CommuUnity Vibe

INSIDE
Angels Grove
(2011 - 2012 winners
Best Schemes Competition)

Meet the Judges:
Amina Blackwood
Meeks
“Next to the love of God, the love of country is the best preventive of crime.” - George Borrow

Jamaica is a jewel glistening under the sun. Lush green mountains and sapphire blue seas are her apparel. Vibrant people and pulsating music add to her rich culture. I could go on and on in describing her beauty but must limit myself.

However, there is something tainting this beauty’s exquisite smile; that something is crime.

Crime is a disease that has been attacking the core of our country for decades. Murder, corruption, theft, are just a few of its symptoms. This monster cripples our people with fear and anger. For a country with a slogan “Jamaica...no problem”, Jamaica sure has “nuff problems”.

How can we fight this monster? The remedy is simply... love. A quote from Jimi Hendrix sums up its importance. “When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.”

Love is caring for our neighbours, our children, and having compassion for one another. Love is the greatest medicine man can give our beautiful land; it forgives, it heals broken hearts, it reaches out to persons who are in need and it comforts. Love is the cure.

If our people learn to love without ceasing, what can stop this country from being what it can be? So let’s learn to love and live together. Let’s teach love in our homes and in our communities, so that it can spread throughout this country like a “love epidemic”! Let’s fight the disease of crime. Let’s fight it as a community with one heart. We need to save our jewel!

Wendy Jo Williams
Manager
Social Development
National Housing Trust
Cover photo: Caribbean Palms Marching Band at the launch of the 2013/2014 Best Schemes Competition in Angels Grove, St. Catherine. Photographer Lenworth Black
Best Schemes
2013-2014
“Celebrating Communities”

20th Anniversary
This year, 2013 marks the 20th anniversary of the National Housing Trust (NHT) Best Schemes Competition. Over the years the competition has provided a platform for exciting rivalry among some 132 communities from across the island.

The competition resulted from the NHT’s objective to not only help citizens build “dream houses”, but to help them build “dream communities”. The Best Schemes Competition would therefore develop super neighbours who would be socially aware, have positive attitudes and engage in social activities within their communities.

The Best Schemes Competition is open to all NHT built schemes, and encourages practices in the areas of culture, health, education, environmental awareness, governance and entrepreneurship. In recent stagings of the competition, the NHT has been awarding $2 Million in cash prizes to communities at the National and Regional levels.

This national competition has borne much fruit. There has been a significant increase in volunteerism, youth groups and citizens’ associations, landscape improving projects and the building of community centres within these schemes.

The competition has ignited creativity and patriotism among residents of NHT built schemes. Additionally, it has fostered friendly rivalry among competitors, as they mingle with and learn from each other.

The biennial event has also helped to stir civic pride among residents, while they contribute to the growth and development of our nation.

As the Best Schemes Competition continues to grow from strength to strength, the NHT takes pride in its role in this partnership with Jamaican citizens to celebrate and build dream communities.
## WINNERS OVER THE YEARS

Who will be Next?

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Communities are required to do activities that promote development through culture, health, education environment awareness, governance and mortgage management. Below is an explanation of the categories of assessment and the marks to be gained.

**CULTURE (16.25 PTS.)**

Using positive aspects of Jamaican culture that foster community unity and identity.

**HEALTHY LIFESTYLES (11.25 PTS.)**

Evidence of infrastructure or programmes that aid residents to reach their full potential: physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

**EDUCATION (16.25 PTS.)**

Efforts to improve residents’ educational levels, as a way of enhancing employability and business development potential.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS (16.25 PTS.)**

The community’s ability to manage the built and natural environment in a sustainable way, evidenced through the development and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure such as communal spaces, parks, green areas and garbage disposal.

**GOVERNANCE (15 PTS.)**

The ability of community based organisations (CBOs) to effectively plan, manage and co-ordinate activities in the community.

**MORTGAGE REPAYMENT (25 PTS.)**

Full points are awarded to communities with zero arrears during the competition year.
It is sunset; there is a burst of colour across the sky. The laughter of cheerful students fills the air as they come home from school. A group of men work together fixing a car. Welcome to Angels Grove, the 2010/2011 NHT Best Schemes Champions!

Some weeks ago CommUnity Vibe went to Angels Grove to find out the “secret” of their success.

The youth in the community had a lot to say.

“The people in Angels are loving, kind and it’s a calm community” Jaheim Nelson, said.

According to Reheem Blake, Angels Grove is active all year round.

“We have fun activities like Ms. Angels Pageant Competition, summer camps, Angels Grove Choir, and we play football, cricket... we have activities for everyone,” Blake revealed.

“We even grow food here,” Nelson added. “We grow ackee, jack fruit, dasheen...everything...and then we share it with our neighbours.”

“There is no other community like Angels Grove. I would advise you to live here. I love my community,” he boasted.

First vice-president in charge of education of the Angels Grove Citizens’ Association, Cheryll Shippey, in an interview at the community centre, highlighted that Angels Grove is one of a kind.

“You do not see one set of people doing the activities. From the youngest to the oldest, everyone is involved,” she said proudly.

The VP revealed that Angels Grove has an active education programme which involves computer training programme for the elderly and a homework assistance programme for the youth.

According to Shippey the youth are “active ingredients” in Angel Grove’s development.
"It takes a village to raise a child, and we are training our young people to become model citizens. They are involved in our committees so when it is time for us to step down, they are able to step in," the VP explained.

**BEST SCHEMES COMPETITION**

According to VP Shippy, Angels Grove residents are already in gear to win the title again.

“We have a community of active participants. Skills and talents are not lacking in this community.”

It is therefore clear that the Angels Grove citizens are keen on defending their Best Schemes title for 2013/2014.

The Best Schemes Competition is open to all 132 of NHT’s built schemes. It encourages communities to showcase what they have achieved in the areas of culture, health, education, environmental awareness, governance and entrepreneurship.
The earth is flat! Or so Europeans believed until Christopher Columbus set sail and drowned the theory. Fast forward to today, our knowledge of the world has expanded thanks to technology which is readily available at our finger tips. But not every Jamaican has the luxury of the internet or a computer. The Universal Service Fund (USF) is helping to change this by providing funds to outfit communities with computers and internet service for public access.

Community Vibes (CV), visited USF’s Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Hugh Cross. We wanted to know how to access USF services. Here is what he had to say.

**CV: WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND?**

Hugh Cross: The USF (formally the Universal Access Fund Company Limited), is a statutory body under the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, which according to its vision aspires “to ensure that every resident of Jamaica is provided with easy and reliable access to the information superhighway through the deployment of broadband services, to facilitate the transformation of Jamaica into a knowledge-based society and to stimulate continuous improvement in the quality of life for all.”

**CV: WHAT SERVICES DOES THE USF FACILITATE?**

Hugh Cross: The USF outfits an enclosed and secure space with computers and internet services for public use, based on applications received from established organizations. Examples of established organizations are citizens’ associations, schools and churches. We also facilitate training through our information literacy programmes. Young people and older folks alike can benefit through our training programmes. More than 150 internet access points have been set up in communities across Jamaica so far.

**CV: IF A COMMUNITY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A COMPUTER LAB, WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE TO DO?**
Hugh Cross: Representatives from the community would submit a completed application form showing where the lab is going to be, who will manage it, and what contribution they are going to make. Next we will pay a visit and do our internal analysis. If approved we advise them and they proceed to procure the necessary software and hardware and we will pay for them.

**CV: WHAT IS REQUIRED?**

Hugh Cross: A community needs to have a secure, enclosed building and local leadership to ensure sustainability.

**CV: WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT HAS BEEN SET UP?**

Hugh Cross: The USF will pay the monthly internet bill. The community is responsible for the administration. Communities have a right to charge a nominal fee. That would be a way of covering the light bill.

**CV: WHERE CAN A COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE GO FOR AN APPLICATION?**

Hugh Cross: They can go to our website, www.usf.gov.jm for an application and for further information.
MEET YOUR JUDGES

The Best Schemes Competition is privileged to access the services of an elite group of talented sons and daughters of Jamaica as judges. In this issue of Community Vibes, we introduce two of these persons to you.

Amina Blackwood Meeks

Mrs. Amina Blackwood Meeks is known as “A storyteller’s storyteller”.

As a recognised storyteller, Mrs. Blackwood Meeks’ endorsements have come from a variety of sources including educators, storytellers, corporate managers, festival organisers and children from across the world.

She has also been instrumental in the renaissance of the art form of traditional Caribbean storytelling by her involvement in a variety of productions locally, across the Caribbean, in Europe and in North America.

As she traverses the world through cultural contributions, Mrs. Blackwood Meeks describes her mission in this way: “To contribute to the growth and maintenance of the rich oral tradition of the Caribbean, and to ensure the recognition of the connection between the ancient wit and wisdom in the stories and modern development imperatives.”

Andrew Brodber

Andrew Brodber, describes himself as a “man of God, and father of one son”. This Christian family man contributes to local culture, through his work with the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) an agency which he has served with pride for several years.

Mr. Brodber is also an award winning actor, having been recognised for his work both on stage and on radio. This distinguished actor has been trained in speech, drama and the literary arts both locally and overseas. His training in these areas spans several geographic zones, including Seoul, Korea; New York, USA and Kingston, Jamaica.
• Best Schemes competition is celebrating its 20th Anniversary?

• Jamaica was the first country in the western world to construct a railway— even before the United States!

• Emancipation Park, was once the site of Knutsford Park Race Course?

Jamaican Proverb

“WHA’ NOH POISON, FATTEN.” -meaning: If an experience doesn’t destroy you, you can benefit greatly from it.
Youth from Denham Town celebrate their first year in the NHT Music for Social Transformation Programme.
FEEDBACK
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