

# Ministry of Education

## **Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre Officially Opened**

**KINGSTON, (JIS):**

Wednesday, November 09, 2005

The Point Hill Diagnostic Reading Centre (PHDRC), which was constructed to improve the literacy and education levels of students in Point Hill and surrounding communities in St. Catherine, was officially opened and dedicated on November 6.

The facility, which has been in operation since September 2004, was built at a cost of over \$9 million, through funding from the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), the Bank of Nova Scotia (BNS), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, the Point Hill Community Alumni Association and the Point Hill Community.

The centre is situated adjacent to the Point Hill Primary and Junior High School and more than 58 students have benefited from the various services since it was opened over a year ago. They attend literacy classes and reading workshops and are taught basic elements of information technology such as the parts of the computer, hardware and software, Microsoft Word, Internet and troubleshooting.

In addition, the facility provides formal assessments for students with specific learning challenges.

Principal of the Point Hill Primary and Junior High School, Elaine Allen said that the idea to start the centre was conceived in 1997, when she became principal of the school and observed that some students were not achieving their grade level in reading.

"We decided that we had to do something about the reading," she told JIS News, adding that a reading resource room was then established at the school to assist the students.

She pointed out that teachers, along with Jane Taylor, one of the founders of the project, and now Director of the PHDRC, as well as community volunteers offered to help the students. They later assisted at a summer camp organized for students, who did not do well in sitting the Grade Four Literacy Test. "It was then that we started talking about having the students in one location, in a quiet setting, so the dream was born," she added.

Mrs. Taylor said that she, along with other founding members, the principal and the community, spearheaded a fundraising drive and approached a

number of private sector entities and individuals for funds to construct the facility.

"This took three agonizing years," she said, adding that board members were then elected to manage the centre.

Chancellor of the University of Technology, Sir William Morris, who was the guest speaker at the function, congratulated the teachers, volunteers, sponsors and community members for ensuring the successful completion of the project.

"That's truly a remarkable achievement over a very, very short period indeed but it speaks volumes for the leadership that this particular project has actually received," he said. He noted that the centre would provide an opportunity for persons not only to acquire basic skills in reading but also "to reach out into the expansive horizon of the expandable information super highway via the Internet".

"We cannot continue to underpin a society where we have got the digital poor, no access to information and therefore poor decision making. Your centre is more than a centre for diagnostic," the Chancellor added.

During the dedication ceremony, a plaque was also unveiled in memory of now deceased founding member Eric Downie, who assisted in raising funds through the Point Hill Community Alumni, for the construction of the building.