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Negril's rebirth

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

MADE FAMOUS by the hip-pies of the 1960s, Jamaica's Capital of Casual, Negril, is experiencing a rebirth, as new and traditional players pump millions of dollars to the look, feel and taste of their properties.

Both Sensatori Azul and Blue Diamond have cleared lands for the construction of five star resorts, while RIU, Sandals, Lee Issa, who recently bought Moon Dance Villas, the Vagabond Group and Vera Club have brought a renaissance to the resort town.

RIU Negril has closed its oldest Jamaican plant, with plans to reopen brand new on November 15. The 420-room resort is going through extensive facelift, said director of sales, Angella Bennett.

Boasting that the results would be "impressive", Bennett said the rooms have been upgraded, so have the common areas.

"Among the modifications guests can look forward to are: a newly redone front desk and lobby bar; a brand new swimming pool; a new children's swimming pool with slides and a new sport bar, instead of a discotheque," the director of sales revealed to **Hospitality Jamaica**.

MORE RESTAURANTS

She added that a new Asian restaurant, Mandalay, has been placed in the mix, bringing the number of restaurants to five. Its gourmet restaurant, which is popular among guests, has been renamed Kulinarium.

According to Bennett, the bathrooms will now have walk-in showers instead of bathtubs, while the junior suites will have an integrated lounge area with split levels and sofa beds.

"We have completely redecorated the 'Rastaman' bar, and turned it into a lounge bar with a terrace."

Not to be outdone, just up the road, the resort which has been one of Sandals Resorts International's most successful, Sandals Negril, since opening its doors in 1988, has also had extensive work done to its plant.

"The amazing work we are doing

PLEASE SEE **NEGRIL**, 4



Idle AWhile Villa, now owned and operated by Lee Issa and his family.



Vera Club by Merrill's.



Only a sign with the name Grand Lido is left standing at the entrance of the former SuperClubs property.



Sandals Negril Bamboo and Coconut Block.



Rendering of one of the new bedrooms at the Sandals Negril Bamboo and Coconut Block.



Land cleared for construction of an additional set of rooms for Sensatori Azul.



Negril Boardwalk Village.

NEGRIL

CONTINUED FROM 3

to this product will guarantee that it remains ahead of the curve, not only in Negril but the region,” stated Wayne Cummings, director, business process and administration at Sandals.

Cummings said the chain had long ago completed 104 rooms in the centre of the property and are now doing the blocks that were previously the Coconut Cove Hotel.

“That block comprises a 78-room and suite block refurbishing.”

Combined 182 rooms have been refurbished at the resort at an estimated cost of US\$18 million.

The refurbishing exercise is scheduled for completion, December 15, the same day the winter tourist season commences.

Complementing all the work being carried out, Blue Diamond will construct approximately 600 rooms, employing over 1,000 staff, at what the group plans to name Royalton Negril.

The lands have been cleared, the buildings that housed the former Grand Lido Negril have been demolished, making way for Royalton. However, there seems to be a delay in getting approval for the project.

Efforts to get a comment from Blue Diamond’s Kerry-Ann Quallo-Casserly proved futile.

In the case of Sensori Azul, work is also expected to start on their new property before the end of the year.

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeil, excited about the prospects, said Negril overall was doing well.

“Occupancies have been up this year across the board. Both large and small properties. The increased demand is driving investment in refurbishing as well as the construction of new rooms,” he stated, noting that the trend was important to the industry.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

“It ensures that the tourism product that we offer is fresh, viable and exciting. The investment, he said, will continue to drive the economy, providing economic growth and job creation.”

Dr McNeill added that he was expecting this trend of increased investment, refurbishing and building of new rooms to be replicated across all Jamaica, with at least 1,600 new rooms to start construction this year.

In the meantime, Florida-based developer, Avra Jain, has teamed up with former Jamaican hotelier, Mary Phillips, culinary greats, Delius Shirley and Cindy Hutson, to acquire Negril’s Moon Dance Resort on the cliffs.

The 33-room boutique property, which include four villas, a restaurant, spa and public areas, has been closed for refurbishing and is scheduled to open on October 1, as The Cliff Hotel and Spa.

Lee Issa, who operates the five Couples resorts on the island, having bought Moon Dance which is located on the beach, has renamed that boutique property Idle A While Villas.

VeraClub is a European group which is now attached to Merrill’s One. It is not clear whether or not this group will market the other two Merrill resorts.

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The Pizzeria at Riu Negril.



One of the many restaurants at Riu Negril.



The new look Riu Negril.



Parts of a bedroom at the new Paradise Block at Sandals Negril.



A bedroom of the new Paradise Block Rooms at Sandals Negril.



Land cleared for construction to commence at Royalton Negril, where the 250-room Grand Lido Negril was located.

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The challenge of finding new markets

David Jessop



THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

THE CHALLENGE now facing almost every Caribbean tourism destination is how to diversify their source of visitors as international and inter-regional competition becomes more intense; not least because later this year, US citizens may, on an individual basis, be freer to travel to Cuba.

Finding new sources of visitor supply is, however, not as easy as it sounds. The issue is particularly complicated in completely new markets as it requires airlift and accompanying arrangements that usually involve some form of financial incentive, particularly, if it involves a scheduled air service. Establishing new markets also requires a relatively long lead time. Tour operators have to negotiate commercial arrangements with carriers and domestic suppliers and

agree with properties and destinations marketing arrangements and funding for promotional activities.

So important has growing markets become that bodies like the Jamaica Tourist Board now organise local events. This year, the Jamaica Product Exchange has a special focus on attracting buyers and industry professionals from the markets of the Caribbean, Latin America and Eastern Europe – and are participating in international trade shows in locations further afield, such as China, in order to develop relationships that may eventually result in new sources of visitors.

NICHE MARKETING

A further way forward much discussed within the region is the development of niche marketing opportunities in established markets in North America and Europe. This has resulted in Caribbean destinations identifying an increasingly diverse range of opportunities from faith-based tourism to sporting events, entertainment in the form of music festivals, to what remains socially contentious in most

Caribbean nations, the encouragement of high-spending visitors in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender market.

It is also widely accepted that much more needs to be done to encourage inter-regional tourism. This has declined in recent years as a result of poor and expensive air connections, visa requirements by some countries, and low volumes, making package vacations expensive and unattractive for many Caribbean people who on inter-regional visits tend to stay for periods of no more than three to four days.

But beyond such commercial and logistical problems, there are other dimensions that are all too easily ignored in the quest for growth in new markets.

Earlier this year, a paper published by Cristina Jonsson, a tourism lecturer at UWI's Cave Hill Campus; and a UWI management studies graduate, Nicola Harrison, looked at what Brazilian visitors expect from a vacation and related this to what Barbados actually offered. The research – which ought to be read by all industry professionals, is available upon

request – was striking.

In brief, it found that not enough notice was being taken of visitor motivation when targeting new markets.

THE BRAZILIAN TAKE ON B'DOS

The researchers interviewed Brazilians visiting Barbados, spoke with representatives of the Brazilian embassy, and compared their views with what tour operators and others in the private and public sector were able to offer on the island. What they discovered was that the facilities that Brazilians most wanted in a vacation were missing or could be better supplied at home. They wanted loud beach life, spontaneity, adventure, parties and nightlife. Like many Latin people, they were used to eating very late and partying through the night. Brazilian visitors also indicated that they were disappointed with the lack of quality shopping, the absence of local craft items, and experienced language difficulties because few people spoke Portuguese.

Whether such research has also been undertaken on what visitors from Russia, China or let

us say, what the Gulf States, also want is unclear; but from listening to presentations at international industry gatherings, it is clear that what many visitors from these countries require is also unlikely to be met in most of the region, which remains geared to providing offerings most likely to appeal to visitors from North America and Europe.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with this if growth, and diversification can be achieved through identifying new niches or moving the product up-scale; nor is it meant to be critical of the remarkable success in diversifying source markets that Jamaica and some other Caribbean destinations like Curaçao, Aruba the Dominican Republic and Cuba have achieved.

Rather, it is to note that a much closer focus on visitor motivation and needs will in future be required, particularly by smaller destinations in the Anglophone Caribbean, when looking at new markets and how best to address growing competition.

Carib resort owners, managers anticipate CHTA forum

THE CARIBBEAN Hotel and Tourism Association's (CHTA) inaugural Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) has drawn attention of innovative hoteliers from across the region as well as top speakers from a variety of industry segments. This long-needed networking and educational conference will take place October 2-4 in Puerto Rico.

"The objective of this not-to-miss event is to bring together all segments of the marketplace designed to help industry professionals save money, earn more money and create operating efficiencies at small, midsize and large properties," said Emil Lee, president of CHTA. "The concepts that will be presented are practical and executable ideas that will help to improve profitability," Lee added.

"There has been nothing like CHIEF in the Caribbean for the past two decades, and we are excited that the event is working as planned to bring together the industry," said Lee. "We are finding that CHIEF is filling a void in the conference agenda via sessions targeted to sales, opera-

tions and sustainability as evidenced by hoteliers' inclination to register multiple individuals from each departmental area," Lee added.

ASSISTING HOTELS

CHIEF is designed to help hoteliers compete effectively in the 21st Century. Many of the sessions are devoted to helping small, independent hotels while others have been developed to assist the large chain hotels compete in the difficult Caribbean environment.

Overall, the programme is structured to bring all segments of the marketplace together for networking and ultimately working more closely to grow tourism.

"We are seeing a high level of interest from several of our trail-blazing hotel owners and managers" said Lee.

Sandals Resorts International chief executive officer, Adam Stewart, along with other Sandals employees will be among the feature attendees and speakers at CHIEF.

Stewart commented, "Our industry is in a constant state of change. The travel distribution channels of



Adam Stewart

today are likely to differ in the future. Our success is predicated on our ability to anticipate change and adapt to reach our customers and

address their needs. CHTA's CHIEF event will bring top-level thinking to the table to add greater insight into our business planning.

It's important for the region's hoteliers to come together at events like CHIEF. I look forward to being part of this important dialogue."

"I've got a small successful hotel, but I am always looking to see what others are doing so I can stay competitive," said Lorraine Wheatley, co-owner/manager of the Anegada Reef Hotel, British Virgin Islands. "CHIEF offers me an opportunity to compare what both chain hotels and independent resorts are doing to stay ahead of the crowd," she added.

"I am looking forward to attending CHIEF to exchange experiences and to learn about best practices that my colleagues'/competitors are using," said Ewald Bie-mans, owner, Bucuti and Tara Beach Resorts in Aruba. "I also want to network with other industry executives to hear how we can maximise awareness in the global marketplace," he added.

Other notable attendees and speakers include: Nathan Lump, **Travel + Leisure** editor, Demetrius Canton, Expedia, Brian Payea, TripAdvisor and Gonzalo del Peon, AMResorts.



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Jewel Dunn's River celebrates five years



The fifth anniversary cake.

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE 250-ROOM Jewel Dunn's River Beach Resort and Spa celebrated its fifth anniversary on Tuesday, September 1 with a grand gala dinner, complemented by a spectacular show on the hotel's pool terrace.

The event attracted a large turnout of specially invited members of the local community, who joined with resident guests for a fabulous

evening.

Among those present were Custos of St Ann Norma Walters; Sagicor Group's president and chief executive officer, Richard Byles; Member of Parliament for North East St Ann Shahine Robinson; Mayor Desmond Gilmore; senior vice-president, Caribbean operations and development at Aimbridge Hospitality, Rich Cortese; regional manager, Sagicor Bank, Northern, Oral Heaven; Sharon Williams of the



Members of the Harmony Aquatic Dancers performing in the pool.

Jamaica Tourist Board; and Vana Taylor of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association.

Several managers from sister Jewel properties and other hotels also turned out to support Jewel Dunn's River's special day. Among them former general manager, Carol Bourke, who now heads Hilton Rose Hall; current general manager, Ann-Marie Goffe-Pryce; Jewel Paradise Cove's Barbara Burton; and Jewel Runaway Bay's Scott Robbins.

The flagship of the Jewel brand, Dunn's River is owned by Sagicor. Byles, hailed the milestone, describing the period as five wonderful years.

The entertainment package included the Cuban group, Harmony Aquatic Dancers, who delivered a splendid performance in the pool; Rampage, the hotel's resident band; and reggae star Freddie McGregor, who capped the evening's activities with a tremendous show.



Derrick Evans of H'Evans Scent photobombs this shot, which shows (from left) Duane 'DJ Bones' Howard of Irie FM; Dana Paisley, CEO of Wiz Marketing; Scott Robbins, general manager of Jewel Runaway Bay, and Oral Heaven, regional manager, Sagicor Bank, Northern.



Richard Byles, Sagicor Group's president and CEO, is flanked by wife Jacinth (left) and Ann-Marie Goffe-Pryce, general manager, Jewel Dunn's River.



From left: Kellesah Thomas (Miss Jewel Resorts); Gerneil Hylton, HR manager; Alicia Lynch, Michael Spencer (Mr Jewel Resorts), all came from Jewel Paradise Cove.



From left: Richard Bourke, Sharon Williams of the Jamaica Tourist Board, Custos Norma Walters and Rich Cortese.



A section of the audience enjoying Freddie McGregor's performance.



Mayor Desmond Gilmore in the company of Latoya-Gaye Brown.



Entertainment coordinator at Jewel Dunn's River, Sassy, wore black for the occasion.

McNeill meets Air China execs

BEIJING: JAMAICA'S SENIOR tourism officials, Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill, and Jamaica's director of tourism, Paul Pennicook, met with a number of executives from China's flag carrier, Air China, this past week.

Since leaving an impact at the 15th IAAF World Championships in Beijing, Jamaica sought to leverage the opportunity to meet with the airline to further strengthen tourism ties with the host country to elevate the visibility of Destination Jamaica in the Far East.



Jamaica's minister of tourism and entertainment, Dr Wykeham McNeill (third right), and Jamaica's director of tourism, Paul Pennicook (third left), meet with vice-chairman of Air China, Jia Tie Sheng (centre), along with other Air China tourism executives.

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (left) receives a gift from vice-chairman of Air China, Jia Tie Sheng, while meeting with airline executives.

Jamaica House China



Chinese travel agents meet with Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill at Jamaica House 2015 (JH15). JH15 was mounted at the NUO Hotel in Beijing, China from August 26-30 and hosted over 750 travel agents, tour operators, airline representatives and travel service groups as well as travel media.

JAMAICA

TOURIST BOARD

JTB in Canada focused on wedding market

AS THE 2015/2016 fall and winter season approaches, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) in Canada is ramping up its participation in bridal shows. In 2014 alone, 22,287 Canadians visited Jamaica for the purpose of a wedding or honeymoon, and this number continues to grow as the popularity of destination weddings increases in Canada.

The JTB will participate in at least 16 Canadian wedding shows over the coming six months, making Jamaica one of the most visible Caribbean destinations at bridal shows in Canada. Having a strong presence at these shows guarantees that Jamaica remains top of mind for brides and grooms selecting a destination for their wedding or honeymoon. In total, these shows are attended by almost 100,000 persons.

"Our participation in the fall and winter bridal shows ensures that we continue to present Jamaica to couples looking to tie the knot in a tropical destination," said Philip Rose, regional director for the JTB in Canada. "There are many destinations vying for this market, so it's important that we have a strong presence at these shows and demonstrate that Jamaica has so much more to offer than just sun, sea and sand. Most couples are thrilled to learn about the fantastic diversity the island has to offer and the resources we have available to assist them in planning the perfect trip."

UPCOMING 2015 CANADIAN BRIDAL SHOWS

1. Canada's Bridal Show, September 11-13, Toronto, 8,000 attendees
2. The Ring's Bridal Expo, September 20, Kitchener, 2,000 attendees
3. Hamilton-Halton Fall Wedding Show, September 26-27, Hamilton, 3,000 attendees
4. Suhaag Show, September 27, Mississauga, 5,000 attendees
5. National Bridal Show, October 23-25, Mississauga, 8,000 attendees

UPCOMING 2016 CANADIAN BRIDAL SHOWS:

1. Canada's Bridal Show, January 8-10, Toronto, 12,000 attendees
2. Windsor Wedding Extravaganza, January 16-17, Windsor, 4,000 attendees
3. Ottawa Wedding Show, January 16-17, Ottawa, 10,000 attendees
4. Total Wedding Show, January 23-24, Mississauga, 10,000 attendees
5. London Bridal Show, January 23-24, London, 2,000 attendees
6. National Bridal Show, January 22-24, Toronto, 10,000 attendees
7. The Bridal Show, January 23-24, Burlington, 2,500 attendees
8. Let's Get Married Bridal Show, TBC January, Montreal, 6,000 attendees
9. Suhaag Show, TBC February, Mississauga, 5,000 attendees
10. The Perfect Wedding Show, TBC February, Mississauga, 2,500 attendees
11. Area Productions Bridal Show, TBC March, Newmarket, 1,500 attendees.

Bamboo Blu Restaurant voted No. 1 for third straight year

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

BAMBOO BLU Restaurant at Mammee Bay, Ocho Rios, has been voted number one by customers and has picked up the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for the third consecutive year.

Bamboo Blu, a regular in The Gleaner's Restaurant Week each November, has been racking up rave reviews in all areas of its presentation – food, service, value and atmosphere.

Of 660 reviews, over 500 rated Bamboo Blu as excellent, making it the number one restaurant in the Ocho Rios area, out of 89.

One reviewer, who rated the restaurant five-out-of-five, wrote on August 27:

"Amazing dinner on the beach: Memorable dinner on the beach while watching the sunset! For my daughter's birthday they wrote her name in the sand and lit it on fire while singing to her. Lobster and service was impeccable!"



Fire roasted snapper with coconut run-down sauce, sautéed green bean and jasmine rice.

Another five-out-of-five rated review, posted August 24, said: "Love it. My husband and I went there for a romantic dinner, it was great, the food was lovely I

would recommend the oxtail shepherd pie, it was to die for. The scenery was wonderful and after dinner we took a long walk on the beach. Will definitely

visit again."

Proprietor Bunny Williams was extremely happy for the positive reviews and summed it up by encouraging patrons to: "Be brave – drink a Big Bamboo in your very own to-keep bamboo chalice. Be a star, howl at the moon around our nightly bonfire. Be Liz Taylor, be Martin Luther King, be Frank Sinatra, they created this historic jet-setters hideaway."

Located on the beach at Mammee Bay next door to the Riu Hotel, Bamboo Blu provides a welcome relief after a day of activities by offering a relaxed atmosphere. The restaurant prides itself on the wide variety of cuisine it serves, ranging from burgers to seafood to international fusion, Caribbean and vegetarian dishes.

Favourite entrees such as fire roasted silver snapper, honey BBQ baby back ribs, or Zesty Spaghetti with Vegetable Bolognese; awesome appetisers such as salt fish bammy bruschetta and conch soup are designed to please even the most discerning palates.

Volunteers needed for Int'l Coastal Cleanup Day

THE JAMAICA Environment Trust (JET) is looking forward to another record turnout for this year's International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) Day activities in Jamaica, to be held on Saturday, September 19. In 2014, Jamaica ranked as the 12th largest ICC event in the world and the largest in the English-speaking Caribbean. Over 7,400 Jamaicans cleaned up over 85,000 pounds of garbage from 113 sites. In 2015, the aim is to rank Jamaica in the global top 10 with over 10,000 volunteers expected to participate in cleanups across the island.

"We already have over 110 sites registered for ICC this year," said Suzanne Stanley, JET programme director. "We have been training coordinators from all over Jamaica and encouraging them to recruit as many volunteers as possible so that we can meet our target of 10,000 beach cleanup volunteers on September 19."

ICC efforts began in Jamaica the mid-90s with small cleanups taking place in a few locations across the island. In 2008, JET became national coordinators of ICC activities in Jamaica and gained the support of the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) as the primary donor, who has continued to support the initiative over the years. As the ICC national coordinator, JET works with local site coordinators including community-based



Chaniek Lewis (left) of Jamaica Tourist Board caught up with Dutty Berry and Bella Blair, brand ambassadors for the Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica campaign, at the launch of International Coastal Clean-Up Day 2015. On Saturday September 19, thousands of volunteers will join the beach clean-up initiative at beaches in parishes across the island.

organisations, non- government organisations, government agencies, private sector organisations, hotels, tourism stakeholders, youth clubs, service clubs, and schools to carry out ICC cleanups across Jamaica.

ICC volunteers are responsible not only for picking up trash on coastlines, but also collecting data on the type of garbage affecting

the marine environment. The data is compiled and sent by JET to the Ocean Conservancy in the US, who coordinates the global event. "Last year's global ranking in the top 15 is really something to celebrate," said Diana McCaulay, JET CEO, "for such a small country like Jamaica to have so many people coming out to clean up our beaches is a tes-

tament to all JET and TEF have been doing to raise awareness about marine litter over the years, but we still have a long way to go."

NUH DUTTY UP JAMAICA

This year's ICC Jamaica theme will be Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica. Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica is the public education component of the Clean Coasts Project (CCP), another programme being delivered by JET with the support of TEF. Launched in February 2015, Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica aims to improve citizens knowledge about the impact of poorly handled waste on public health and the environment, while encouraging personal responsibility for the generation and disposal of waste. Launched in 2014 with \$34.5 million in funding from TEF, Phase I of CCP included environmental education for adults and children along with practical strategies for tackling poor solid waste management and marine debris in Jamaica. In 2015 ICC will kick off phase II of CCP which was recently approved for an additional \$60 million in funding from TEF.

JET encourages all Jamaicans to support clean coasts by joining an ICC cleanup in their parish. A full list of sites can be found online at www.jamentrust.org. For more information on Nuh Dutty Up Jamaica and the Clean Coasts Project log on to www.nuhdutyupjamaica.org.

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

I AM VolunTourism is a social enterprise that provides opportunities to “give forward” through volunteering, travel camps, service learning and study abroad globally, according to Chris Rose, the CEO.

“A social enterprise is an innovative business model that achieves a social mission while generating a profit,” Rose said.

Unlike traditional non-profit organisations that need grants and fundraising to remain viable, social enterprises, such as I Am VolunTourism, rely primarily on profits for sustainability. It consists of volunteer networks across the Caribbean, Europe, the United States and Canada.

“These volunteer networks provide sustainable support for our training programmes and community-based projects while empowering underserved and at-risk communities globally,” Rose told **Hospitality Jamaica** recently.

He said some of his objectives are: “to address and answer to the devastating effects of all-inclusive, mass tourism on small, rural and remote communities around Jamaica; to increase visitor interaction with local Jamaicans in their everyday environment; to expose volunteers to unique, authentic, historical, cultural and natural experiences; and to support and promote small, locally owned hotels, guest houses, home stays and community attractions”.

RESOURCES IN COMMUNITIES

The enterprise also intends to “directly inject communities with human, cultural, financial and land resources; support and develop locally made souvenir items and other authentic Jamaican products; provide a rich cross cultural exchange through travel, sports and service learning”.

The enterprise has two elements. “The volunteering provides education, skill-sharing and labour that benefits both locals and visitors through cross-cultural learning and exchange”, while the tourism aspect “provides a self-sustained direct economic impact on the local community, while also providing visitors with an authentic, travel experience that is truly inclusive, more efficient and cost-effective”.

Both the volunteering and tourism initiatives are set up to help the visitor and host communities become aware and self-sustaining through a double-win approach, Rose said. The pro-

I Am VolunTourism wants to build Jamaica



Volunteers participating in a drumming workshop in Charles Town, Portland.



Volunteers go tubing at Chukka Good Hope Estates in Trelawny.

grammes “directly address the imbalances of all-inclusive mass tourism by integrating human capital and injecting economic resources directly into the commu-

nity”, he said.

Through volunteer travel, the projects are selected by community members. Their volunteer staff and visitors get the opportunity to live

and/or work in target communities, participating in everyday Jamaican life. Environmental specialists, researchers, clubs and organisations are invited to join in and become

part of this sustainable tourism initiative.

Since 2009, I Am VolunTourism has successfully completed many projects in Jamaica. They include a sports and education volunteer outreach for six weeks of soccer development training camps for 60 rural students and athletes from Treasure Beach.

It has identified, mentored, and provided personal training for local student athlete, Sidi Genus from Treasure Beach, for whom it has established a \$90,000 scholarship and aid for three years, to attend a private high school, St John’s College High School, in Washington, DC.

Other projects include: hosting 40 volunteers from Regina, Canada, for a cross-cultural dance camp outreach with the Muriton Boys Home in St Elizabeth as a part of their care and community outreach; hosting a professional actress and volunteers from Canada and running a two-week performing arts camp at Ocean Breeze Hotel, Lovers Leap, St Elizabeth.

In 2012 I Am VolunTourism

financed and ran camps for 50 at-risk youth from Steer Town, St Ann. It collaborated with ARK Angel Network and built over seven houses in Steer Town for underserved families, and single mothers. Its ambassadors have tutored Duncans All-Age and Infant School students in mathematics and reading. They have also conducted soccer clinics for outstanding Jamaican student athletes from Duncans Primary and the community.

This summer, youth ambassadors from Boca Raton, Florida were moved to “Give Forward and Build Jamaica” in a unique leadership-development programme through travel and community-based volunteer activities, which brought youths together from Treasure Beach/Great Pond, St Elizabeth; Duncans Bay, Trelawny and Charles Town Maroon, Portland. They were empowered through a process of cross cultural exchange, sports and educational development.

MAROON CULTURE

An indigenous cultural, sports and education outreach was established with the Charles Town Maroons in Portland by way of cross cultural tours. I Am VolunTourism provided an opportunity to give forward by connecting with the Charles Town Maroon Council, which exposed the campers to the history and culture of the Maroons. The Charles Town Maroon Council also greatly supports the idea of empowering the at-risk and underserved communities.

With the support of Jamaica Tours Limited in Montego Bay, I am VolunTourism and Salt Foundation made the summer camp at the Charles Town Maroon village and Asafu Yard possible. Assistance also came from farmers in the communities who contributed ground provision for the children, and the Ministry of Finance and Planning, which brought “awareness and facilitating dialogue on economic reform at the community level”.

In the future, Rose said, I Am VolunTourism intends “to establish and develop campsites in strategic communities across the island and to initiate a large-scale agricultural project for sustainability and development of the youth workforce”. It also wants to “build a bridge that connects the indigenous Maroons to the global economic chain” and to “establish a Kingston-based volun-tourism centre for supporting local volunteer activities islandwide”.



Volunteers learning about Maroon history and culture through ring games in Charles Town, Portland.



Volunteers attending to a cactus garden at Duncans All-Age and Infant School in Trelawny.



Volunteers pose with Ma Ruby (front) at Great Bay, St Elizabeth after creating an income-earning aloe garden for her.



Parents of children who were sponsored by Jamaica Tours Limited in Montego Bay to attend I Am VolunTourism camps with the Charles Town Maroons. CEO Chris Rose is at the extreme left.



Volunteers teaching a class at Duncans All-Age and Infant School in Trelawny.

The shackle, the river, 'Tarzan' and the bonfire



The bonfire that was built in honour of Colonel Frank Lumsden on Sunday, September 30.

TO HONOUR the life, work, and achievement of Colonel Frank Lumsden, the Charles Town Maroon Council and his relatives hosted a three-night wake at the Asafu Yard, Charles Town, Portland from Friday, August 28 to Sunday the 30th.

I, along with Marcus Goffe, a member of the Charles Town Maroon Council, compered the formal segments of the programme. It was a personal and professional occasion for me. Over the years, by covering Maroon events, I had become associated with Lumsden.

I knew of his illness, so when I heard he had passed, I wasn't shocked. I just didn't know the end was so near. I reflected on his achievements and the big shoes that he had left to be filled.

And the three-night wake turned out to be a big process in keeping with the stature of the man who revived the Maroon culture in Charles Town, where there has been an international Maroon conference for the past seven years. The very first conference was held at Quao Village.



A neck shackle that Hospitality Jamaica writer Paul H. Williams found along the Buff Bay River in Charles Town, Portland, recently.

On the Saturday, some of us went river bathing at Quao Village, located beside the Buff Bay River. The water was clean and calm, and I took a few dips. I wasn't in great spirits, though. Something was weighing me down, just like my wet

T-shirt, which felt so oppressing and suffocating. I had to drag it off.

I went back to a spot above the river to feel lighter. There, we chatted for a while, until I remembered I had left some stuff at the river-side. I went to fetch them.



CONTRIBUTED

Hospitality Jamaica writer Paul H. Williams shows off the two 'likkle' fish caught by Rodney Rose of the Charles Town Maroons. Rose is an expert river fisher, but Sunday, August 30 wasn't his day at all.

As I was about to climb the incline to return to the 'lighter' spot, I saw a rusty-brown circular piece of metal under the base of a tree. Erosion had partially removed the stones and earth from the spot.

I looked at the object, and something stirred inside of me.

I took it up. Weighty. Yet, it was just an inch thick with two small holes opposite of each other. It wasn't a complete circle; there was a

quarter-inch break. This heavy piece of metal I was convinced on the spot was a neck shackle from the days of slavery.

I held it and caressed it, moving my fingers around it. It was like I was caressing the neck of the person who wore it. I brought it up to the chatting spot to showcase. The reaction was nonchalant, tinged with a little curiosity.

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Yet, the more I held it and caressed it, the more uncomfortable I became. I was holding a shackle from the inglorious past. I had never had such a strong physical encounter with the story of my ancestors. I have seen shackles before, but this one was pulling tears from their ducts, making me very disturbed, angry.

I spent the rest of the time in the village picking John Crow beads.

Perhaps my ancestors used to pick John Crow beads to adorn themselves, to pass time, when they rid themselves of their shackles and fled.

Then I felt my left ear for the hole. I felt like putting a little bunch of John Crow beads into it. The stem was the right size but too long. I shortened it. With much care, the bunch of John Crow beads was inserted.

From my other ear dangled a little African mask. My head was tied with indigo African cloth. In my hand was the shackle, not on my neck. My friend Karen Marks saw the artistry. She began taking pictures. I felt so regal and free, free to be me.



People dancing in the night near where a bonfire was built in honour of the late Maroon colonel, Frank Lumsden.



For this man, it was as easy as Sunday morning in the Buff Bay River, Portland on Sunday, August 30.



A little girl watches as two youth somersault into the Buff Bay River, Portland on Sunday, August 30.



Maurice 'Tarzan' McFarlane is all energised after returning from the river via a branch back into the foliage.

Back at the Asafu Yard, I put the shackle atop my bag of clothes. Later in the evening, I placed it on a glass showcase in the museum. It was a Maroon artefact, part of our story.

We returned to the river the Sunday. Much lighter day. I revisited the spot where I found the piece from the past. The energy. Then I went into the river with my clothes on. Felt so good. There, we took pictures and chatted. I laughed so hard at one point, I felt like passing out. Karen Marks!

RIVER

The river was calm, just as it was the day before. People were at ease, swimming, floating, somersaulting. The river can be so liberating. My ancestors could tell. And there was this youngster, Maurice McFarlane, a real-life Tarzan.

He climbed down a branch into the river, and back up the branch into the foliage, effortlessly. Envy pricked me for the first time in my life. I wished I could do that. And then "plop!" Maurice spiralled into the river.

After chatting with Karen and taking pictures of Maurice, who said he wants to be a model, we left Quao Village, not before I glanced at the place where the shackle was found. To the Asafu Yard, we were bound.

That night, at a spot not too far from the said river, a bonfire was lit. Beside it, we drummed, sang and danced under the stare of the golden moon. Unshackled, we moved, as we celebrated the life of another great Maroon.



Maurice McFarlane climbs back up the branch from which he had descended into the Buff Bay River, Portland.

Sandals Whitehouse hosts US multi-station radio remote

SANDALS WHITEHOUSE European Village and Spa, last week, hosted 20 top-rated radio stations reaching some 12-15 million listeners across the United States.

DJs shared details on the hotel chain's The Closer You Look, the Better We Look campaign by raving about their own experience at the resort and interviewing the hotel's team members and managers.

Consumers in top markets, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Miami got an inside look into the Sandals Luxury Included experience.

The airwaves were sizzling with information on the resort's Gourmet Discovery Dining at seven specialty restaurants, its exclusive partnership with Robert Mondavi Winery, unlimited water-sports at the Sandals Aqua Centre, the beauty of the hotel's rooms and suites overlooking the two-mile white-sand beach, the resort's signature Red Lane Spa, Sandals WeddingMoon and the Sandals Foundation.

DJs were also treated to special performances from the Beeston Spring Cultural Youth Group and also made donations of school supplies to the performers though the



Courtney Miller (right), general manager at Sandals Whitehouse, promotes the luxurious offerings at Sandals Whitehouse live on air during the US multi-station radio remote held at the resort recently.

Sandals Foundation.

Participating US cities and stations included:

■ WQIK-FM – Jacksonville – Jacksonville's Big Show

■ WBEN-FM – Philadelphia –

Kristen Herrman

■ WMMX-FM – Dayton – Jeff, Gina & Dave

■ KSRZ-FM – Omaha – Chris & Ricky

■ KJKE-FM – Oklahoma City –



Atlanta's Johnny O (WWWQ-FM) (seated) shares lens time with youngsters from the Beeston Spring Cultural Group.

Kevin Christopher

■ WCJK-FM – Nashville – Moose

■ WMJX-FM – Boston – Tina Gao

■ WMTX-FM – Tampa – Randi West

■ KKDM-FM – Des Moines – Randi West

■ KPEK-FM – Albuquerque – Randi West

■ WNSH-FM – New York – The Kelly Ford Show

■ WLXX-FM – Lexington – MIDDAYS with Deidre

■ WXLC-FM – Chicago – Haynes

Johns

■ KWNR-FM – Las Vegas – Toni Marie

■ WBGG-FM – Miami – Doc Reno

■ WRRM-FM – Cincinnati – Bobbi Maxwell

■ WWWQ-FM – Atlanta – Johnny O

■ WVEZ-FM – Louisville – Ric Owen in the Afternoon

■ WVKL-FM – Norfolk – Charles Black

■ WLDI-FM – WPB – Brody

Reggae Marathon donates old, unused banners to recycling project

REGGAE MARATHON, Half Marathon & 10K has donated all old banners from its December 2014 event and previous stagings to the Jamaica Public Service (JPS) Banna Bags project for the creation of school bags for children in need.

The Banna Bags Project is a social outreach programme by JPS to convert unused corporate vinyl banners into attractive, sturdy and waterproof bags as an alternative to traditional expensive bags for children in need of support with school supplies. The first beneficiaries of



Reggae Marathon school bags which were produced, in collaboration with JPS, as part of the company's 'greening' initiatives.

the Banna Bags Project were young students in need of back-to-school supplies. Thereafter, students at the JPS Foundation Model Schools and children nominated by JPS employees have benefited.

Reggae Marathon decided to get involved as an extension of the brand's 'greening project', where the organisers recycle and reuse materials at the staging of each event.

"We collect plastic bottles and other plastic material at the annual event and hand them over to recy-

cling plants. In addition, we ask our runners to donate their 'gently used' shoes. These are collected in drums at each event and given to young runners in need during the Grand Prix series," said Alfred 'Frano' Francis, race director of the Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon & 10K.

The 15th staging of Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon & 10K is set for December 3-5 in Negril. To date, there has been a 29 per cent increase in registration compared to last year at this time.