

**The H.O.P.E. Centre – Making a big Impact
(Hope, Opportunity and Power through Education)**

Established in 2007 as an outreach ministry of the Women’s Ministries Department of the Spanish Town Seventh-day Adventist Church, the HOPE Centre, as it is fittingly named, is making a big difference in the lives of people. The Centre, which occupies premises at 14 Brunswick Street, operates as a school, book store and thrift shop.

“We recognised that there were many persons in our congregation and community who wanted to improve their education but were not able to afford the tuition charged by other institutions,” explained Merle Baldwin, head of the Women’s Ministries Department. “As a result, we decided that we would intervene as a group to fill that need.”

Tuition at the HOPE Centre is free but persons are required to contribute \$2,000 each term to help offset overhead expenses.

Since its inception, more than 50 students have enrolled at the Centre which offers CXC Mathematics and English as well as adult remedial reading and basic Mathematics.

Another 40 students are attending City and Guild English classes in the evenings at the Eltham High School where a branch was established by Sis. Claudine Cunningham.

Tuition at that location is also free and no registration fees are charged.

Despite the number of students that are in the programme, space is still available at both locations for persons who are interested. Biology and Principles of Accounts will be added to the list of subjects taught as soon as a teacher is identified.

“We are very grateful to the teachers who provide their services free of cost. They are very qualified, dedicated and supportive. The success of the Centre rests heavily on their contribution,” Sis. Baldwin said.

Sis. Cunningham expresses personal satisfaction derived from volunteering her time. “I find the programme to be very intimate to me as years ago I felt the leading of the Lord to

start a ministry like this. For me, it is more than just teaching as many times I have the opportunity to witness and counsel persons with domestic problems. It is a very rewarding experience for me as I have been able to use the skills that the Lord has given me to bless others”.

Camilla Reid, a newly baptised member at the Spanish Town SDA Church, is happy about the opportunity she has to improve her education at the Centre so she can obtain the qualifications she needs to enter the field of nursing.

“I am presently doing Mathematics and English. I would recommend anyone to come to classes at the Centre. The teachers are very caring and make every effort to help you learn,” she stated.

The Discount Bookshop at the Centre sells textbooks, stationery, school and office supplies at low prices as a financial support to the Centre. The Central Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists operates the thrift shop which is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Plans are being made to expand the services of the Centre. Three entities have committed to donate computers which will be used to set up an internet café. Additionally, discussions are to be held with agencies such as the Business Development Foundation and HEART Trust NTA to have programmes during the summer holidays for community small business operators.

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