

The Jamaica Information Service (JIS) and the Mount Olivet Boys' Home in Manchester are set to deepen their relationship with the addition of a mentorship programme, carried out by the JIS.

The home was adopted by the JIS late last year and the boys were treated to a day of prizes and gifts during the Christmas season. However, the JIS has decided to take this relationship further by pursuing an avenue that is even more meaningful to impact the lives of the boys.

The 25 boys, aged nine to 18, housed at the home's Walderston location, will be teamed with JIS mentors and volunteers drawn from across the organisation. They will participate in motivational sessions and fun-filled activities.

Chief Executive Officer of the JIS, Mrs. Donna-Marie Rowe explained that the agency saw the mentorship programme as a natural extension of its mandate to promote programmes and projects supporting national development. "Voluntarism is alive and well in Jamaica and at the JIS," she related.

"Many of our boys in today's society are calling out for help and we were impressed with the work being accomplished at the Mount Olivet Boys' Home. The decision to begin a mentorship programme for the boys was based on our resolve to play our part in making a difference in the lives of our young people, to impact their lives today to secure a better tomorrow for our country. The JIS team saw the need and gave an overwhelmingly positive response," she said, and "the support of the staff has been inspiring."

Members of the staff, she pointed out, were eager to get the programme started and added that participants have already received training to improve their skills as mentors. The training was conducted by Student Services Manager at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Dr. Thelora Reynolds and Co-ordinator of the Mentorship Programme, UWI, Ms. Merritt Henry.

"Together, we anticipate that the boys of Mount Olivet and the JIS staff will have a fulfilling relationship," Mrs. Rowe said, while making reference to a recently launched public education campaign known as 'A Bold New Beginning', designed to engender nationalism and unity.

"We are taking a bold step in the lives of these children to create a new beginning for them, so that they can be proud to be Jamaicans and will work towards making a positive difference in their peer groups, the community and by extension our country," she said.

Meanwhile, Director of the Mount Olivet Boys' Home, Mr. Rudolf Brown, expressed gratitude to the JIS for undertaking to mentor the boys. He noted that mentorship would be "very valuable" to the boys, as many of them do not have any family members in whom they could confide.

"Sometimes some of them do get depressed, so if they can have a person who can act as a big brother or a big sister or somebody just to be there for them, I think that would be very helpful," he explained.

The programme will officially begin on March 27, when the JIS pays its second visit to the home since adopting it in December 2009.

Goodwill and support for the upcoming visit came from corporate sponsors, such as Continental Baking Company, Maxfield Bakery, Trade Winds Citrus, and Supreme Outdoor Advertising as well as the Jamaica Urban Transit Company (JUTC).