

The Prevention of Violence Is An Investment in the Country's Economy– Says Dr Ashley

Dr. Deanna Ashley, executive director of the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) said that the prevention of violence is an investment in the development and improvement of the country's economy and Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Dr Ashley made the observation while discussing recent Peace Day activities on Power 106 with host, Dervan Malcolm on Both Sides of the Story in observation of International Peace Day, which was observed on September 21.

"If you want to see an increase in productivity, you must invest in your people. So you need to invest in making sure that children don't drop out of school and in fact when they leave school, they have learnt and can read and write and therefore can go on to develop useable skills," she stated.

"So you therefore need to dovetail investment so that those who have failed in schools obtain remedial education and one of the ways to teach and engage students is to use different tools



Dr. Deanna Ashley, executive director of the VPA

whether it be in or out of school," she said pointing out that this can be done through sports and the creative arts where children are not being taught or learning using the traditional ways.

She said these forms of meaningful engagements will prevent children from getting involved in delinquent and criminal activities. The VPA executive director further added that if the country is to grow and develop the issue of the pre-

vention of crime and violence must be treated as a priority.

Dr Richard Keane, chairman of the Peace Management Initiative West who was participating in the discussion said his organisation is committed to working with the communities to strive for peace.

"When you see a few lives change, your hope is that few will become a lot more and so we work with those that we have access to and we see change both in the way they think and conduct themselves and that is what motivates and drives us," he said.

International Peace Day was observed on Tuesday, September 21 under the local theme **"Sustaining Communities for a Peaceful Country"**. A number of virtual activities were held to commemorate the day. The VPA in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, the Early Childhood Commission, among other entities, encouraged children to write Peace Day letters.

Inside this issue:

VPA Presents Care Packages to Cassava Piece Residents 2

Restorative Justice Programme Reports Success 2

CRP Develops Peace Building Resiliency and Wellness Training Manual 3

Jones Town Children Benefit From Peace Building Summer Camp 3

International Day of Peace Celebrate on September 21 4

Children Pen Letters of Peace 4

Professor Ward Conferred With National Award

Professor Elizabeth Ward, Chair of the Violence Prevention Alliance has been conferred with the Order of Distinction in the Officer Class. Professor Ward was presented with the award on National Heroes Day, October 18. She



was recognised for public service in the area of national security and justice. For the last 20 years Professor Ward has been creating and executing crime prevention programmes in Jamaica in various capacities including as chairman of the VPA. We congratulate you Professor

Ward.

VPA Presents Care Packages to Cassava Piece Residents

Some 50 residents of Cassava Piece in Kingston received care packages from the VPA as part of its International Peace Day outreach activities.

Professor Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA said the delivery of the care packages is part of the ongoing work being done with the community which commenced some three years ago.

"The community members identified that elderly persons in the community are in need and that it would be good to give them some support and that there are children in these homes who would also benefit," she pointed out.

The care packages included basic food items such as flour, sugar, rice and tin food; toiletries, reading books for children



Jonelle Llewellyn, Research Associate (left) at the VPA presents Julius Roye with a care package

and masks. The donation was in collaboration with the Council of Voluntary Social Services and GraceKennedy Group.

Leroy Thompson, one of the residents who received care packages expressed gratitude for the

gesture. "This has been a blessing for me and it came during a time of need," he said noting that the pandemic has been very distressing as he

was also grieving from the death of close friends.

For Julius Roye the package is a blessing and will go a far way in assisting

in preparing meals for his family.

"These packages are meaningful and will assist many. The pandemic has taken a toll on the community especially the elderly who are in need of many necessities and this could not come at a better time and this will help to maintain them for a while," said Oneil Morrison, a young man from the community who is also integral in peace building.

Meanwhile, Mr Morrison commended the work being done by the VPA which he said has assisted in quelling the violence in the community. "The peace building activities initiated in the community have assisted in improving the characters of persons in the community. We have a lot of activities that engage children and the wider community. This has assisted in the breakdown of barriers and assisted them in addressing conflicts in a peaceful manner," he informed.

Restorative Justice Programme Reports Success

The Restorative Justice Programme is reporting successes in resolution of minor offences where offenders are referred to the programme for dispute resolution disclosed Oral Taylor, August Town restorative justice parish officer at the Ministry of Justice.

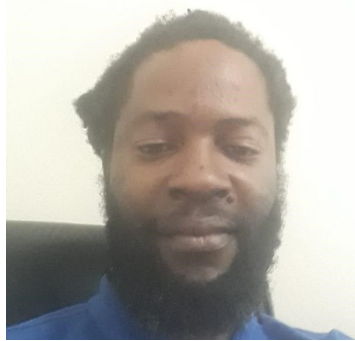
"We have a success rate of 90 per cent of the cases referred to us whether from community policing or from the courts, the participants arrive at a satisfactory agreement whereby the offender remains accountable to the agreement made at the session and were able to fulfil the agreement that they committed to," he stated.

Mr Taylor made the disclosure while addressing a VPA Steering Committee Meeting recently where he was the guest speaker.

Restorative Justice is a type of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) method, focused on achieving conflict resolution through the use of conferences.

Mr Taylor however noted that these resolutions were in minor charges which he said can sometime spiral into serious crimes.

He said Jamaica has been leading the Caribbean in implementing this type of transformational type of justice. The aim of the



Oral Taylor, restorative justice officer

programme is to reduce the criminal backlog by diverting cases from the formal justice system and also resolving conflicts at the community level.

Other aims include the elimination

of reprisal culture by enabling individuals to have access to a dispute resolution process at the early stage of conflict and avoid an escalation to violent reactions.

Some of the minor offences that are referred to the programme

are: unlawful wounding, assaults, theft of property, malicious destruction of property, cruelty to child, threat, public nuisance and breaches to the Noise Abatement Act. Mr Taylor mentioned that one of the short comings of Restorative Justice is that it is more reactive rather than proactive. "When it comes to community engagement and working together within communities, I believe that we need more interventions that are proactive in orientation because restorative justice is meant to enable persons to manage conflicts but in reality restorative justice is happening after the fact as oppose to before the fact," he said. He however noted that the programme works with persons in communities where the Restorative Justice Centres are located.

CRP Develops Peace Building Resiliency and Wellness Training Manual

In July 2021 a Peace Building Resiliency and Wellness Training Manual was completed by the leadership team of the Child Resiliency Programme (CRP) as part of the partnership established with the newly launched Peace Institute of the International University of the Caribbean and the Violence Prevention Alliance.

Dr Kim Scott and Dr Michelle Miller of CRP have been appointed as faculty members of the Peace Institute and are scheduled to begin training in the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development in the Peace Building Resiliency and Wellness Course (PRW) this semester. The delivery of the PRW course to the Ministry of National Security case managers also began in October.



Dr Kim Scott, Director of the Child Resiliency Programme

Preparation of the delivery of the Child Resiliency Programme for Boys Town began and include identifying the children and parents referred for this academic years cohort with 60 families referred from Denham Town,

Boys Town Primary, St Alban's Primary, Trench Town Primary, St Annie's Primary and Red Hills Primary. The referral criteria were adjusted to include children identified to be suffering from anxiety and depression and needing mental health support in the COVID-19 context. The programme delivery continues to include a hybrid approach of both a face-to-face and virtual component. Phone calls, WhatsApp teaching and home visits

continue to play a large role in the delivery of the programme in addition to the usual face-to-face delivery since the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020.

The Child Resiliency Programme began in 2006 as an outreach programme of the Hope United Church, under the umbrella of the Hope Counselling and Wellness Centre. It seeks to meet the needs of pre-adolescents and build on their physical, social, cognitive, vocational and moral competencies as the most effective strategy for preventing multiple problems including violence. In 2014 the programme began operating out of the VPA.

Jones Town Children Benefit from Peace Building Summer Camp

Twenty children from Jones Town Primary School participated in a peacebuilding summer camp entitled "PATHWAYS TO PEACE: Children Leading the Way", conducted by the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Positive Pathways Activity. The summer camp was held over a period of four weeks in August and September.

"It is always a challenge to implement a short intervention like this and hope to make a difference," said VPA's Executive Director, Dr. Deanna Ashley. "We wanted to address the needs of

the youngest children identified in USAID's Positive Pathways activity – the 10–12-year-olds – and hopefully plant a seed of hope and peace within them."

The short summer camp conducted six sessions by experienced facilitators who have experience working with this age group. They used the five E's (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate) and their activities included stories, discussions, games, and quizzes on topics such as bullying, being responsible, making peace, problem solving, values and attitudes. The creative and expressive arts were central to the sessions and the children used art and craft to plot their personal career goals. They also explored feelings

through role plays, which further helped them develop messages promoting peace.

The sessions culminated in the students participating in a short video where they shared their fears as well as their messages of peace to their community and to Jamaica. They were coached by renowned dramatist and educator, Owen "Blakka" Ellis. Many of the children reported not feeling safe within their community, demonstrated through the use of the traditional Jamaican game, "Bull in the Pen". Rooted in the subconscious need to break free from bondage, it related to the oppressive violence that characterises the children's daily existence.

VPA, the Jones Town Primary School and sponsors, USAID Positive Pathways, hope that this nurturing will be possible and that over the next five years of their lives, these youngsters will be on the Pathway to Peace that they started in the summer of 2021.

This initiative was one of the first activities conducted under the USAID Positive Pathways' Community Peace Building grant.

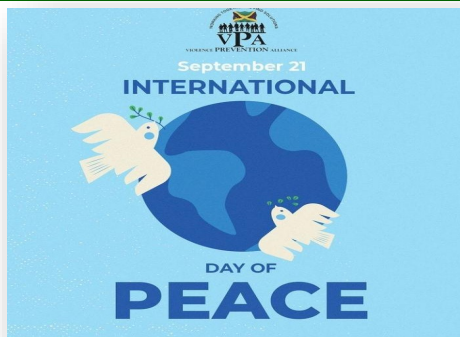
International Day of Peace Celebrated on September 21

International Peace Day was observed on September 21 under the local theme **"Sustaining Communities for a Peaceful Country"**. The VPA in collaboration with its partners observed the day with a series of virtual activities.

The VPA in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, the Early Childhood Commission, among other entities, encouraged children to write Peace Day letters.

The initiative was aimed at reinforcing the message of

peace being the cornerstone of the nation's development as it realizes the goal of unity for all. These letters will be published in the local newspapers and shared on social media platforms of the VPA and its partners. The Peace Manage Initiative Western Chapter hosted a webinar to mark the day. The webinar was on the progress updates on how PMI has impacted communities.



The Rotary Club of Manor Park hosted the second staging of its virtual **Forum for Peace**, on Tuesday, September 21, 2021 at 6:00 pm under the theme **"Peace, Non-Violence, Equity and Sustainable Development - Jamaica's Prospects?"**.

This annual celebration of the International Day of Peace, featured a panel discussion examining Jamaica's prospects of recovering better from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,

building resilience and transforming Jamaica into a society that is more equal, more just, equitable, inclusive, healthier and sustainable.

Children Pen Letters of Peace

Dear Gordon Road community,

Peace is very important in a community. If there is no peace chaos will erupt. There is a way to make and maintain peace. I have a plan. I call it the P.L.E.E plan. I will explain the plan more in detail. The first component of the plan is practice. We must practice to solve conflicts with words. Sometimes conflicts get out of hand and end in physical fights. No matter what we should sit and talk out the problems. Practice makes perfect. For example; two people are having a fight about who is right and who is wrong. In that case they should sit down and get the facts then apologize to each other.

The second component is learn. We should learn to love and care for each other. Love is a big part of peace. A community who loves each other will protect and care for each other. Everyone will be at peace when love is in the



Neal Lol Dean, Student of Bishop Gibson High

picture. The third component is encourage. We should encourage each other to ask for help to solve serious conflicts. Sometimes conflicts get out of hand that others need help to solve it. Media-

tors sometimes need to be contacted. Sometimes a family member or friend can help instead. At the end of the day a fair and reasonable solution should be found.

The fourth and last component is environment. A peaceful and loving environment should be composed. Your environment tells a lot about you. An aggressive person can be peaceful if they are surrounded with a peaceful environment. We should make Gordon Road a peaceful place so new comers can know how to behave. That is the end of my plan. I hope that you will take my idea on. I hope to see a change in the community.

Sincerely,
Your neighbour,
Neah loi Dean.

Dear Jamaica,

My name is Jevaughn Wilkins, a sixth grade student at Maldon Primary School. 'Sustaining Community for a Peaceful Country' should be a main

concern for all citizens of all countries. There are a variety of ways by which one can achieve peace in a community. For me, advising people about the disadvantages and consequences of fighting and other forms of violence will motivate them to become better citizens. This can be done through seminars and other small events .

Peace can be made with one another through simple acts, but for some reason people tend to drift away from the concept of making "peace" and draw closer to violence, research has shown that is through decades of decay in values and attitude. People should be kind to each other and help when they can. These simple acts can really benefit everyone in positive ways. Youth who live and practice peace making are better prepared and function in the working world because acts of kindness will also boost their customer service skills as they set an example for others to try and pursue the same act. This is my way and thought of how peace can be achieved and sustained in my community.

Yours sincerely,

Jevaughn Wilkins



Jevaughn Wilkins, Student of Maldon Primary School