



## PRESS RELEASE

**April 4, 2024**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Annual Oral Health Competitions Contribute to Behaviour Change in Children**

For some 25 years, the Southern Regional Health Authority (SRHA) dental teams have been making great strides in instilling a culture of good oral health practices among children in the southern end of the island.

Each year, the dental teams in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Elizabeth and Manchester stage oral health quiz, poster, dub poetry and deejay competitions for students at the infant, primary and secondary levels.

SRHA Regional Dental Surgeon, Dr. Shanelle Dempster-Peart explained that the SRHA dental teams have seen an increased awareness about oral health among students which have translated into good oral health practices within their families.

"Participating in oral health competitions offers the school community a unique opportunity to raise their oral health knowledge and awareness beyond the basics covered in the academic syllabus. The value of the partnerships formed between the students, parents, teachers, guidance counsellors, other school officials and dental team is immeasurable. By involving these stakeholders, the competition facilitates the creation of a supportive environment and strengthens those which already existed" Dr. Dempster-Peart said.

She added that for the children who are exposed to the importance of oral hygiene at a young age, they are more likely to adopt personal healthy habits and to share the information with adults and children with whom they interact.

"The skills acquired through these competitions, such as critical thinking, teamwork, and effective communication, serve as building blocks for their future academic and professional endeavors. By encouraging participation in the Oral Health Competition, we empower children to be proud of their mouths. The lifelong benefit of introducing good oral  
(more)

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hygiene habits during childhood cannot be overstated" the dental surgeon added.

Parish Dental Auxiliaries Coordinator for Clarendon, Dionne Neufville-Fraser explained that the dental teams begin working with the children months before the competitions.

"What we do in October of each year is to host a workshop and give the teachers guidance on how they are to train the students for the quiz, poster and deejay competitions. They also have to do their own research and then we do our elimination competitions, so it is a year-long process" Mrs. Neufville-Fraser said.

She added that the teams have gotten the feedback from the parents, teachers and students that the competition has been working in fostering good oral health practices.

The Clarendon team held its oral health competition at the St. Gabriel's Anglican Church in Clarendon on March 20, 2024.

Picture 1



Regional Dental Surgeon, SRHA, Dr. Shanelle Dempster-Peart (left-back),  
(more)

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Dental Surgeon at the Clarendon Health Department, Dr. Dwayne Stephenson (right) and teacher from the Four Paths Primary and Infant School in Clarendon, Avia Francis and her students are pictured here at the competition recently. The students participated in the deejay competition.

Picture 2



Some of the entries in the poster category of the competition.

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