from his boat, the *Cascarita*, and lose it to the ocean. But he admits to taking precautionary measures to prevent this from happening.

"I row all the time with a rope around my ankle and I do all security stuff possible to remain safe," he said.

Levy maintains his energy levels

at sea by consuming freeze-dried food, which he hydrates with desalinated seawater. Though he declares to having at least six months' supply of food remaining on his boat, he was very happy for the change in diet that came with his two-day stay in Belmont. He ate most of his meals at Dor's Crab Shak, dining on a variety of seafood dishes.

Levy's boat is equipped with solar panels, which he uses to generate electricity. It also comes with a gas stove and two mini desalination plants, which he uses to convert seawater into fresh drinking water. He has access to both voice and data communication technology, enabling him to stay in touch with friends and family.

To date, the daredevil has experienced only one major catastrophe throughout his journey.

"There was a major storm during the week of Christmas that prevented me from rowing for that entire week, so I stayed all that time in my cabin. It is watertight, so I wasn't fearful of any water coming in, and in the event that I



Abraham Levy (left) and Frederick Brenner of Dor's Crab Shak.

had capsized, the boat is built to automatically upright itself again, so I basically just rested and waited out the storm," he said.

Cancun Caribe Mexicano, Invex Banco and Gatorade are some of the primary sponsors allowing Levy to fulfil his dream. Though not yet

decided on his next big adventure, he told **Hospitality Jamaica** that it will have something to do with the ocean.

"I love challenges, I love to be in nature, and I love the ocean, so whatever I do next will have something to do with the ocean," he said.

Customer experience management

a must for local tourism

AVAYA ICT expert Dennis Mullert reckons that the survival of Jamaica's tourism sector depends on its use of more effective customer experience management tools.

"Even while Jamaica is a small island, there's a lot of business here when it comes to tourism," said Mullert, engagement solutions practice leader at Avaya.

"However, studies have shown that no matter how beautiful the beaches and the sunshine, if today's customers are not able to connect to high-speed Wi-Fi when they get on the property and communicate just as easily, it's unlikely that they will return."

Deryk Meany, resident manager at the Secrets Resorts and Spa in Montego Bay, attested that since implementing a smart Wi-Fi solution on their property using fibre from Digicel Business, their customer experience ratings have increased significantly.

"At Secrets, our smart Wi-Fi solution coupled with our smartphone application have helped to increase customer satisfaction tremendously – up to 80 per cent," Meany said.

"As soon as they arrive on property, they can connect to high-speed Internet and do just about everything from their smartphones, from booking spa appointments and tours, to making free international calls to their family and friends abroad."

Meany also added that the success of these technologies in enhancing the experience for the guests has encouraged them to implement even more customer experience management technologies across their properties.

Speaking at the Digicel Business/Avaya Power of We Seminar held at the Secrets Resorts on Tuesday, March 3, Mullert noted that for local businesses in the hospitality and BPO sectors especially,



Deryk Meany



Digicel's Jason Corrigan

improvement of their customer engagement systems could improve their ability to compete globally while increasing their customer lifetime value by eight to 10 per cent.

"Seventy per cent of customers worldwide expect unique treatment and tailored offers from the organisations they communicate with," Mullert said. "The modern consumer wants to be able to communicate with businesses in any way they choose, so whether they prefer to text, have a web chat, video chat or talk on the

phone, businesses must have the necessary means in place to facilitate this."

Mullert therefore urged the hospitality and tourism sector to get to the point where the customers can integrate their smartphones into their entire vacation experience.

"In the past, voice communication was the primary method of interaction between businesses and their customers," said Mullert.

"Today's customers want to communicate from whatever device they are using, whether this is a smartphone or a tablet. They don't want to be tied to one method."

Echoing Mullert's sentiments, general manager of Digicel Business, Jason Corrigan, said, "We have seen where the benefits of an effective customer experience management system can positively impact businesses, so from increasing profit and improving efficiency, to building stronger customer retention and relationships, businesses need to start investing in proper collaboration tools."

Corrigan added, "As an Avaya Platinum partner, Digicel Business can give local companies access to all the products and services they need to make this a reality. And that's why we are hosting this seminar in Jamaica's tourism Mecca; we want all our customers to know how important this is and make it easy for them to get access to it."



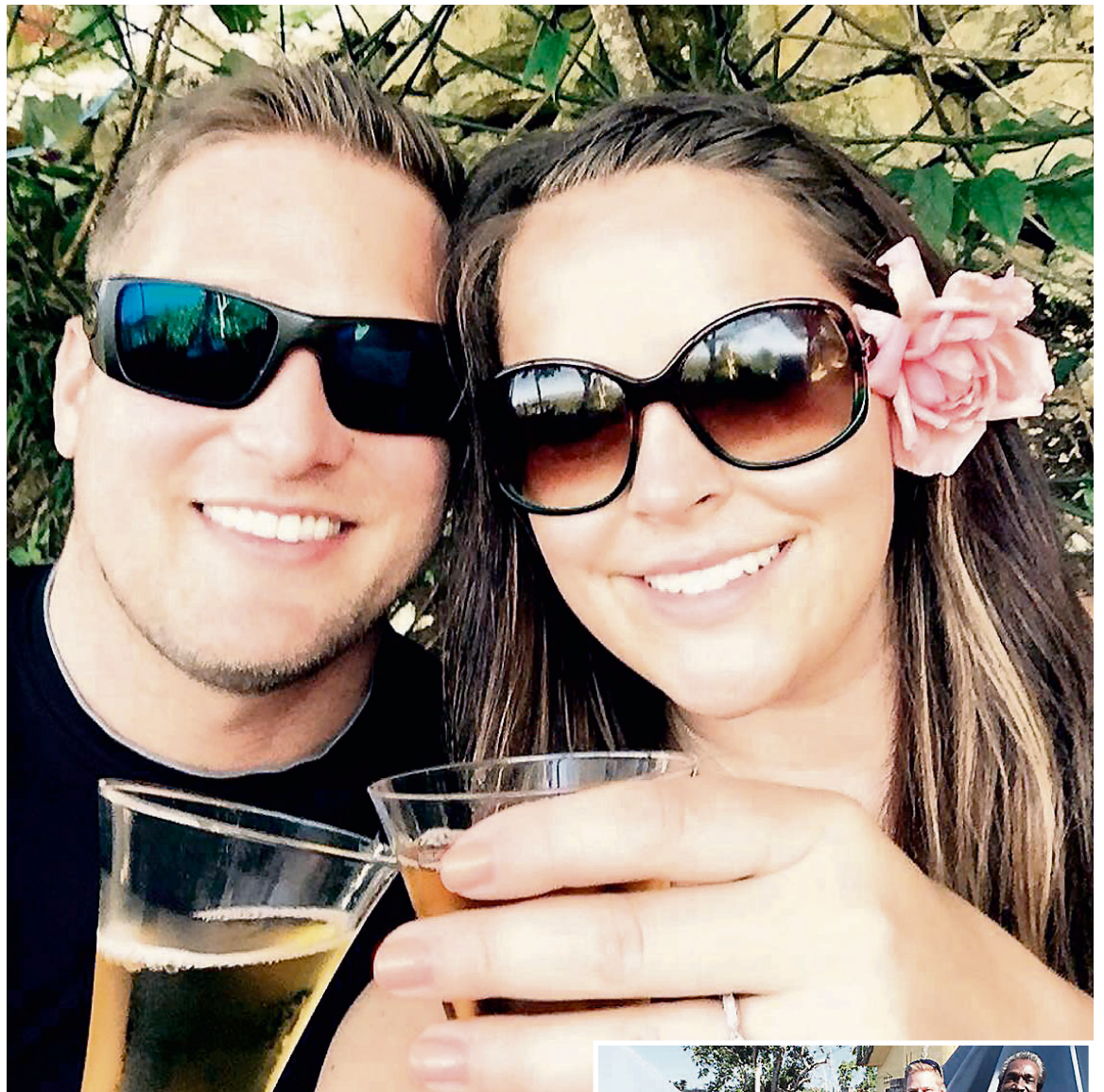


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Ahhh...s first wedding proposal



Ryan St Martin and his fiancée Tara Martin at Ahhh...



Ryan St Martin and Tara Martin relaxing at Ahhh...

AHHH... RAS Natango's popularity on Trip Advisor has not waned, and the more renowned the St James attraction becomes, the more allure it offers visitors to the island.

Last Tuesday will forever remain with the owners of the attraction, Tamika and Ian Williams, when Ryan St Martin proposed to his soul mate, Tara Martin in lush Ahhh... gardens.

"Before arriving in Jamaica, Ryan requested a special place that he could use to make his proposal, so we recommended the gardens," said Tamika, who noted that St Martin mentioned the number of reviews he saw on the popular Trip Advisor site.

"Tara thought she was on a regular tour, so with our other guests in tow, we led them through the garden. The proposal area was decorated and in order not to give it away, I explained that we sometimes left decorations up after a wedding," said Williams.

She said as the couple walked through the pergola, the other guests stayed behind as they realised what was about to happen.

"At that moment, I got a bit scared. What if she said no. It would spoil the day for everyone. She sat in the waiting chair and when he knelt before her, she realised it was happening and just started crying. Finally, through sobs, she shook her head then mouthed 'yes!' The other couples had tears running down their eyes."



Ayale Williams (left); his mom Tamika Williams (second left) and father Ian (right); share lens time with Tara Martin (centre) and Ryan St Martin at their Ahhh... Ras Natango art gallery and gardens in Camrose, St James.

Williams described the moment as magical.

The couple was toasted with champagne and served an authentic Jamaican meal of fish, chicken, green bananas and dumplings.

Before leaving Ahhh..., Martin painted an orchid from the garden on a canvas, which she took away as a creative token of a most memorable day.

Ahhh..., located in Camrose, St James, has had a destination wedding, anniversary celebrations, vow renewals, and now, its first wedding proposal. **Hospitality Jamaica** brings you highlights of the proposal.

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St Thomas resident Dorette Abrahams honouring the 437 martyrs of the 1865 Morant Bay Uprising prior to the start of the 2013 Paul Bogle Lecture.



A monument marking the spot where 14 skeletons were found in two trenches behind Fort Morant, St Thomas, 1965. The remains are said to be those of some of the martyrs of the 1865 Morant Bay Uprising.



Ainsley Henriques, chairman of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

The name of 1865 Morant Bay Uprising martyrs will be affixed to a wall at Fort Morant in St Thomas.

PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

Left: The statue of National Hero Paul Bogle in the courtyard at the Jamaica National Heritage Trust at 79 Duke Street, Kingston. It will be remounted soon in front of the restored courthouse in Morant Bay, St Thomas.

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

IN 1865, one of the casualties of the Morant Bay Uprising was the courthouse, so, too, was now National Hero Paul Bogle, for whom a statue was mounted in front of the restored historic building in 1965.

But there was to be more fire. In the early morning of February 19, 2007, the restored building was razed, apparently from fire started by vagrants. Paul Bogle's statue was severely destroyed, and after much controversy, it was removed for repairs.

However, the fuss over the courthouse and the statue has been going on ever since. Citizens of the parish have been

calling for its restoration and the remounting of the statue, which itself is mired in controversy. Some people claim it is not Paul Bogle's likeness in which it was created, but that of man named Baggan, also from Stony Gut.

The intensity of the controversy is expected to be abated or increased soon, as the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), with assistance from the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), is to restore the building and remount the repaired statue.

According to Ainsley Henriques, chairman of the JNHT, the long-awaited restoration is at three levels: permission had to be obtained from the owner of the property, in this case, the parish council; seeking funding to pay for the professional restorative work; and the restoration itself. The work will go out to tender by the end of this month, it is hoped.

As for the funding, it is expected to come from private and public sector interests, including the TEF. Getting the funding for restoration is important because, according to Henriques, "It is one of the more important building icons of the Jamaican heritage and history, it represents the sacrifice of the martyrs ... to give the St Thomas people ... a sense of self-worth, so it

has a major psychological impact on the parish. You cannot live with a ruin in your midst."

In addition to the courthouse, there will be a museum/interpretative centre.

"We are about to start the research, so we look forward to all the assistance in getting the information so that we can make the interpretative centre not a museum where you look at artefacts, but to understand the roles the ancestors play in developing the parish," Henriques said.

RESPECTING THE SQUARE

"And it's not just the courthouse that we want to make sure is properly maintained, we also want to make sure that the tomb area, as well as the cenotaph, is all part of the Paul Bogle Square, giving respect to Paul Bogle as the national hero from St Thomas." The other martyrs will also be recognised.

A plan to inscribe their names on a wall of the fort is under consideration. There is already a tomb holding the remains of 14 skeletons that were found in two trenches near the fort in 1965. They are said to belong to some of the 437 martyrs of the 1865 Morant Bay Uprising. A monument in honour of Paul Bogle, George William Gordon and the other martyrs is also nearby.

As it relates to the likeness of the statue, it is accepted that it is not in fact Paul Bogle's features that Edna Manley captured. Henriques, though admitting that Baggan was the man whom the statue was modelled after, is defending its remounting nonetheless.

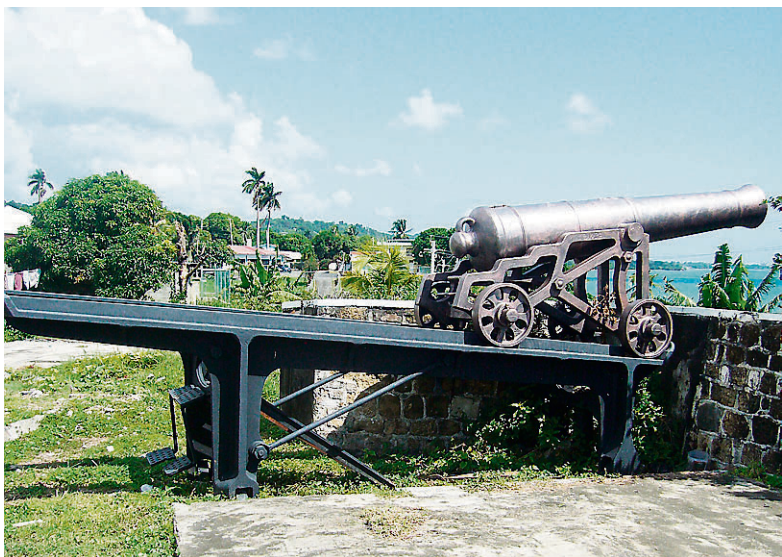
"The statue was an impressionist statue by Edna Manley to show the strength of Paul Bogle and his commitment, which is why it looks like a cross," Henriques told **Hospitality Jamaica**. He claimed the statue was created before the picture of Paul Bogle surfaced.

So, the picture of the man who is generally regarded as Paul Bogle is also a point of debate. Henriques said it is rumoured that the man in the photograph is an African-American man "of some substance and quality". But, like it or not, the statue will be remounted in front of the courthouse when it is restored and not before.

"I cannot tell you that I can sit here and see that the quality of the interpretation of Paul Bogle's strength as a martyr for social justice that Edna Manley created should be relegated to somewhere else ... Edna Manley's interpretation of Paul Bogle's strength, his commitment, his sacrifice is embodied in Edna Manley's statue of Paul Bogle," Henriques told **Hospitality Jamaica**.



The courtyard at the back of the Morant Bay courthouse ruins.



One of the cannons at Fort Morant in Morant Bay, St Thomas.



The ruins of the Morant Bay courthouse in St Thomas.



Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook (right) is happy to host Max Jacob (second right), TUI's product manager for the Caribbean, in the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) booth at the recently held ITB Berlin 2015 in Germany. Pennicook is joined by Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (left) and the JTB's regional director for continental Europe, Gregory Shervington. TUI is the world's number-one integrated leisure tourism group and Germany's largest tour operator.

McNeill, Pennicook attend leading travel trade show in Berlin

MINISTER OF Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill and Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook were in Germany and participated in the world's leading international travel trade show, ITB Berlin, which was held from Wednesday, March 4 to Sunday, March 8.

ITB Berlin, considered the largest travel trade show in the world, is a key business-to-business platform for tourism industry partners to network, negotiate and do business. More than 10,000

exhibitors from approximately 190 countries exhibited their innovative products and services to the more than 110,000 trade visitors who attended the five-day event.

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) mounted an interactive booth at the event in Berlin, along with 17 co-exhibitors, to showcase the island's flagship resorts and attractions to buyers from Germany and throughout Europe. The JTB's regional director for continental Europe, Gregory Shervington, was also in attendance to market the destination.



Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (right) shares a moment with the Jamaica Tourist Board co-exhibitors at ITB Berlin 2015. From left are: Mystic Mountain Ltd and Mystic Ridge Resort's Marsha Mattos, Round Hill Hotel & Villas' Josef Forstmayr, Jamaica Tours' Noel Sloley Jr, and Sea Garden Beach Resort's Tricia-Ann Bicarie.

JAMAICA

TOURIST BOARD



The Jamaica Tourist Board's booth showcases the destination's resorts and attractions. The booth served as a meeting place for the island's tourism partners to network and engage in business consultations with members of the international travel trade during ITB Berlin 2015 in Germany.



Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (left) meets with the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) European representatives at the Jamaican Embassy in Berlin, Germany, on Tuesday, March 3, for updates on European source markets. Also pictured from left are: Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook; JTB's regional director for continental Europe, Gregory Shervington; JTB's representative for Italy, Brian Hammond; the JTB's representative for Spain and Portugal, Marc Meister; and the JTB's representative for the Netherlands, Hans van Wamel (foreground). More than 12 per cent of Jamaica's stopover arrivals are from the UK and Europe.



BARBADOS' TOURISM sector has begun to show signs of growth. In 2014, long-stay visitor arrivals increased for the first time in two years by 2.2 per cent to 519,638 visitors, compared to the previous year.

Chairman of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc (BTMI), Alvin Jemmott, explained that while there was still some way to go to restore all of the market share lost during the past few years, it was encouraging news for the destination.

"This is admirable considering that our destination is one of the more mature holiday spots in the region, with a very high repeat visitor rate. It also comes against the background that there was a projection of a four per cent decline in

arrivals for the year back in December 2013."

Tourism is still the best hope for Barbados' economic recovery, as it generates some 12 per cent of the island's foreign exchange earnings, which are estimated at \$4 billion.

There was also a record-breaking number of arrivals in December 2014 when Barbados welcomed 56,132 long-stay visitors, the highest on record in any given month since the April 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE

BTMI CEO William Griffith explained that the growth in arrivals was due largely to marked economic recovery and growing consumer confidence in the United Kingdom. Barbados' UK arrivals

grew by 11 per cent in 2014 to reach 186,858 visitors or 37 per cent of Barbados' total arrivals.

In the United States market, he revealed that visitor arrivals declined by two per cent in 2014. Thus far, the BTMI has been able to replace 82 per cent of the 55,702 seats lost after the withdrawal of the American Airlines service out of JFK. In addition, December was a record month for the US market, with 14,460 arrivals, the third-highest number of December arrivals from the USA to date.

The Canadian market, which was predicted to finish at eight per cent below the 2013 performance, was down by two per cent at the end of 2014.

The Caribbean market experi-

enced a 10 per cent decline in seats via regional carrier LIAT; diminished spending power among potential visitors; and high airfares, which Griffith argued "placed regional travel in an uncompetitive position in some instances, when compared to the cost of international travel." Overall, the CARICOM market registered a decline of 9.9 per cent in arrivals.

EUROPEAN DOMINANCE

Of note, the European market continued to maintain double-digit growth in 2014. Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium were up 15 per cent, 17 per cent and seven per cent respectively. Italy was also up 13 per cent over 2013. Similarly, arrivals out of Brazil were up by 18 per cent.

The cruise tourism sector registered a two per cent decline in arrivals to reach 557,898 arrivals, and home porting activity was five per cent below the previous year due to a decrease in calls across various lines. However, we welcomed 395 cruise ships, an increase of 21 vessels when compared to 2013. There were 1,164 more cruise stay visitors than in the previous year, with the majority choosing to stay 7-10 days.

2015 PREDICTED AS 'YEAR OF GROWTH'

Building on the successful growth of the previous year, Barbados' tourism arrivals are projected to increase by five per cent in 2015.

Also for the year, the island has recorded strong levels of visitor arrivals with preliminary figures showing January 2015 being the highest on record for the past 15 years with 56,132 arrivals. The USA grew by 14 per cent to 10,810, the highest on record since 2001. The UK increased by 15 per cent or 2,790 more visitors to a total of 21,355 visitors and Canada made a significant jump of 27 percentage points to reach 10,578 visitors.

To ensure that this growth is sustained in 2015, the BTMI will be combining a new digital marketing strategy and a deeper reliance on research with a new nimble business structure and several collaborative marketing programmes reach their targets.

A new programme dubbed Brilliant Barbados has been designed "to drive incremental business in the traditionally softer period of the year", Griffith said.

"The battle for growth and sustainability for visitor arrivals will not be won solely by winter performances. It requires greater effort and more targeted marketing activity in the summer and fall months," he added.

Tourism security conference for Curaçao

TOURISM SAFETY and security are imperative when providing quality in tourism. More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a favourite destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors.

It is an undeniable fact that safety and security issues in the tourism industry gained a much bigger importance in the last couple of years.

Because of this particular reason, the Curaçao Tourist Board, in cooperation with Tourism and More Inc, will host the Caribbean International Tourism Safety &

Security Conference 2015, which will be taking place from June 24-26 at the Curaçao World Trade Center.

The main goal of the Caribbean International Tourism Safety & Security Conference is for every delegate to gain knowledge through the sharing of experiences and to enhance the awareness about tourism safety and security in the Caribbean. It also provides a unique opportunity to meet with hundreds of safety and security professionals from all around the world. On June 24, the Caribbean International Tourism Safety & Security Conference will start with a seminar

for local stakeholders. The seminar will be conducted as an interactive discussion on the 'TOPPs' (Tourism Oriented Policing & Protection Services).

INFORMATION SESSION

On June 25 and 26, both the public and private sector will come together for insightful information sessions related to safety and security in the Caribbean region. Topics that will be addressed during the conference are: The State of Tourism in the Caribbean region, Passenger Experience, Festival Security, Tourism Police, Cruise Security, Food &

Safety Security, Media Crises, Issues of Law and Tourism and Human Trafficking.

The Caribbean International Tourism Safety & Security Conference will provide all delegates with new information and the best practices for a safer Caribbean region. The fact remains that the Caribbean region is considered by many as their dream destination, and therefore, it is important to ensure a safe feeling. Curaçao would like to invite you to be part of the Caribbean International Tourism Safety & Security Conference. For more information and online registration, please visit www.curaçao.com/ssc/.

Half Moon hosts **BLOOD DRIVE**



Karrie Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE HALF Moon resort in Montego Bay recently boosted its corporate social responsibility efforts, hosting a blood donation drive, with several staff members participating in the life-saving initiative.

The all-day event was staged last Thursday at the resort's Montego Room and was facilitated by medical personnel from the National Blood Transfusion Service and the Cornwall Regional Hospital in St James. The blood drive was hosted as part of the Half Moon Foundation's continuous efforts to give back to the community.

"The Half Moon Foundation has always been embarking on initiatives geared at giving back to our communities," said Diandra Shand, the resort's marketing manager. "We have the Pack for Purpose and the Two Dollars A Day programmes that are presently ongoing, but what better way to give back than to give blood? We see so many accidents happening on our roads and there are so many persons in need of blood ... so donating to the blood bank is our way of helping out our fellow citizens, and this is something that we want to do again in the very near future."

A total of 46 employees participated in the drive. Of that number, 11 participants were found to be ineligible to give blood, resulting in 35 units of blood collected. An additional three units of blood was contributed by representatives of the Jamaica Tourist Board who were in attendance at the event, bringing the day's overall total to 38 units.

Shernette Crichton, Half Moon's director of operations, led the charge by being among the first set of staff members to donate.

"It saves lives, and we do our best to offer support, not just within our own environment, but also out-

side, and we feel that an initiative such as this is very important because it's giving back in a different way. We are always proud to give back to our communities because we depend on these communities to support our business," Crichton told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

While the majority of the staff who participated seemed happy in making their contribution to the Blood Bank, there were a few others who were simply terrified of the experience.

"This is my second time giving blood, and I still find the experience scary, but I know that this is important in saving the lives of so many persons. I have had friends and family who were in situations where they needed blood and there wasn't any available, so I'm glad I did this, and I will do it again," said Arlien Dyer, travel industry sales manager.

Shand, who organised the event, said she was extremely pleased by the courage of her colleagues in supporting the worthy cause.

"I am extremely satisfied with the level of participation today as some of us hate needles, but I'm just proud that persons are brave enough to come out and give blood," she said.

Anyone between the ages of 17 to 65 is eligible to give blood providing that a body weight of at least 110 pounds is maintained. However, there are a number of conditions that make some persons ineligible to donate blood.

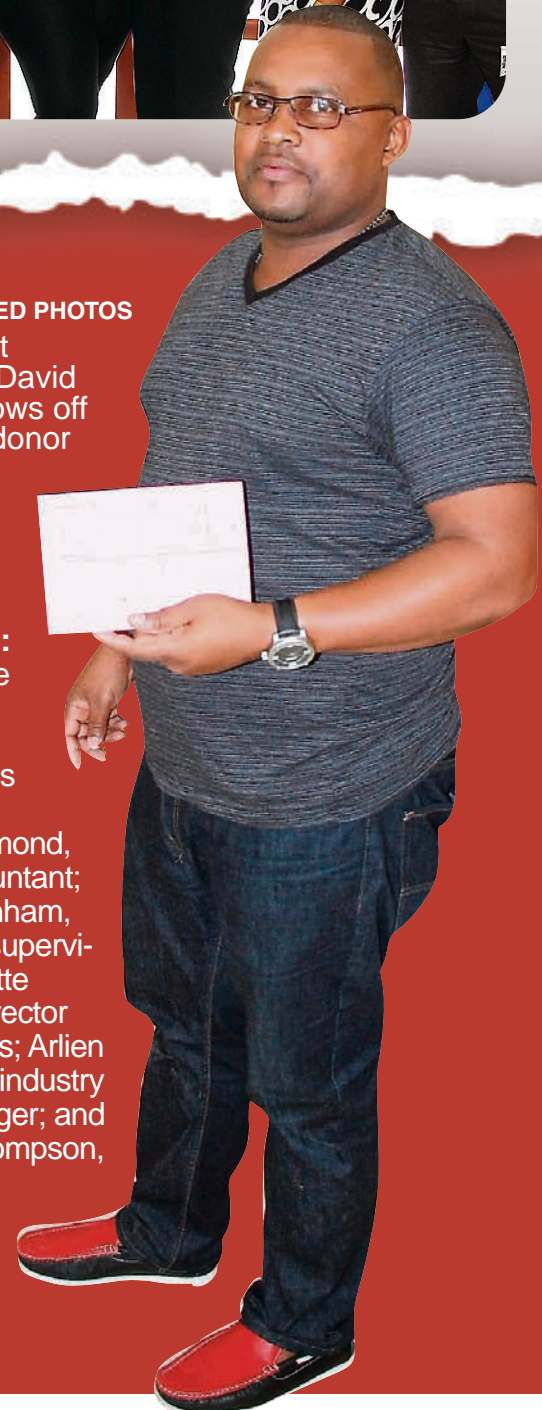
"Most persons can give blood, but there are a few issues that would restrict some individuals. If you're having a cold or flu or suffering from any chronic illnesses or any temporarily illness, that means you might not be able to give ... persons with tattoos and piercings can donate after a year has passed, as then, the period would have passed for infections to arise and be treated," said Odean Black, blood donor organiser at the Blood Bank.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Restaurant manager, David Leslie, shows off his blood donor card.

ABOVE:

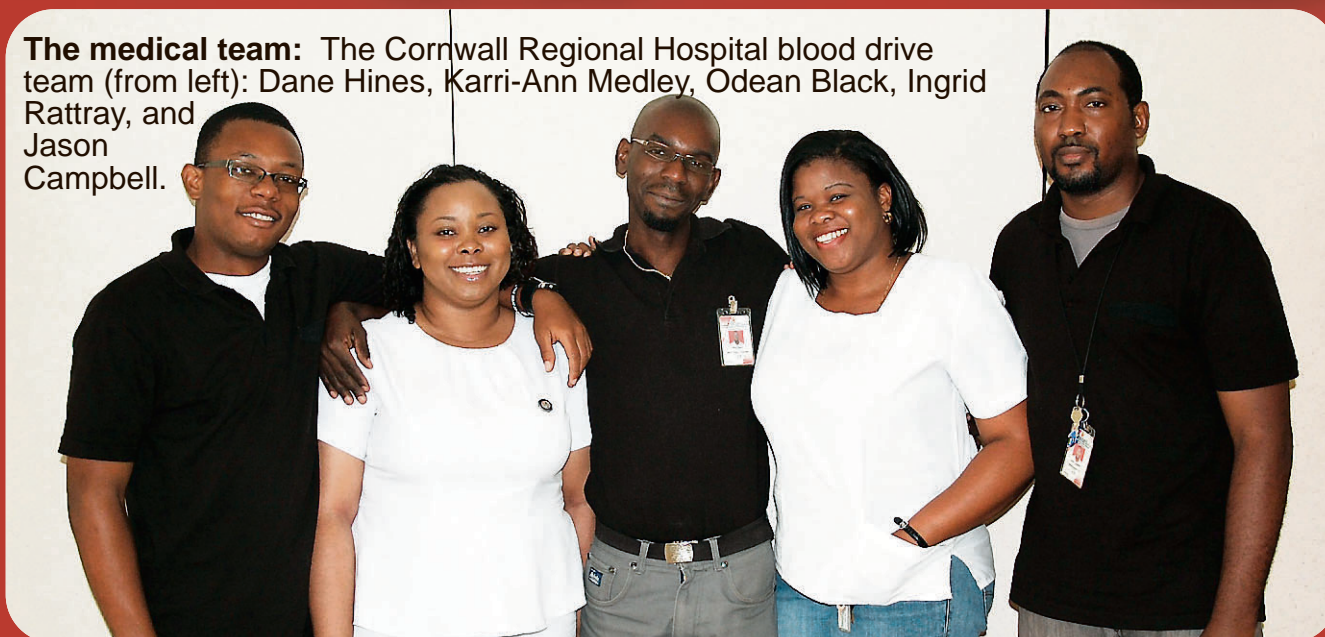
The Half Moon team: From left are Tashane Castillo-Barath, sales coordinator; Opal Drummond, group accountant; Jaculine Dinham, front office supervisor; Shernette Crichton, director of operations; Arlien Dyer, travel industry sales manager; and Damion Thompson, group sales manager.





Giorgio Rusconi, director of food and beverage, doing his Brownie duty by donating blood.

The medical team: The Cornwall Regional Hospital blood drive team (from left): Dane Hines, Karri-Ann Medley, Odean Black, Ingrid Rattray, and Jason Campbell.



Jacqueline Dinham, front office supervisor, is attended to by phlebotomist Jason Campbell.



Odean Black (left), blood donor organiser, assures Damion Thompson, group sales manager at Half Moon, that there is nothing to fear.



Hotel manager Shernette Crichton enjoys a sweet after making her donation.



Registered Nurse Karri-Ann Medley (left) performs a pressure check on Ruthann Parker.



Tashane Castillo-Barath, sales coordinator ((left), and Arlien Dyer, travel industry sales manager, pause for a pic.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H

Sweet Honey ROCKS



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

Sweet Honey in the Rock poses for Hospitality Jamaica after Blues on the Green at Emancipation Park, St Andrew on Friday, February 27.

I LOVE jazz and blues, which I hope to sing professionally. It has been my dream for more than 20 years, and I have been rehearsing ever since. Sometimes, I sing more than 20 songs, one behind the other, adding my own flair.

I am also into negro spirituals, pop songs from the stage and screen, and Bob Marley's music to a certain extent.

So, I try to go to shows from which I can

learn stage-crafting and the nuances of live performances. And Friday, February 27 was another opportunity to learn, but it wasn't just another musical event. It was a special one, where patrons were invited to donate educational tools to the Nathan Ebanks Foundation "which promotes inclusion, participation, empowerment and equal opportunities for children with disabilities and special education needs".

Sponsored and hosted by the Embassy of the United States in St Andrew, at Emancipation Park, Blues on the Green was part of the embassy's observance of African-American History Month. This year, the show was headlined by Sweet Honey in the Rock, an all-African-American female *a cappella*, Grammy award-winning group. They were accompanied by Romeir Mendez, a United States resident of Jamaican parentage.

The headliners were another reason the show was special to me. In their vast repertoire, the notes of jazz and blues and negro spirituals are deeply embedded.

Leaving the lazy drones behind, five worker bees came to produce sweet honey on 'The Rock'. I was expecting a feast, and they delivered sweet musical nectar, including their stylistic interpretation of Bob Marley's **Redemption Song**. Even Bob Marley himself



United States Ambassador to Jamaica Luis G. Moreno addresses the audience at Blues on the Green.



Show headliners, Sweet Honey in the Rock, in one of their spell-binding performances on Friday, February 27.



The Holy Trinity High School Band opening the show at Blues on the Green.



From one songbird to another, singing sensation Subrina Murray was delighted to meet veteran singer Marcia Griffiths during the intermission at Blues on the Green.



From left: Christine Staple Ebanks, founder and president of the Nathan Ebanks Foundation; Joshua Polacheck, counsellor for public affairs at the Embassy of the United States of America; and United States Ambassador to Jamaica Luis G. Moreno having a chit-chat just before the start of Blues on the Green.

enjoyed it. He was on screen smiling from ear to ear.

Throughout their performances, the four vocalists used their honey-flavoured voices to convey messages of protest, redemption, peace, equality, freedom and self-acceptance, themes I could relate to. Whether it was their harmonised *a cappella* numbers or those accompanied by the virtuoso bassist, Romeir Mendez, the performances were utterly delightful.

And Shir Childress, the sign language

interpreter, who is part of the group, was no less adept. She used her face, hands and body animatedly to communicate the sweetness coming from her colleagues' mouths to the eyes of the excited hearing-impaired members of the audience. At one point, she was moved to leave the stage to greet them. It was another sweet moment for the night.

But, the delicious sounds that floated through the park and soothed all in attendance didn't flow only from the mellifluous

quintet. The statuesque Subrina 'Brina' Murray, originally from Richmond, Manchester also has a sugary voice, which she used to great effect as she opened the show accompanied by the energetic and sensational band, Othneil Lewis and Friends. Singing in Swahili, English and Jamaican Creole, Brina justified her selection for the opening. I want to hear more of her.

Yet, I didn't get the chance to fully enjoy the show as I was busy covering it. There I was, jostling for camera space to get some

good shots. I was as busy as a bee, taking notes and pictures, working for my honey. But there were moments when I put the notepad, pen and camera down to absorb the sweetness, the pleasure.

On my way home, I sing to myself, "There's honey in the rock my brother, there's honey in the rock for you" But, will that honey flow on the night of my debut, as it did on the night when there was Sweet Honey in the Rock at Blues on the Green?



From left: United States Ambassador to Jamaica Luis G. Moreno; Marisa Benain, director of cultural policy and monitoring in the Ministry of Youth and Culture; and Joshua Polacheck, counsellor for public affairs at the Embassy of the United States of America, share a light moment while waiting for the start of Blues on the Green.



Right: Subrina Murray mesmerising the audience with her soulful voice at Blues on the Green at Emancipation Park, St Andrew.



A section of the large audience that turned out for Blues on the Green.

THE INTERNATIONAL Air Transport Association (IATA) has released 2014 commercial aviation safety performance.

■ The 2014 global jet accident rate (measured in hull losses per one million flights) was 0.23, which was the lowest rate in history and the equivalent of one accident for every 4.4 million flights. This was an improvement over 2013, when the global hull loss rate stood at 0.41 (an average of one accident every 2.4 million flights) and also an improvement over the five-year rate (2009-2013) of 0.58 hull loss accidents per million flights jet.

■ There were 12 fatal accidents involving all aircraft types in 2014 with 641 fatalities, compared with an average of 19 fatal accidents and 517 fatalities per year in the five-year period (2009-2013).

■ The 2014 jet hull loss rate for members of IATA was 0.12 (one accident for every 8.3 million flights), which outperformed the global average by 48 per cent and which showed significant improvement over the five-year rate of 0.33.

“Any accident is one too many, and safety is always aviation’s top priority. While aviation safety was in the headlines in 2014, the data shows that flying continues to improve its safety performance,” said Tony Tyler, IATA’s director general and CEO.

MH 370 AND MH 17

The year 2014 will be remembered for two extraordinary and tragic events – MH 370 and MH 17. Although the reasons for the disappearance and loss of MH 370 are unknown, it is classified as a fatal accident – one of 12 in 2014. The aviation industry has welcomed the proposal by the International Civil Aviation Organisation to move towards the adoption of a performance-based standard for global tracking of commercial aircraft, supported by multinational operational assessments to evaluate impact and guide implementation.

The destruction of MH 17 by anti-aircraft weaponry, however, is not included as an accident under globally recognised accident classification criteria. The four aircraft involved in the events of September 11 were treated in the same way.

“The shooting down of MH 17 took with it 298 lives in an act of aggression that is by any measure unacceptable. Governments and industry have come together to find ways to reduce the risk of over-

IATA releases 2014 safety performance

Fewest jet hull losses but rise in total fatalities



The main fuselage from TransAsia Airways Flight 235 is hoisted away in Taipei, Taiwan in February.

flying conflict zones. This includes better sharing of critical information about security risks to civil aviation. And we are calling on governments to find an international mechanism to regulate the design, manufacture and deployment of weapons with anti-aircraft capabilities,” said Tyler.

“To the flying public, an air tragedy is an air tragedy, regardless of how it is classified. In 2014, we saw a reduction in the number of fatal accidents, and that would be true even if we were to include MH 17 in the total. The greatest tribute that we can pay to those who lost their lives in aviation-related tragedies is to continue our dedication to make flying ever safer. And that is exactly what we are doing,” said Tyler.

2014 SAFETY BY THE NUMBERS:

■ More than 3.3 billion people flew safely on 38 million flights (30.6 million by jet, 7.4 million by turboprop)

■ 73 accidents (all aircraft types), down from 81 in 2013 and the five-year average of 86 per year

■ 12 fatal accidents (all aircraft types) versus 16 in 2013 and the five-year average of 19

■ 16 per cent of all accidents were fatal, below the five-year average of 22 per cent

■ Seven hull loss accidents involving jets compared to 12 in 2013 and the five-year average of 16

■ Three fatal hull loss accidents involving jets, down from six in 2013, and the five-year average of eight

■ 17 hull loss accidents involving turboprops of which nine were fatal

■ 641 fatalities compared to 210 fatalities in 2013 and the five-year average of 517

JET HULL LOSS RATES BY REGION OF OPERATOR

■ All regions but one showed

improvement in 2014 when compared to 2013. The exception is Europe, which maintained the rate of 0.15 jet hull losses per one million sectors.

■ All regions saw their safety performance improve in 2014 compared to the respective five-year rate, 2009-2013, as follows:

■ Africa (from 6.83 to 0)

■ Asia-Pacific (from 0.63 to 0.44)

■ Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (from 2.74 to 0.83)

■ Europe (from 0.24 to 0.15)

■ Latin America and the Caribbean (from 0.87 to 0.41)

■ Middle East-North Africa (1.82 to 0.63)

■ North America (from 0.2 to 0.11)

■ North Asia (from 0.06 to 0).

■ CIS had the worst performance (0.83) among regions, but it showed strong improvement over

three consecutive years: 6.34 (2011), 1.91 (2012), 1.79 (2013).

TURBOPROP HULL LOSS RATES BY REGION OF OPERATOR

■ The world turboprop hull loss rate improved to 2.3 hull losses per million flights in 2014 compared to 2.78 in the five years 2009-2013.

■ The following regions saw their turboprop safety performance improve in 2014 when compared to the respective five-year rate: Asia-Pacific (from 2.16 to 0); CIS (from 12.12 to 11.95); Europe (from 1.46 to 0.71); Latin America and the Caribbean (from 4.53 to 1.21); Middle East-North Africa (from 7.91 to 7.17).

■ Africa had the worst performance (14.13 hull losses per million flights) in 2014 for turboprop hull losses, which exceeded the region’s five-year rate of 9.62. There are relatively few turboprop operations in North Asia so the single turboprop hull loss experienced in the region in 2014 caused the turboprop hull loss rate to rise to 11.28 compared to the five-year rate of 2.41. North America also saw a deterioration in 2014 compared to the preceding five years (1.19 vs. 1.02).

IOSA

Airlines on the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) Registry experienced three jet hull loss accidents and one turboprop hull loss accident. The total accident rate (all aircraft types) for IOSA-registered carriers was more than three times better than the rate for non-IOSA carriers (1.09 vs. 3.32). As of 4 March 2015, 396 airlines are on the IOSA registry. For IATA’s 251 airlines, IOSA certification is a requirement for membership in the Association. That some 145 non-member airlines are also on the registry is evidence that IOSA is the global benchmark for airline operational safety management.

“The overall performance of IOSA airlines shows that the audits are among the factors having a positive impact on safety. Beginning this year, we have upgraded to Enhanced IOSA, which incorporates systems to monitor compliance across the two-year audit cycle. This is moving IOSA from a once-every-two-year snapshot to a continuous management process,” said Tyler.