

Socially Challenged Youths for Summer Games

More than 1,000 young people from communities islandwide, deemed socially challenged and vulnerable to crime and violence, will participate in this year's 21st staging of the Council of Voluntary Services Social Services (CVSS) summer games on July 13.

The games, to be held at the Mona Bowl, University of the West Indies (UWI), target young people aged 10 to 25 years, representing over 20 organizations, for participation in a range of sporting events, scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. The participants will vie for prizes and awards in track and field, netball, football, and basketball, among other activities. Several of the events will see representatives being able to field mixed gender teams, while a number of physically challenged athletes will also be afforded the opportunity to participate. A special feature preceding the games will be public participation in selecting a slogan for the event. The Ministry of Health, Canadian High Commission, Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ), and LIME Foundation are among 15 sponsors committing to this year's renewal of the games, which was officially launched at CVSS's National Volunteer Centre, Camp Road, Kingston, on June 20. Guest speaker, Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita Headley, in endorsing the games, described the event as a social development programme catering to the needs of at-risk youth who are "expecting and demanding opportunities which can give (them) hope for an improved lifestyle." "There is no question that sport is an important tool for engendering a culture of community cohesiveness, encouraging peace and unity, creating the necessary conditions for conflict resolution, and decreasing anti-social behaviour that lead to crime and violence. In communities struggling to overcome diverse social ills, sport is often an avenue to propel young people towards positive action," she argued. The Minister also underscored the pivotal role which organizations, like CVSS, play in advancing youth development. These, she pointed out, complement and underpin undertakings such as the National Development Plan, Vision 2030 Jamaica, which seeks to position the nation to attain developed country status and, in the process, make it the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business. Meanwhile, Canadian High Commissioner to Jamaica, His Excellency Robert Ready, said the games represent the "best of sport, camaraderie, healthy competition, and efforts by all participants at striving for excellence." LIME Foundation Chairman, Errol Miller, in noting the "close relationship" which the organization shares with CVSS, expressed the hope that the games will be successful. "Our wish is that the (children) will have fun, and they will make friends…and that they compete injury free and have a great CVSS Games," he said. CVSS Chief Executive Officer, Winsome Wilkins, in outlining details of the slogan competition, explained that entrants can select any one of three which have been proposed. These are: "Feel the Uniting Spirit of Sport"; "Uniting Spirit and Sport"; and "Youth in Action". She said they can also coin their own, comprising a maximum of seven words. The contest, which is currently underway, will run until July 2. Submissions can be emailed to: cvsssummergames2013@gmail.com or submitted on Facebook at "CVSS Summer Games". Additional information, inclusive of contest rules, is available on the organization's website: www.govolunteer.com.jm. Formed in 1940, the Council of Voluntary Social Services is one of Jamaica's oldest voluntary organizations, catering to building the capacity of its members and the wider community, thereby creating sustainable alliances, facilitating mutual support and joint action; and representing the concerns of stakeholders within the social sector, particularly those deemed disadvantaged and vulnerable. The CVSS is currently one of Jamaica's largest non-profit umbrella organizations, with a membership of over 100.