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WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015



Chabad

**JAMAICA NOW HAS FIRST-EVER
PERMANENT JEWISH EMISSARY**

WATER PARK A BOOST FOR JEWEL RUNAWAY BAY • NO ORDINARY BELLMAN



More than 80 tourists and locals celebrate Chanukah in the sand in Ocho Rios.



Not only did the Jewish tourists visiting during the high holidays pray, but they found time to explore the island.

Jamaica welcomes Jewish tourists

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

AFTER NEARLY 400 years of Jewish settlement, Jamaica has become the ninth Caribbean island to have its own full-time Chabad presence, with the establishment of the first-ever permanent emissary.

Based in the tourism capital, Montego Bay, Rabbi Yaakov and Mushkee Raskin and his wife,

Mushkee, have turned a new leaf in the annals of the Jewish history with their arrival in Jamaica.

Chabad's presence on the island has a long and storied history, dating back to the summer of 1957, when young rabbinical students Yehuda Krinsky and Leibel Raskin had been sent by the Rebbe-Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory to bring Jewish publications and awareness to Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and the

Robbi Yaakov Raskin (left) and members of the local Jewish community share lens time.





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Dominican Republic, Rabbi Raskin told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

In his report to the Rebbe, Raskin described a Jamaican Jewish community that was thirsting for Jewish teaching and services, but lacked kosher food and other basic infrastructure.

Over the decades, Jamaica was served by successive groups of roving rabbis who visited the island, mostly during the summer months or for Jewish holidays.

However, ahead of the High Holidays in 2014, Chabad of Jamaica has been hosting Jewish tourists.

Some 1,000 Jewish tourists have been served by the Jewish couple since they took up roots in the Second City.

“Our move here was really inspired by my grandfather,” says the 24-year-old Montreal native, a grandson of Rabbi Leibel Raskin. “On his 70th birthday – one year before he passed away – he asked his grandchildren to make the effort to become emissaries of the Rebbe. I knew that this would be the life for me, but I never dreamed I would serve the same place where he once served so many years before.”

ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

Following their marriage in August 2013, the Raskins began to consider Jamaica as a place to start a Chabad centre of their own.

“After a discussion with Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, vice-chairman of Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, and Rabbi Mendel Zarchi, founder and spiritual leader of Chabad in Puerto



Kosher meals.

Rico, and the point person for Judaism in the Caribbean, we planned our first trip together to scout the island out in the spring of 2014.”

Hearing about a Jamaican Jew with ties to Great Britain named Raymond Doweck, who kept kosher while living in Kingston, the couple decided to set up a meeting. When they called his home, they were dismayed to discover that he had a stroke that very morning. Upon arrival in Jamaica, they went directly to his hospital room and were saddened to learn that Doweck did not appear responsive

to their conversation. Much to the delight of his family, he did, however, perk up somewhat when the rabbi strapped tefillin upon his arm and head.

Doweck later died, but the Raskin and his wife’s dream had just started. They were heartened by what they experienced in Jamaica, including help from Doweck’s niece, Debby Flacks, who it turned out that the rabbi knew, as the two had met at his sister’s Chabad centre in Monaco. Flacks and her husband, Michael, attend regularly when they are in Monte Carlo.

While most of the Jewish residents (as well as the community centre, United Congregation of Israelites) are concentrated in the capital city of Kingston, the Raskins chose to put down roots in Montego Bay.

The Chabad Jamaica centre is located in Ironshore, Rose Hall.

“Montego Bay is a haven for tourists and because it was recently connected to Kingston with a new highway, cutting down travel time between the two larger centres, we visit Kingston very often for Torah classes, children’s programmes and other Jewish services with the local

community,” said the Rabbi.

Setting up in Jamaica has not been easy and it took a series of false starts for them to find the right place to serve the Jewish community.

“We found a place that is right up the hill from the major resorts,” said Mushkee Raskin, 22, from Brooklyn, New York. “And best of all, it’s right next door to a Jewish family we met. They, along with Debbie and Michael [Flacks], were our first Shabbat guests – something we hoped would become a regular occurrence.”

With their new home secured and their household belongings intransit, the Raskins concentrated on the high holidays, taking reservations and drumming up interest for services and meals for tourists and locals alike.

After making contact with about 70 Jewish households, their numbers climbed locally, and even more significantly with the tourists in the various resorts.

“By promoting a deepened awareness and inspired commitment to Judaism, we hope to create a more unified and robust celebration of Jewish life in Jamaica,” said Rabbi Raskins.

Acknowledging there were fewer Jews here than where he and his wife grew up, the rabbi reflects, “but that just means that we treasure each and every individual, and do our best to make every relationship as rich and as meaningful as possible”.

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Jewish tourists enjoying the best of Jamaica.



Rabbi Yaakov Raskin (third left) with Jewish tourists during Chanukah.

Water park a boost for Jewel Runaway Bay

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

JEWEL DUNN'S River Resort officially opened its multimillion-dollar water park on Tuesday, July 20 in St Ann, with Sagicor CEO Richard Byles hailing the continuing success of the company's involvement in the tourism sector, while calling for more Jamaicans to be part of the industry.

Tourism Minister Dr Wykeham McNeil and his Opposition counterpart, Shahine Robinson, also commended the Jewel brand, owned by Sagicor, on its rapid growth after just three years in the sector.

Ground was broken for the US\$700,000 water park on June 12, last year, with construction completed in less than a year.

In the four months since then, there has been an increase in the occupancy level at the family-oriented property.



Jewel Runaway Bay Resort water park.

According to general manager Scott Robbins, since then, there have been 1,200 local corporate patrons, more than 7,000 local school kids and teachers, 4,200 local families and 2,000 cruise passengers.

"From March to July in 2014, we averaged a 66.8 per cent

occupancy, from March to July in 2015, we averaged an 85.2 per cent occupancy with an increase of US\$10 to the average daily rate," Robbins disclosed.

Robbins said there has also been an increase in weddings since the water park became operational in March. In May of this year, there were 29 weddings, compared to six the previous year.

"Then we had to tell all of our



tour operators that we are sold out for Christmas to New Year's, eight months in advance," Robbins said.

Miss Jamaica World 2014 Laurie-Ann Chin made an appearance, sliding down the chute and making a splash into the pool before assisting McNeil,

Byles, and Rohan Miller, president and CEO of Sagicor X Fund Ltd, and executive vice-president, Sagicor Life, to cut the ribbon to officially open the park.

Jewel Runaway Bay Resort has been awarded the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence five years in a row from 2011 to 2015.

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AA to launch non-stop service to Ja from the West Coast

AMERICAN AIRLINES, the world's largest airline, will add non-stop flights from Los Angeles International Airport to Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay starting December 18, 2015.

In response to high demand, the carrier's new route, currently open for sale, will give the West Coast market direct access to Jamaica twice a week, on Fridays and Saturdays.

The Los Angeles-Montego Bay

route will be operated using a Boeing 737-800, with a capacity of 160 seats, of which 16 are in First-Class and 144 are in Economy. The flight schedule in local times is as follows:

■ **AA2599:** Departure from Los Angeles International Airport at 10:59 p.m., arrival in Sangster International Airport at 7:40 a.m. (next day)

■ **AA2598:** Departure from Sangster International Airport at 10 a.m., arrival in Los Angeles

International Airport at 1:21 p.m.

"We are pleased that American Airlines has chosen to expand their service to Montego Bay with this new non-stop service," said Paul Pennicook, Jamaica's director of tourism. "California is a notable market for Jamaica, and the addition of this flight will increase the destination's convenience to West Coast travellers. We're delighted to work with American Airlines to help travellers discover Jamaica's beautiful attractions and

outstanding hospitality."

"As the premier carrier to the Caribbean, these new flights highlight our commitment to providing our customers with a network that is second to none," said Art Torno, American's senior vice-president, International and Cargo. "We are committed to Jamaica, and this new route will further promote travel and tourism to the country."

Jamaica, with its mountainous ranges and beautiful coastlines, is

blessed with magnificent waterfalls and natural wonders. A year-round vacation destination, Jamaica has more attractions than any other English-speaking Caribbean country. From adventure excursions to relaxing on a bamboo raft, the island has a variety of options for all travellers. Its accommodations range from luxury resorts and villas to charming cottages and inns, all focusing on top-notch service with restaurants to fit any taste and price point.



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THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Regional effort needed to battle sargassum seaweed

FROM THE Dominican Republic to Barbados, countries across the Caribbean are struggling to deal with the unusually large amounts of sargassum seaweed that are being washed up on many beaches.

Although the strong-smelling rotting seaweed arrives most years in many countries, the volume this year – reportedly up to three to four feet high in some locations – is so great that normal voluntary efforts to clean beaches are proving ineffective on many coastlines.

The problem for the tourism sector and for local fishermen is that the unsightly piles of seaweed could begin to have longer-term negative economic consequences. Although there are no reports of visitor cancellations, the hospitality industry across the region is concerned about the seaweed's unsightly appearance, visitor complaints, the cost of mechanical removal, and the possibility of reputational damage. The seaweed's arrival also coincides

with the start of the season when many European visitors arrive in the Eastern Caribbean.

Fishermen, too, are concerned.

There are reports in some countries that the seaweed has led to diminished catches and a fall in their earnings. There is also some anecdotal evidence of investors questioning the long-term cost implications in relation to projects they are engaged in.

As the name implies, the sargassum seaweed comes from the Sargasso Sea. This is an ecologically important warm-water area located in the mid-Atlantic where traditionally masses of seaweed have been encountered.

Much less clear is why the quantity has been so bad and so widespread this year and exactly what can be done.

The University of the West Indies and others regional and international bodies have been exploring whether there are nutritional uses for the seaweed if processed, issues related to the danger of ecological damage to beaches if heavy mechanical equipment is used to remove it, and



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CONTINUED FROM 6

the reasons for such large quantities appearing this year; but there are no easy or rapid answers. To complicate matters the seaweed may have ecological advantages for beaches, and its removal can damage wildlife habitats. There are also issues of cost and who pays for any clean up.

Significantly, no one knows whether this is a one-off problem this year or will become a recurring longer-term challenge.

One alternative but costly solution being considered in the Dominican Republic, where sargassum seaweed is being washed up on the eastern coastline, where there is the greatest number of beach resorts in the country, is the installation of barriers. These, it is suggested, might keep the seaweed from reaching the shore in a manner that will result in the ocean currents carrying the seaweed back out to sea.

NO QUICK FIX

Speaking recently about how best to address the issue, Barbados' minister of tourism, Richard Sealy, who is also the chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, said that there was no quick fix.

His country's Coastal Zone Management Unit, he said, had advised that the problem was not going to go away in the near future and called for a coherent response to the challenge it posed. For Barbados, Sealy said it was not a seasonal or specific beach problem anymore, but "was affecting the entire island". He suggested that what was needed was a regional effort to deal with the problem.

"There is no real regional [effort]; nothing coordinated is happening at that level. Barbados is pretty far advanced ... but it is important that we have some level of coordination regionally as well," he said.

He has a good point. Here is an issue of importance to the whole Caribbean tourism economy that requires long-term regional thinking and detailed exploration in a way that involves all Governments, the industry, fisherfolk representatives and scientists.

I THOUGHT she was out of my life for good, never to feel her agony again. But I was wrong. Again, I was wrong.

On Thursday, out of the blue, she came nagging at my left heel, and by Friday morning she has taken over my left leg, keeping me in bed for the greater part of the morning. If there ever is a devil, the chik-V it is. And I really have no space in my life for the devil.

I had to cancel a Saturday appointment in the west because I couldn't depend on painkillers that I was already on. Yet, the pain in the heel subsided later Friday evening. I felt it bite from time to time, but a toothache I was having as well was giving me more than I could bear.

Saturday morning, slightly in pain, I remembered that the Makka Pro International Surfing Contest would be on at Makka Surfing Beach at Southaven, Yallahs, St Thomas. Nature was calling again. And I heeded the call again. Camouflage shirt, khaki shorts and sandals, and I was on my way, in pain.

I had been to Southaven earlier this year, and on my way on Saturday, I remembered some stuff I saw at the place where the event was to be held. I hoped to nature that I wouldn't see them this time around.

LITTERING NATURE

But alas, upon my arrival, they were very much there, especially at a certain spot. I shook my head. I guess when nature calls, people, as I do, answer to the call, but they don't have to litter nature with their wrappers. And rubbers are not biodegradable.

Anyway, the contest was on, the breeze was strong, and the sun bright. White horses were galloping ashore, and surfers were trying to get on to their backs. The essence of the contest was for surfers to get horses to take them ashore, while they perform stunts. So, they spend a good amount of their allotted time trying to find the perfect waves.

If only I could jump on one of those boards, I thought. I would just lie and let the waves carry me to and fro. And I remembered yesterday when I was young and agile, just like those surfers. I imagine years from now they, too, will be reclining on a bed of smooth pebbles, reminiscing, and perhaps in pain.

The breeze, though strong, was soothing, taking away some of the intensity of the sun's heat. And the roar of thundering waves also helped. The constant chatter of the announcer, informing the surfers, didn't help, but it was the nature of



AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

The Chik, the aches, the surfs and the pierced stone

The strong waves at Southaven, Yallahs, St Thomas are ideal for surfing.



The Makka Surfing Beach at Southaven, Yallahs, is a sea-pebble haven.

the beast, and I ended up learning a few things about contest surfing.

In between rounds I walked the festive-like grounds looking for interesting things and people, but where were they? I perhaps should have waited until day two, I thought. Then, I remember why I fled Kingston and St Andrew – to be close to nature, in my painful predicament.

With nothing of interest to get my creative juices flowing, I would go

back to the beach, on to the pebbles, looking for interesting ones. I have so many already in my personal collection, but the thing about sea pebbles is that you can never stop collecting them.

They are so diverse, the colours, the shades, the textures, the layers, the sizes. And the Makka Surfing Beach is a pebble haven. Some of the ones in my collection I plan to pierce, turning them into pendants, pieces of nature, positive energy

around your neck. But I am yet to buy the drill set.

At one point when I was thinking about the drilling, my eyes rested on a perfectly shaped hole in a whitish oblong pebble. That couldn't be. I moved towards it and picked it up. There was a hole right through the pebble. It looked as if it were drilled by someone. I couldn't believe my luck. In my hand was a smooth stone pendant.

I wasn't going to lose it on the



The pierced pebble found on Makka Surfing Beach on Saturday.



Two surfers in a round of the Makka Pro International Surfing Contest.



The Makka Pro International Surfing Contest, having its ninth staging this year.



Jensen Callaway of Florida, USA is at the Makka Pro International Surfing Contest at Makka Surfing Beach for the third time this year.



Feather banners fluttering in the breeze at the Makka Pro International Surfing Contest.



From left: Garren Pryce, Ivah Wilmott, Armani Green and Javaun Brown, competitors in the junior surfing competition at the Makka Pro International Surfing Contest at Makka Surfing Beach.



Team Jamaica athletes, officials and members of the reggae band, Rootz Underground, pose with Philip Rose (second right), regional director for the JTB in Canada; Kaci Fennell (third right), Miss Jamaica Universe 2014; and Christopher Samuda (right), president of the Jamaica Paralympic Association and chairman of the Jamaica Paralympic Foundation.

‘Jamaica House Toronto’ launched on July 22

ON JULY 22, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) launched Jamaica House Toronto for the 2015 Pan Am Games. Jamaica House Toronto was home base for Jamaican athletes, members of the business community, sponsors, Jamaicans, and friends of Jamaica from July 22 to 24 at Ontario Place in downtown Toronto.

Jamaica House Toronto was organised by Toronto-based events company, JACANA Group, with the JTB as the title sponsor. Each evening event featured top Jamaican musical acts, including: Rootz Underground, I-Octane, Cham, and Maxi Priest. Jamaican cuisine was on offer from Bliss Tropical Cuisine, Grace Foods, Appleton Estate, Kisko, and Old Tyme Jamaican Ginger Beer.

The launch welcomed several media outlets, including diaspora, travel trade, consumer and news outlets. Representatives from CBC News at Six, Travelweek, Canadian Travel Press, G98.7 FM, Jamaicans.com, Caribbean Camera, Pride News and Share all covered the event. Several Jamaican dignitaries attended, including Janice Miller, Jamaica’s High Commissioner to Canada, Lloyd Wilks, Jamaica’s Consul General to Toronto and Christopher Samuda,



Several news outlets attended the launch of Jamaica House Toronto. Shown here is Philip Rose, regional director for the JTB in Canada, being interviewed by CTV News at Six.

JAMAICA

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president of Jamaica Paralympic Association. Popular Jamaican reggae band, Rootz Underground also participated in the launch, along with Kaci Fennell, Miss Jamaica Universe 2014.

“Guests of Jamaica House Toronto will enjoy a true taste of

Jamaica during the Pan Am Games through our sport, music and cuisine,” said Philip Rose, regional director, Canada for the JTB. “Not only do we have an impressive line-up of musicians set to perform, but we’ve also created a venue where travel partners and businesses can



A cross section of media from news, consumer, travel trade and diaspora outlets attended the Jamaica House Toronto launch.



Jamaican dignitaries with the Jamaica Tourist Board. From left: Philip Rose, regional director for the JTB in Canada; Janice Miller, Jamaica’s High Commissioner to Canada; Lloyd Wilkes, Jamaica’s Consul General to Toronto; and Christopher Samuda, president of Jamaica Paralympic Association and chairman of the Jamaica Paralympic Foundation.



Jamaica House Toronto provided a venue for business interactions. Shown here are Christopher Samuda (left), president of Jamaica Paralympic Association and chairman of the Jamaica Paralympic Foundation; Lloyd Wilkes (third left), Jamaica’s Consul General to Toronto; Philip Rose (third right), regional director for the JTB in Canada; and Janice Miller (second right), Jamaica’s High Commissioner to Canada, speaking with Jamaica House Toronto sponsors and travel partners.

network with Jamaican brands, and consumers can learn more about travel to the island.”

Sponsors of Jamaica House Toronto include Jamaica National Building Society, Victoria Mutual Vacations, Royalton White Sands

Resort, Appleton Estate, Grace Foods, Bliss Tropical Cuisine, Old Tyme Jamaican Ginger Beer, Kisko and Ocean Flame Communications.

For more details on Jamaica House Toronto, please visit www.teamjamaica.ca.



Daniel Barrett (left) serves two customers at his Success Craft Market.

Daniel 'Danny Dread' Barrett – a self-taught craftsman

MEET DANIEL Barrett, otherwise called 'Danny Dread', a self-taught craft trader who has been creating a name not only for himself, but also for other players in the local craft sector by producing top-class products for Jamaica's tourism sector.

Barrett, who is a member of the Success Craft Market in Montego Bay, has been producing craft items for the tourism trade since 1974 and has earned enough money from the skill to raise his family of three children, all of whom are now adults.

He said his early introduction to the tourism sector came in the form of working as a caddy on a golf course, then as a busboy – a scullion in the kitchen before he was drawn into the craft industry.

A former plumber and painter, Barrett said after searching around, he found a number of persons with whom he was acquainted becoming involved in the craft trade, and he took a liking to the production aspect before moving into trading.

He said, "A lot of guys whom I knew were involved, and with not much to do, I decided to join the group. I watched them as they cut the wood and carved wonderful items from them, and eventually, I

started to do my own creations, and as they say, the rest is history. I have established myself as one of the top persons in the industry which I see as a great honour."

Barrett is of the view that the craft industry has untapped potential, especially in the area of production, which would ensure that Jamaicans gain employment to create and produce items instead of importing them.

CRAFT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN TOURISM

He said, "The craft industry plays an important role. We are able to expose Jamaica and its creative people to the rest of the world when we display and sell our products to our visitors. When you look at the range of products that we create, Jamaica and its craftsmen are second to none in respect of our creativity and our energy."

He is hoping that craft markets across the island, especially those in western Jamaica, will continue to receive the kind of patronage they deserve. He said craft traders are thankful for the support of the Government and the all-inclusive hotels that accommodate traders on a rotation basis to sell on their properties.

"I think the locals could get

some more of the business, especially in the registered and designated craft markets. We are producing top-class craft, and I remain thankful for what we have been getting," he said.

For someone who entered the craft industry without formal training, Barrett said he is now in a position to give a healthy recommendation to young craft producers who may be at a crossroads in relation to their future in the industry.

He said, "I will definitely recommend people to join the industry. It allows you to draw on your own creativity. However, once you decide to enter the trade, you must come with a positive attitude and decide to remain in it for the long haul."

"It's not going to be brisk business all the time, so be prepared to take the bitter with the sweet, and from where I stand, there is more sweetness than bitterness."

Barrett, who has spent almost his entire adult life in the industry, said he has no plans to retire and will continue to produce top-quality items, not only for visitors, but for Jamaicans to admire and showcase in their homes.



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ON AN evening in 2014, as Sandals Negril bellman Christopher Pringle was assisting with prepping a guest bedroom, he received a call from the front desk that another guest, who was checking out the following morning, requested his presence. When Christopher entered the lobby, he was greeted by a woman in tears; she was overwhelmed as she had entered her room shortly before and found a personalised birthday card perched to the side of her bed which was extravagantly decorated. At check in, she had mentioned to Christopher, as he toted her luggage, that she was celebrating her 50th birthday. He, in turn, gave her the birthday surprise of a lifetime. Through her tears, she expressed that she simply wanted to thank him for remembering her as she had never felt so special on a vacation.

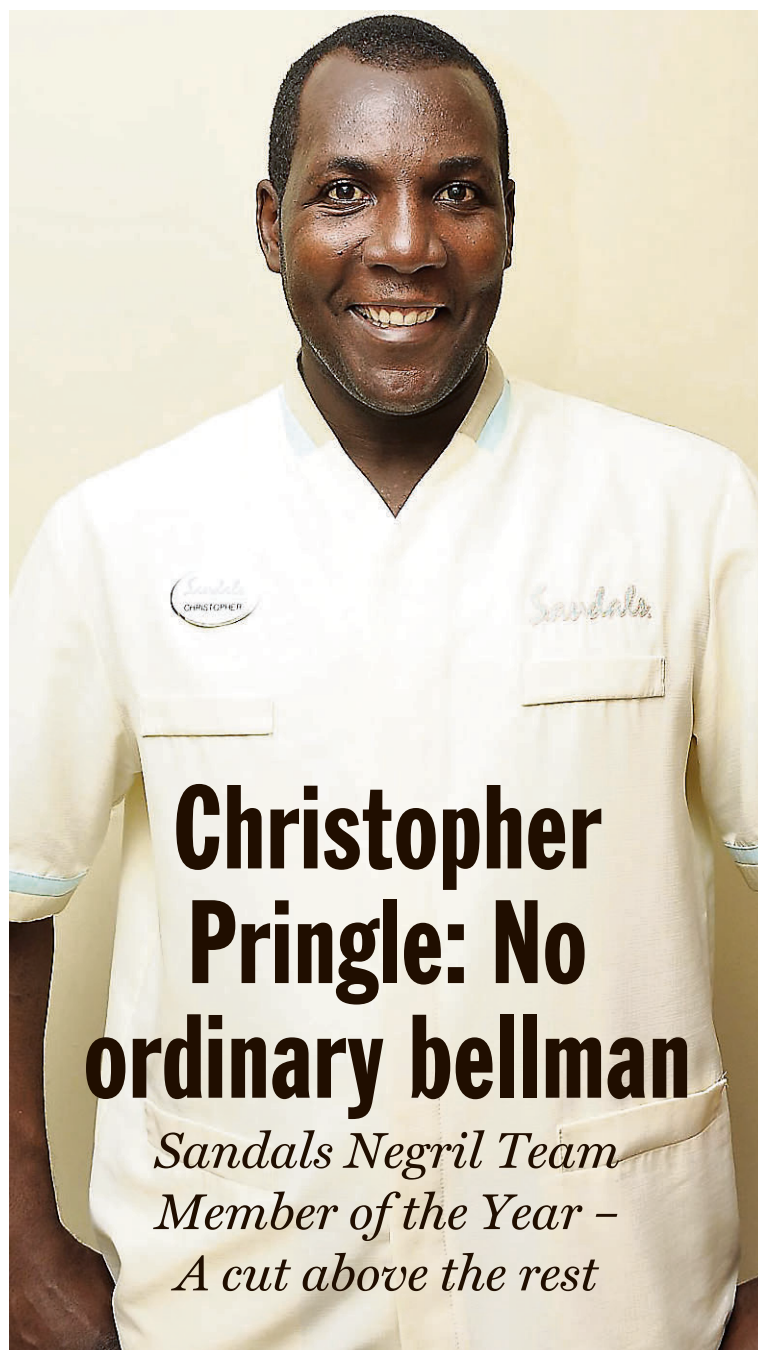
Stories like this one are synonymous with Pringle, who has been a part of the Sandals family for the past 15 years. He started at 20 years old as a houseman and became bellman at Beaches Sandy Bay before joining the Sandals Negril team in the same capacity in 2011. His current manager, Charmaine Brown, said she was first introduced to him three and a half years ago when he acted as a relief employee at Sandals Negril.

“He was so impressive in that short time that at the end of the contract period, I called the executive managers and told them that I would not be sending him back,” she said.

CONSISTENT IN HIS SERVICE

Pringle has proven to be consistent in his service delivery, always going the extra mile to deliver ultimate guest satisfaction and exceed expectations. His manager also recalled numerous instances in which he has turned guest stays around by offering an added level of personalised service – much like what one would expect from a butler. It might be as small as several phone calls to check on clients throughout their stay, to helping to celebrate special occasions, booking dinner reservations, or being the go-between with the food and beverage team as he tries to create chocolate, champagne, or floral delights for the resort’s visitors.

“I try to treat each of my guests as number one and build a good relationship with them, which, in turn, allows me to make an impact that really counts,” Pringle shared. In fact, guests even refer other guests to him sometimes.



One of his colleagues said, “He doesn’t go around the department and hotel standards. He thinks above the ordinary and builds on them. He is truly a gem.”

Christopher Pringle stands out because he is a team player within and outside of his department, and nothing is too small or big for him. The end result is ultimate guest and staff satisfaction. He leads by example and acts on his initiative. While at Beaches Sandy Bay, he was afforded the opportunity to participate in voice training/telephone etiquette class, and he has taken this skill into his current operations. Whenever the front desk is busy and the switch board is ringing off the hook, you are almost guaranteed to find Pringle filling in – once there are no guest arrivals or departures.

He said, “If it’s even for an hour and I can help to make the

situation better, I jump in. I am one of the voices of the resort and I try to be a part of making anyone’s interaction with the hotel a good experience.”

He also extends this attitude to other departments, as you will also find him making beds to expedite the check-in process or at the bar washing a glass or two.

On many occasions, Pringle has been noticed at work outside of his shift hours assisting his colleagues with their duties. His manager often looks on impressed as he constantly does it without indicating a need for favours or rewards.

He owns and takes personal responsibility for his areas of work, such as the *porte cochère*, which he checks to ensure is cleaned at the appropriate time, *et cetera*.

Additionally, he is lauded for being tactful in his approach to



Christopher Pringle shows off his awards.



addressing issues affecting his department; if something goes wrong, he identifies the gaps and makes suggestions for addressing the issue without shedding a negative light on his colleague.

Christopher Pringle is the father of a three-year-old boy, whom he says motivates him everyday to do all he can to make a difference in the world. The 16 Prestige Staff Awards that he has added to his collection since his tenure with Sandals speak to his commitment to self and organisational development. He also sings high praises for his manager whom he says inspires him to always test the limits and branch out into as many areas as he can. Pringle has acted on this advice in the workplace, but has also been known to extend himself to the community. The Sandals Foundation Community Spirit Award that he received holds pride of place in his heart alongside the community impact programmes in which he has participated in his native Westmoreland and Hanover. These include literacy programmes

in primary schools, motivational talks at secondary schools, and the Sandals Foundation Christmas treat at the Llandilo School of Special Education.

“Whenever I speak of Christopher and his achievements, I get goose pimples,” said Charmaine Brown. “He is truly an exceptional individual with a no-nonsense approach to service in all forms. He is someone who you can use to motivate others,” she shared.

A typical bellman is often confined to the lobby and sometimes seen as nothing beyond a ‘baggage man’, but Pringle has acknowledged that his interaction with guests can set the tone for their overall vacation experience and he has capitalised on that. In his capacity, he even does what he can to help build staff morale.

In his own words: “I always have to be a role model. This uniform I wear comes with responsibility and I recognise that I must live up to the standards of a Sandals employee and always represent well, whether at work or in the streets.”

Conference for growth through innovation

A THEME has been announced for the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO)'s State of the Industry Conference in Curaçao from October 21-23. This year's theme, Caribbean Tourism: Growth through Innovation, reflects the need for Caribbean tourism to continuously introduce new ideas, methods and products in order to remain competitive, said the CTO secretary general, Hugh Riley.

"The tourism industry is such an incredibly globally competitive business that we need to constantly be looking for ways to innovate, to do things differently," Riley said, adding that the theme encapsulates the thinking the Caribbean should adopt in order to find a better business model.

CURRENT TRENDS TO BE FEATURED

The secretary general said current trends that drive tourism, including mobile and social media, will be featured at the conference, which is being organised in collaboration with Curaçao's Ministry of Economic Development and the Curaçao Tourist Board.

"We are searching for creativity and innovativeness inside the Caribbean and outside the Caribbean, so we are looking for the best practices, the best ideas, from anywhere in the world which we can learn from, so we can capture those and adapt them to our own needs. Anyone who comes to this conference can expect to hear the best ideas and leave with something that will help to grow their business," he assured.

The State of the Industry Conference will be preceded by CTO business meetings, including meetings of the board of directors and the Council of Ministers and Commissioners of Tourism.

Reggae Marathon contributes US\$11M to the economy

DURING THE first 12 years of Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon and 10K, it has contributed more than US\$11 million to the Negril and Jamaican economies, according to data collected by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) and Reggae Marathon between 2001 and 2012.

A JTB survey of 2012 also noted that stopover arrivals for Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon, and 10K stood at seven per cent for the month of November. The race, which is held during the first week

of December, attracts visitors from more than 34 different countries across the world each year.

At a recent seminar hosted by Jamaica Sports, in collaboration with the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, it was announced that a new Sports Tourism Economic Assessment Model had been developed to enable the tracking of the economic impact of sporting and other events on the Jamaican economy.

At the Jamaica Sports seminar, Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon,

and 10K was lauded as one of the 'star events' on the island's sporting calendar. A UWI-commissioned study in 2014 reported that there is a high demand for road races in Jamaica, which is indicative of a growing global trend towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle of fitness and wellness.

Richard Lake, chairman of not-for-profit Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon, and 10K praised the group of volunteers who have made the annual event a unique

experience for local runners and those who visit the island to participate.

"We are so proud to be celebrating our 15th anniversary this year and to know that this event has impacted the world in such a manner that people plan for it each year after year. What started as a hobby for race director, 'Frano', and the Jamdammers Running Club of Kingston is now a major contributor to the Jamaican economy. Congratulations to all who made this possible."



Runners staying the course at Reggae Marathon.

... Take advantage of the early-bird registration fee

AS THE early-bird registration fee to participate in this year's Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon, and 10K draws close to its July 31 deadline, runners from Saudi Arabia have registered for the first time, joining others from such countries as the USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Belgium, and Poland. To date, there has been a 29 per cent increase in registration at this time, compared to last year.

According to Alfred 'Frano' Francis, race director for the event, there has been a significant increase in traffic on the event's updated website and most of the promotion of the event is being done through several social-media channels.

"Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon, and 10K continues to make a significant impact on the sporting industry worldwide," he said.

Francis encouraged local schools, corporate

teams, and individuals to register online and take advantage of the discounted rates up to the end of this month.

"At the close of the early-bird offer, the prices will increase for both local and international participants, with a further hike in the fees when purchased on site at the event," he continued. The registration site is: www.reggaemarathon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015-Local-Entry.pdf.



Bittersweet reunion for Trench Town alumni

A circle of old friends enjoying themselves.



Some Trench Town High School past students catching up on the news that they might have missed.



Wheelchair-bound Latoya Thomas would not miss the Trench Town High School reunion for the world.

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

IT WAS a bittersweet weekend, July 17-19, for some Trench Town High School past students. They were reuniting for a 50th straight year, but it was the last reunion before the school is officially closed on August 31.

There was much joy, reflection, and nostalgia among the alumni, mainly from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Yet, their reminiscences were juxtaposed against much sorrow, disappointment, and even anger. But they really had a memorable blast, especially those who travelled from abroad.

The activities started at South Beach Café on Brompton Road in New Kingston on the Friday night with a link-up. And indeed it was, as some people who hadn't seen each other for more than 40 years were suddenly hugging and embracing. Much catching-up went on and broken links reconnected, which certainly will be sustained by social media and emails.

WALKS DOWN MEMORY LANE

At Saturday night's dinner and dance at the New Kingston Conference Centre at the New Kingston Business Centre, every seat was occupied. The surprises continued, and there were many more walks down memory lane, back to the school at Trench Town, in the 'Jungle', which moulded them and prepared them for their life journeys. The sentiments were strong, and even for sentimental reasons, some people believe the school should be kept open.

"I think Trench Town is a landmark, a school that was donated by the British as an Independence gift. I strongly

believe that Charlie Smith should be the school that they close down and turn into a polytechnic, instead of Trench Town. Trench Town is so sentimental to us. We had fun. We didn't even know that we were poor. I feel it," Erica Bancroft-Wilson, a teacher by profession, said as tears welled up in her eyes.

PRACTICAL VIEW

However, another past student, who requested not to be named, believes the institution cannot be kept open just because of sentimentalities. For practical reasons, he said he supports the closure.

"You can't be sentimental about something that makes no sense," he told **Hospitality Jamaica**, especially with the rundown infrastructure.

All is not lost, he is maintaining. "The school has not really died, it has been given a chance to rise again, rising from the ashes, as it were, like the Phoenix. It will be converted to a polytechnic institute," the 1979 graduate said.

Dennis Grant, a 1969 graduate, and arguably the oldest past student present, also spoke with **Hospitality Jamaica** about the closure, and believes not much was done to save the school.

"It's a sad day in Jamaica when we are closing schools, and the ultimate reality is that we might have to build more prisons," Grant remarked, "The fact that an educational institution was established as a gift from the British government, all efforts should have been made to revive the institution, but they waited until it was too late. They didn't do enough to try to save it."

“Trench Town still rocks.” He said the essence of this year’s reunion is a “camaraderie of past students coming together to say the school may be closed, but we are not closed. We are still alive and well, and we still rocking, and we still going forward. We will do whatever is necessary to keep that bond together,” Grant declared.

The high point of the evening, which was compered by Cordella Plummer O’Gilvie and Wayne Tomlinson, was the messages delivered by attorney-at-law, Leroy Equiano; businessman, Patrick K. Gilling and Dr Dennis Grant, all past students. Their perspectives were interspersed with much humour and nostalgia.

But it was the Powerpoint presentation of images from a 1975-76 yearbook that got some people shouting and pointing in their excitement. There were things that they didn’t even

remember, and faces they had not seen since schooldays. The physical transformations were so stark in some cases that people didn’t recognise one another.

After a witty vote of thanks by Neville Townsend, it was party time, and they were 16 again, moving and grooving to their favourite songs of yesteryear, songs that reminded them of yesterday when they were young and had the exuberance of youth. They didn’t move as fast, but the years have been kind to them, and they had grown to outlast their beloved school.

The weekend climaxed with ‘Chillaxing’ at Alterry Private Beach at Priory, St Ann. The teenagers-at-heart played, swam, and reminisced some more under the sun and in the shade. Then it was time to reflect on the weekend and look forward to next year, the first reunion after the closure.



A game of dominoes, even for old time’s sake.



From left: Jean-Gregory Wright, Traverse Cornwall and Rosemarie Bonnick-Gordon are happy to see each other.



Teacher Erica Bancroft-Wilson believes her alma mater should remain open, even for sentimental reasons.



Trench Town High school past students engage themselves in a game of pass-it-around.



Members of the Negril Rotary Club clean up the coastline during last year's Coastal Clean-up Day.

JET anticipates record turnout for International Coastal Clean-up Day 2015

SEPTEMBER 19, 2015 will be marked globally as the 30th annual International Coastal Clean-up Day (ICC). Started by the Ocean Conservancy in the USA in 1985, ICC is the largest one-day volunteer event in the world with more than 90 countries participating annually.

The annual event is coordinated locally by the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) and is funded by the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) under the Clean Coasts Project (CCP). The theme for this year's event will be 'Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica', the public-education campaign component of the CCP.

Last year, Jamaica's ICC day was in the top 15 worldwide, ranking 12th out of 91 countries. This year, JET will again be partnering with several other government agencies and the private sector to beat last year's record to stage the biggest Jamaican ICC yet – more than 120 beach clean-up activities are planned to take place across Jamaica for ICC 2015.

"Registration is now open for groups who want to coordinate beach clean-ups in their parishes," said Suzanne Stanley, JET programme director. "We are planning more beach clean-ups than ever before for ICC in Jamaica this year, and we need a strong team of coordinators, sponsors, and partners working together to guarantee its success."

In 2014, 74 groups coordinated 113 beach clean-ups in Jamaica for ICC, including hotels, government agencies, schools, community and non-government organisations, service clubs, and ordinary citizens. In efforts to cement

these partnerships, JET has reconvened an ICC planning committee which includes representatives from JET, the TEF, the National Environment and Planning Agency, the National Solid Waste Management Authority, recycling companies, tourism interests and private-sector partners. The planning committee will help to guide groups from across Jamaica as they coordinate beach clean-up exercises on September 19.

A CLEANER AND HEALTHIER JAMAICA

"This year, we will be promoting the Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica campaign message through our ICC activities," said Diana McCaulay, JET CEO. "The aim of the Clean Coasts Project has always been to create synergies between JET's environmental education activities – like Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica and ICC – under one broad theme of better solid waste management for a cleaner and healthier Jamaica."

JET has been coordinating annual beach clean-up activities in Jamaica since 1994 and has acted as ICC national coordinators since 2008. This year marks the 22nd anniversary of JET's first clean-up of the Palisadoes strip. This year, the flagship JET Beach Clean-up will take place at the Fort Rocky Beach and its environs on the Palisadoes. A full list of clean-up venues will be published in the days leading up to the event.

For more information on how to get involved in International Coastal Clean-up Day activities, and to register to be a part of the event this year, log on to JET's website: www.jamentrust.org.

Sandals Whitehouse helps out with back-to-school shopping list



Sandals Whitehouse volunteers Shermonique Campbell (left), Vilma Smith (second left) and Keresha Grant (second right) and Sandals Foundation scholarship recipient for the Whitehouse Region Bertie Abbott (third left) hand out back-to-school packages to youngsters in Savanna-la-Mar, Westmoreland recently. The event represented a partnership between the resort's PR department and members of the NCU media group who conducted a 14-in-14 education and wellness initiative in the parish recently.



Sandals Whitehouse's Snapshots team member, Shermonique Campbell (right) shares a photo op with a happy family who benefitted from donations of back-to-school supplies during a 14-in-14 education and wellness initiative staged by the NCU Media Group in partnership with the resort. More than 200 youngsters received packages courtesy of Sandals Whitehouse.



Happy Sandals Whitehouse team members deliver some much needed back-to-school supplies to youngsters from the Savanna-la-Mar region at a recent Back-to-School Fair sponsored by the resort.