

Staff of the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) brought Christmas cheer to the Mount Olivet Boys Home on Saturday (December 12), bringing gifts, clothing, food, and sharing words of encouragement with the boys, who reside at the Manchester-based facility.

On arrival, the team from the JIS, some of whom had brought family members to share in the occasion, exchanged warm greetings with the staff and the 28 boys at the facility, before playing games with them, showering them with gifts and sharing a tasty meal of fried chicken, cake, ice cream and fruit drink.

They also heard encouraging words from Director of Administration and Human Resources, Mr. Errol Gardner, who urged them to "always work hard, and walk on the straight and narrow path. Be honest, and hardworking, it will pay off."

The highlight of the day was an impromptu concert, chaired by Acting Radio Manager, Mrs. Alva Lindsay Blair, with the boys showcasing their talents in song, dance and poetry, and the staff of the home and the JIS team also joining in, to loud cheers from the boys.

The visit of the JIS was the first in a long-term engagement with the home, which the agency has decided to adopt.

"This time of the year is about giving, but the engagement will not be for today alone, it will be long-term," said Chief Executive Officer of the JIS, Mrs. Donna-Marie Rowe. She said that the agency hopes to make quarterly visits and will be offering support by mentoring the boys.

Chair of the JIS Outreach Committee, Miss Odette Barron, explained that when staff members heard of the planned visit, they gave cash for the purchase of gifts and clothing for the boys and volunteered to spend the day with them, and to be long-term mentors.

"We may not have everything that we would wish to have, but with the little, we came and

shared with the boys at the Mount Olivet Boys' Home. We will be back throughout next year to begin our structured mentor programme," she informed.

In expressing gratitude for the visit, Director of the Home, Ms. Cynthia Thorpe, said that occasions such as these help to foster a sense of worth and motivate the boys to strive for something meaningful.

"One of the things that impressed me is that the (JIS) team didn't stay on one side and the boys on the other side. The interactions went well, and it is important that our residents feel at ease with the outside world, because it is part of the process of socialisation," she stated.

She issued an invitation for "different groups to come here throughout the year, and share with them. At the end of the day, we want (the boys) to know that they are worthy... and that they can feel good about themselves. It is about Jamaican pickney, and all of us are Jamaicans."

Employee at Mount Olivet for 34 years, Ms. Ivy Wright, also expressed appreciation for the visit. "Christmas is love, giving, and caring for others, and we are glad you all saw the need to come here and brighten our day. The boys always look forward to persons coming here and sharing with them, but this one was special for both staff and residents," she told JIS News.

Children's Officer with the Child Development Agency (CDA), Ms. Georgette Logan, who shared in the occasion, stated that the fact that the JIS has adopted the home will ensure continued success for the boys.

"The children are ambitious, and a number of them, before and after they leave, have entered universities and colleges, and have made it to great heights," she pointed out.

Duty Officer at the institution, Mr. Jeffect Watson, lauded the effort of the JIS to adopt the home and mentor the residents, noting that the move will help to create better men in the society.

"Our boys are here for care and protection, and gestures like this will ensure that when they leave here, we will have better men in the society. Their reaction was one of excitement. I noticed the glow that covered their faces. If we can get our young men to have fellowship, and share in love, we will see better youngsters tomorrow," he said.

The Mount Olivet Boys' Home accommodates boys from troubled homes, as well as street children age eight to 18 years old. It is administered by the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.