

The Launch Of A New Fund To Reduce Infant Deaths

The Pre-Natal and Neo-Natal Care Advocacy Fund (PANCAF) was formed in October 2009, following the tragic death of Baby Justine Victoria Simpson at the St. Ann's Bay Hospital, because of a non-functioning neo-natal ventilator. While the death of Baby Justine was the catalysis for the establishment of this Fund, the unfortunate reality is that a number of babies have died in hospitals across Jamaica as a consequence of inadequate human and medical resources.

Bus & Youth Promotions Inc. in association with the Pre-Natal and Neo-Natal Care Advocacy Fund will host a fundraising event and live reggae show, The All White Affair on Saturday, November 21, 2009 at the Mammee Bay Beach Club in Ocho Rios at 8pm for the St. Ann's Bay Hospital, Obstetrics/Paediatrics Department to help reduce the incidents of infant deaths due to the lack of essential medical equipment. PANCAF started out as an informal watchdog group, made up of former students of Westwood High School who were infuriated by the tragic but preventable death of Baby Justine at the St. Ann's Bay Hospital. According to Natalie Boreland, coordinator of PANCAF, this has been a persistent problem in hospitals across Jamaica that required urgent attention a long time ago: "Baby Justine's mother, Marlene Simpson is a former schoolmate of ours. We have been beside ourselves with grief over her loss and further outraged that these things were still happening in the hospitals in Jamaica - as 8 years ago something similarly negligent happened to my close friend. It has further come to light that babies have been dying unnecessarily at St. Ann's Bay Hospital way before Baby Justine, due to the lack of sufficient and functional medical equipment. A ventilator is there at the hospital, but it is not working and only one CTG machine is available for all the critical maternity patients. The whole situation is absolutely repulsive and unacceptable. So, I decided to channel my rage into doing something constructive, in order to prevent other infant fatalities." PANCAF will help the St. Ann's Bay Hospital to purchase essential medical equipment (such as ventilators), and to facilitate the donation of volunteer time by skilled medical practitioners from overseas in order to alleviate the problem of staff shortage. The deficits in both these areas play a detrimental role in exacerbating this wave of infant deaths (that are easily prevented). The Fund has also garnered support from Westwood Alumni residing in the Jamaican Diaspora, which has resulted in its first major fundraiser being organised by Donna-Marie Lynch of Bus-A-Youth Promotions based in Brooklyn, New York. "I wanted to be part of this worthwhile campaign in order to mobilise support from North America, both in terms of cash donations and volunteering of medical skills. It is also my vision to see the Fund evolve as a credible not-for-profit initiative to ensure transparency, while strengthening the credibility of our cause," explains Ms Lynch. Details of the artistes performing at the All White Affair fundraising event will be announced soon. Members of the public can sign up to support the cause if they are Facebook users by going to [HELP OUR BABIES LIVE - SUPPORT PANCAF !!!](#) The web link for PANCAF and other information to facilitate donations will follow.