

Jamaicans, "Donate Your Organs"

Jamaicans are being urged to donate their organs to save the lives of others.

This appeal has come from Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, Olivia Babsy Grange. She made the appeal this week at the funeral service for Cassandra Smith, a 10 year-old girl from St. Catherine. The young girl came to national prominence recently, when a public appeal for financial assistance was sought, to fund a surgery to replace a defective liver.

The surgery was scheduled to be done at a hospital in the US at a cost of some J\$18 million, but Cassandra died a week before word came from the hospital that they would do the surgery, free of cost.

Explaining the difficulty which little Cassandra faced, in finding a liver for the transplant to save her life, Minister Grange said that perhaps, it was time that Jamaicans begin thinking about donating organs, as a means of giving another human being a chance to live. "I'm going to see how we can start some effort here in Jamaica," she said.

Minister Grange noted that she was thinking about doing it, and added that she will discuss getting an initiative going with the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister. She said that while the idea of donating organs is not new, it was forcibly reinforced to her after witnessing little Cassandra's trauma. She said that if someone had agreed to donate a healthy organ, perhaps Cassandra would have been given a chance at life.

The Minister will begin working with Dr. Peter Charles of the University of the West Indies, a campaigner for organ donorship. "Dr. Charles and myself are going to join our efforts in trying to push the idea of organ donation, because it is critical," she stressed.

Miss Grange pointed out that Urologist, Dr. Lawson Douglas, had pioneered kidney transplant in Jamaica, in the 1970s and early 1980s, adding that it might now be a perfect opportunity to build on that bridge created by Dr. Douglas.

Mother of Cassandra, Sophia Dunkley, said she fully supported the Minister's suggestion. "If Cassandra had gotten a liver, she would be alive right now, so it's a good thing," she said. Miss Dunkley said she would tell friends and neighbours to begin thinking about donating organs, as a means of saving lives. Source : www.jis.gov.jm