



Ministry of Local Government  
& Community Development

# NEWSLETTER

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MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
& COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



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# BOS AWARDS and Recognition Ceremony

## Expanding our #SocialProtectionMandate

### Celebrating Excellence: 62 Students Honoured for Academic Achievements

In a remarkable event at Royalton Negril on March 21, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, through the Poor Relief Department, honoured and recognised 62 students for their exceptional academic performance in the 2024 Primary Exit Profile (PEP), Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). The event, themed “Brilliance in Action: Shaping Tomorrow’s Leaders,” highlighted the resilience and dedication of these young scholars.

Among the outstanding achievements, Gavin Plummer, through hard work, determination, and resilience scored an impressive average of over 90% in his PEP examination making him the top PEP scorer. He is now enrolled at the Herbert Morrison Technical High School (HMTHS). Devonte Walker, who also attends HMTHS, passed seven CSEC subjects. Tammoya Legore received a special award from former Poor Relief Officer, Marlene Dixon, for her academic achievements, while studying Computer Science and En-



trepreneurship at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona. Meanwhile, Shanniece Ramdas received high marks in CAPE and is now studying Biotechnology at UWI.

The Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, delivered an inspiring speech to the students on the foundation of resilience, overcoming obstacles, and the significance of building upon the foundation, provided by the Poor Relief Department. He also announced upcoming government initiatives aimed at further supporting children in the system.

Treka Lewis, Corporate Secretary of the Board of Supervision, emphasised their commitment to youth empowerment through mentorship and workshops. In a poignant reflection, Devonte shared his journey through financial hardships and credited his late mother for instilling a belief in his potential. This event celebrated the bright future these students are forging for themselves and their communities.





## 31 Psychiatric Nurse's Aides Graduated



### **New Graduates Ready to Transform Mental Health Care in Jamaica!**

A recent ceremony celebrated the graduation of 31 new Psychiatric Nurses' Aides (PNAs), empowering them to deliver enhanced care for individuals with mental health disorders, who are in infirmaries and golden age homes. This training initiative, organised by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, aimed to elevate the standards of support for those facing mental health challenges.

Portfolio Minister, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, emphasised the importance of compassionate care and the Government's commitment to improving services for vulnerable populations. He announced upcoming expansions in

poor relief programmes, highlighting a new facility opening in Portland and a nearly complete transitional centre in Kingston.

The PNA programme, spanning four months and comprising 640 hours of training, provides participants with comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills to effectively support mental well-being. Mr. McKenzie encouraged the graduates to become advocates for change in mental health care, assuring them that their contributions, regardless of scale, will positively affect the lives of many Jamaicans. He also emphasised the paramount importance of patient safety and security, noting that any abuse of residents will be met with stringent legal consequences.



## New 16-Bed Wing to be Constructed at St. Thomas Drop-In Centre

- Repairs to Infirmary to be Carried out



**Exciting News for St. Thomas:** Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Desmond McKenzie, has announced plans for a new wing at the homeless Drop-In Centre in the parish. “Based on the survey that we have done, there is an increase in the homeless population here in St. Thomas, and it is important that we provide the facilities as best as we can. This is a further improvement... as 16 more beds, means that we will be able to assist 16 more persons living on the streets,” McKenzie stated. The Minister also added that funds are already available for the project, with construction set to begin soon to accommodate the growing homeless population.

### **Funds to be allocated for repair of St. Thomas Infirmary**

Additionally, significant improvements have been made at the St. Thomas Infirmary, with further repairs planned for the female ward. He noted that the female ward requires urgent repairs. “Once the estimates are submitted to the Ministry, we will allocate the necessary funds to commence the repairs,” he stated. Minister McKenzie also commended the staff and Municipal Corporation for their hard work and added that he will soon return to hand over two more housing solutions under the Indigent Housing Programme.



## Indigent Housing Programme



A New Beginning: Law Student Chelsia Reynolds Receives Home Through Indigent Housing Programme.

In a heartwarming story of support and resilience, 20-year-old law student Chelsia Reynolds from Brompton, St. Elizabeth, has become the proud owner of a fully furnished two-bedroom home, courtesy of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development's Indigent Housing Programme.

Chelsia's journey to homeownership was highlighted during a handover ceremony, where she expressed her deep gratitude to the Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, and her local Member of Parliament, Hon. Floyd Green. Reflecting on her mother's unwavering support in raising

her, Chelsia dedicated the new home to her, emphasising her mother's sacrifices.

Minister McKenzie praised Chelsia as a role model for other youth, noting her determination to pursue her academic goals despite challenging circumstances. He reinforced that assistance through the Indigent Housing Programme is given without regard to political affiliations, underscoring a commitment to aid those in need regardless of their background. The programme aims to address the pressing housing challenges faced by the most vulnerable in society, offering different housing solutions catering to families like Chelsia's.



## Buff Bay Market to be opened by August 6

Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, is aiming for the timely completion of renovations to facilitate the reopening of the Buff Bay Market in Portland. Minister McKenzie visited the facility recently, where he said phases one and two of the projects have been completed, and it is the goal to have this market fully operational by this year's Independence celebrations. The market was among those selected during Jamaica 50 celebrations, to be renovated.

According to the Minister, the entire facility was demolished and has been replaced with a brand-new structure, and its third phase will "turn attention to the office of the market manager and complete the flooring". He pledged an additional \$25 million that will be provided to the Portland Municipal Corporation to complete the renovation and to



ensure that the Buff Bay Market will be fully functional in the shortest possible time for vendors.

Notably, the Buff Bay Market will be of the highest standard, with several new features including proper meat stalls, sections for haberdashery vendors, and an office for market managers to address the needs of the vendors. Additional features include skylights and adequate ventilation to minimise electricity theft and electrical short circuits, which have been the main causes of fires in markets islandwide.

Minister of Science, Energy, Telecommunications, and Transport, Hon. Daryl Vaz, Member of Parliament for Portland Western, who also visited the facility, said he was pleased with the progress of the market and its various features that will provide a comfortable environment for both vendors and consumers. Mr. Vaz pointed out that this model was achieved through active collaboration and can potentially be used in other townships across the island.





# Yallahs Market to be Restored by December 2025



The Yallahs Market in St. Thomas is undergoing a major restoration project, spearheaded by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development in collaboration with the St. Thomas Municipal Corporation. The market, previously leased to a former Councillor, is now in the possession of the St. Thomas Municipal Corporation and will no longer be leased to individuals.

The goal of the restoration project is to accommodate vendors who were previously operating on the sidewalks outside, by providing them with a safer and more suitable environment for trading. Minister McKenzie has also advised the ministry's technical team to work closely with the St. Thomas Corporation, so that a proper assessment can be made to ensure that the right amendments are facilitated, and the relevant issues are addressed moving forward.

Once the clean-up and renovation are completed, vendors will be encouraged to occupy the market and make full use of the facilities provided. The renovated market will include provisions for fruits, vegetables, haberdashery, and all other aspects of a traditional market. Minister McKenzie emphasised the Government's commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of the residents of St. Thomas.

Overall, the Yallahs Market is on track to be fully restored and operational by December 2025, providing a much improved trading environment for vendors and customers alike.

## Amanda 7 Training

### Transforming Development Approvals with AMANDA 7

The Application Management and Data Automation system (AMANDA) is revolutionising the Development Approvals Review Process (DARP) to ensure timely responses within 90 days for building and subdivision applications. The Government of Jamaica has updated the system, allowing applicants to submit applications, make payments, and track progress online. Through extensive training initiatives, stakeholders in all 14 parishes are being equipped to effectively use the upgraded AMANDA 7 software.



# New St. Thomas Municipal Corporation Building Projected for Completion in Six Months



## **Exciting Development for St. Thomas:**

A New Municipal Corporation Building is set to open soon! The new Municipal Corporation Building in St. Thomas, located at the Morant Bay Urban Centre, is on track for completion within the next six months, according to Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Desmond McKenzie. During a recent tour of the construction site, he noted that only minor work remains, which will not hinder progress toward the facility's opening before the year's end.

Minister McKenzie praised the Factories Corporation of Jamaica for the exceptional efforts in advancing the project. Once completed, over 140 employees will relocate to the new building, consolidating various municipal services under one roof. The minister reassured citizens that funding for the project is nearing finalisation and emphasised the community's anticipation for the facility. McKenzie highlighted that, although some challenges remain, they are significantly less daunting than those faced in the past.