Jamaica: Church celebrates children and commits to fostering their future

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Organized by the children's ministries department, the convention, themed "Children of Grace: Healthy, Happy and Heaven-bound," educated adults and children on a holistic healthy lifestyle which addressed issues such as obesity and lifestyle diseases, particularly in children.

"We want our children to be healthy, happy and spiritual individuals, and based on their presentations and activities, they have done well today," said Mrs. Lorraine Vernal, children's ministries director for the church in Jamaica.

The healthy lifestyle acronym referenced as NEWSTART, which stands for nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, air, rest and trust in divine power, was ably demonstrated in a skit performed by the children and aired on NCU Radio 91.1 FM. They showed how each aspect of the NEWSTART program will help only the young and the young at heart.

Giving his experience on the benefits of his healthy choice, Kenric Elliot said, "I was getting a bit overweight, but when my father bought a new bicycle for me and my brother, I was happy to ride my fat away." Thirteen year-old Elliot, who is from the Parish of St. Ann, was the second of two child preachers who blessed the large gathering.

"We have enjoyed the spiritual talents of our children where they demonstrated the importance of having a healthy lifestyle," said Vernal, "but also, we must highlight the fact that they have been facing all kinds of abuse from those whose care they seek. Therefore, we are calling on the perpetrators who inflict violence and abuse on our children, to END IT NOW"
http://www.enditnow.org/ exclaimed Vernal.

The Children's Ministries director's plea was strongly reinforced by Sheron Williams of the Child Development Agency who spoke during the convention.

"Child Abuse has become very important to us as a nation," said Williams. "Every time I watch the news, there is something to irritate the minds of our people because our children are at risk and, sad to say, many of us as adults who are suppose to be protecting them are hurting them," continued Williams.

Amidst the somber messages and warnings in protection of the nation's children, the program was cohesively brought together with a variety of well choreographed talent pieces ranging from songs performed by children choirs, instrumental performances, poems, and scriptural recitations.

Pastor Everett Brown, president of the church in Jamaica, said he was absolutely speechless by the children's performances.
"I am blown away by the share brilliance of our children and their commitment, their passion, and their energy. This tells me that in as much as we are celebrating our 50th anniversary as an independent nation, and if our Lord should delay His coming for another fifty years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jamaica is in good hands and the future of the Church looks good."

The second phase of the program that was dubbed 'Culturama,' was hosted Vivien Morris-Brown, Manchester Parish Manager for the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission.

"This is just exciting. I come here and I get to sing, pray and play, it feels just like I am in heaven," said seven year-old Davia Jones, who was thrilled by the activities.

The fun-filled afternoon activities, staged in the open air, featured dub poetry, dialect and songs. Experts were on spot to give safety tips for beach and pool lovers. In addition, adults and children were taken through a 20-minute exercise routine. Each segment was interspersed with prizes and surprises for the children.

Ten-year-old Howard Grant said the convention was fun. "I am so happy to see so many Adventist children from across the island gathered in one place. After hearing the sermons this morning, I am convinced that we are able to run this Church in the future."

Also on display for the day were health exhibition booths from all five Conferences, Adventist institutions, the Child Development Agency (CDA), and the Office of the Children Advocate. Adventist Health Volunteers were also present and offered free blood pressure, cholesterol and body mass index (BMI) checks.