



PRESS RELEASE

July 21, 2022
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Health Department Provides Platform to Recognize, Mentor and Equip Fathers with Better Parenting Skills

Since 2016, the St. Elizabeth Health Department (SEHD) has been providing a platform for fathers to equip them with better parenting skills, mentorship opportunities and recognition for playing an invaluable role in the lives of their children.

After a break due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, some 50 fathers gathered at the St. Matthew's Anglican Church hall in St. Elizabeth on Thursday, June 30, for the fifth staging of the Fathers of Excellence Forum, focused on the theme, "Fathers Matter".

The initiative is the brainchild of Parish Medical Social Worker from the SEHD, Paul Smith, who explained that the forum has been highlighting the excellent work of fathers and also improving the performance of other fathers who need help.

The Medical Social Worker added that based on the evidences of various studies which have shown the impact of fatherlessness on society, fathers who are playing their roles must be found, acknowledged and empowered.

"The fathers look forward to this yearly event. We have not had it since the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic and after two years we are now back face to face. The fathers have been quite participative and welcoming to the presentations geared towards improving their roles as fathers and highlighting their importance in the lives of their children. They really appreciate what is being done for them and I believe that it is time that fathers get the highlight and the importance that is due to them" Mr. Smith said.

He added that a support group and mentorship programme has been formed to support the fathers who need assistance.

(more)

Chairman: Wayne Chen; Vice Chairman: Michael Stern, **Board Members:** Lorraine Green Mason, Marcus Greenwood, Stafford Haughton, Winston Maragh, Dr. Lloyd Reynolds, Albert Williams, Omar Miller, Dave Powell, **Permanent Secretary's Nominee:** Dr. Naydene Williams, **Regional Director and Secretary:** Michael Bent; **Regional Technical Director:** Dr. Vitillius Holder; **CEO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Alwyn Miller; **SMO, Mandeville Regional Hospital:** Dr. Everton McIntosh

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For Everod Lewis, who has been a participant in the programme since its inception, the forum has had a tremendous and positive impact on him as a father.

“Over the years I have discovered fathers have been getting a bad rap and we have not been getting the milestone that we deserve as a result of those fathers who are reluctant to step up to their responsibilities. I think the good ones need to be an example especially for the young ones coming up. We all have different experiences and men don't tend to rap about certain things like women do and as we go along we have to be mindful that strengthening each other is an important factor in any development” Mr. Lewis said.

Mr. Lewis, who is also the Chief Public Health Inspector for St. Elizabeth added that oftentimes men don't realize the importance of being a father and need directions.

“There is hardly a book that is written to say that this is what you ought to do or what you shouldn't do and as a result I want to be a contributing factor to men being better. For the last six years, the impact has been tremendous on me” Mr. Lewis said.

Picture 1



Some of the fathers who participated in the forum.

(more)

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Picture 2



Organizer of the Fathers of Excellence Forum, Mr. Paul Smith.

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Picture 3



Some of the fathers participating in one of the presentations, which explored how fathers can develop healthy relationships with their children.

(more)

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