



Press Release

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For immediate release

NHT Inner City Housing Project continues partnership with SwimJamaica

For many children living within inner-city communities there are few, if any opportunities to learn to swim. Recognising the importance of this life skill, the National Housing Trust's (NHT) Inner City Housing Project (ICHP), through its Sports Development Programme has partnered with SwimJamaica.

On a sunny Saturday morning a group of 32 children from the ICHP Trench Town housing scheme can be seen enjoying the water at the University of the West Indies pool at Mona Bowl. Eager to learn, sixteen of the children take turns to practice the skills their instructors Jermaine Seymour and Karel Foster are teaching them. Shouts of "Me next" and "I want to do it again" fill the air as the excited children learn new skills. The rest of the group, having swam the previous hour, sits on a bench under an almond tree enjoying a box meal and juice.

Since the partnership was formed in October 2005, the ICHP has enabled 216 children from several of the communities including Denham Town, Maxfield Park and Hannah Town in which they work, to join SwimJamaica lessons.

The NHT's Inner City Housing Project (ICHP) aims to promote sustainable development in targeted inner city communities across Jamaica through the improvement of physical and social infrastructure, the creation of economic employment opportunities and a general improvement in the quality of life for citizens in these communities.

A social development strategy has been integrated into the design and implementation of the Inner-City Housing Project. This is in recognition of the importance of improving psychosocial conditions of living of prospective beneficiaries and other citizens in the areas targeted for improvement. Sports Development forms part of this overall strategy where the children in these communities are targeted and enrolled in various sports activities. These activities provide a creative release for energies and through training, have helped to reduce the levels of aggression in some of the children as well as provide them with a new skill.

"The lessons are going very well. It's great to see the children progress through level one of the SwimJamaica Children's Programme. Many were frightened on lesson one and now at lesson eight they are so much more water confident after having learnt the basic skills." commented Cath Moore, SwimJamaica's Technical Advisor.

The programme runs on Saturday mornings between 10am and 12pm at the UWI pool. Lessons began on January 20, 2007 and run until March 24, when certificates will be awarded to the children following an assessment test of the skills they have been taught. The children also receive a SwimJamaica t-shirt.

Christopher Brown, Project Officer, NHT ICHP commented “The programme is well structured and professionally run. It offers a unique opportunity for inner-city children and has an outstanding pass rate. There is also a career and employment opportunity for men and women who want to become Swim Instructors and Lifeguards. SwimJamaica just needs more support from the rest of corporate Jamaica.”

Launched in January 2005, SwimJamaica is an initiative of the Amateur Swimming Association of Jamaica (ASAJ). The vision of SwimJamaica is to develop the sport from the base by providing opportunities for every Jamaican to learn to swim through the development of high quality, progressive learn to swim programmes that are safe, fun and accessible to all.

SwimJamaica operates two learn to swim programmes, one for children and another for adults. There is also a Career Development Programme which facilitates instructor training courses. Since the launch the programme has developed significantly. At present there are over 550 children in lessons taught by a staff team of 20 instructors at seven pools in Kingston and one in Discovery Bay.

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Contact:

Peter Moore, Business Coordinator, SwimJamaica
National Stadium Pool, Independence Park, Kingston 6
Tel: 926-1514 office 475-9351 cell
info@swimjamaica.com www.swimjamaica.com

Photographs and captions



Children from the Trench Town ICHP enjoying lunch following their SwimJamaica lessons at the University of the West Indies swimming pool.



Christopher Brown, Project Officer, NHT ICHP with children in their SwimJamaica t-shirts



A swimmer practices his freestyle kicking in SwimJamaica lessons at the UWI pool