

KINGSTON — The 70,000-strong Jamaica 4-H Movement is looking to increase its membership by 10,000 over the next three years as it seeks to reach more of the country's young people.

"We have empowered 70,000 clubbites island wide over the last 70 years, and we are aiming at 100,000 clubbites within the next three years," said 4-H Public Relations and Marketing Manager, Karelle McCormack.

She was speaking at the Parish Achievement Day celebrations for Kingston and Southern St. Andrew clubs held recently at the Pembroke Hall High School in Kingston.

She is urging young Jamaicans up to 25 years old to join the movement. "We accept members as young as five years old so as to start them off early where agriculture is concerned," Miss McCormack informed.

Executive Director of the Jamaica 4-H Clubs, Lenworth Fulton, is also appealing to youngsters to be part of the movement, noting that the focus is not just on academics, but skills as well.

Sixteen-year old St. Andrew Technical High School (STATHS) student, Sue-Ann Smikle, who is Secretary and Treasurer of the STATHS 4-H Club, said that the movement has broadened her mind.

"I've been a part of the club for a couple months. I joined because agriculture is something I've never done before, and I'm open-minded to new things... I think it is a very good club," she said.

In the meantime, clubbities showcased their skills in areas such as sandwich making, cake baking and decorating, agro processing, rabbit care and management, poultry care and management, public speaking, budding and grafting, circumposing and potting.

The coveted Boy and Girl of the Year trophies went to Tarrant High School's Tariq Kelly and St. Andrew Technical High School student, Sada Minott, respectively.

Also on display were cakes, puddings, wines, and ketchup made from pumpkin, which is the featured produce this year.

The Achievement Day is held every year, one event in each parish, and seeks to highlight the work of the clubbies, while they participate in competitive events. This year's theme is: 'Value-added Agriculture for Youth Transformation and Entrepreneurship' which is in line with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' 'Eat Jamaican' drive.

The Jamaica 4-H Clubs is scheduled to host its National Achievement Expo from April 13 to 15 at the Denbigh showground in Clarendon.

By CHRISTINE ADE-GOLD, JIS Special Projects/PR Assistant