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Jamaica Honors 77 Youth Who've Made Progress in Their Fight Against Substance Abuse

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Director of Public Prosecutions, Paula Llewellyn (right) presents participant in the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) programme, Shanique Addison with a certificate of achievement at the programme's closing exercise held on Thursday (January 16) at t By. MARK BELL

JAMAICA — Some 77 youth who have achieved significant success in their recovery journey against substance misuse have been honored, the Jamaican government has made known.

According to the government-run news service, their recovery was facilitated through a five year partnership between the Citizen Security and Justice Program (CSJP) III and the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA).

Of this number, 13 have achieved sobriety, while 23 have attained 90 per cent reduction in substance misuse.

The participants were presented with certificates of participation and gift bags during the programme's closing exercise held on Thursday (January 16) at the Jamaica Conference Centre, Downtown Kingston.

The beneficiaries who hail from CSJP participating communities in Kingston and St. Andrew, Clarendon, St. James, Westmoreland and St. Catherine, were introduced to alternative methods of treating with their emotional issues.

The participants received group and individual counselling, as well as training in life skills, anger management and problem solving techniques among other interventions aimed at assisting them to use healthy coping strategies to address social issues.

Between May and December 2019, a total of 171 participants received substance abuse counselling facilitated by the NCDA.

Executive Director of the NCDA, Michael Tucker said it is noteworthy that of the 171 clients who started the programme, 77 or 45 per cent have achieved significant progress in their recovery journey.

"For many of our clients, this would have been their first formal attempt to change their lifestyle and for others it is their first time being substance free," he said.

Mr. Tucker said these numbers augur well for the overall objective of the multi- agency initiative to break the cycle of addiction affecting sufferers who are often victims of psychological or emotional trauma.

"This is a significant achievement for the Agency and also all stakeholders involved in this initiative. We want to publicly congratulate them for their efforts for a job well done. No one knows better the challenges you have been through to get where you are now. We join hands with our substance abuse counsellors, community case management officers, social workers, psychologists and region managers for supporting your dreams to achieve academically, financially and socially," he said.

Chief Technical Director in the Ministry of National Security, Shauna Trowers commended the participants and stakeholders for undertaking and achieving this feat.

"You have taken the initial step and the initial step is to recognize the need for change and then you follow through...This journey you have taken is an excellent one and we would like to congratulate you," she said.

In her testimonial, Doreen Samuels from Central Village, St. Catherine said her battle with substance abuse began at the age of 12 when she started using alcohol to deal with the trauma associated with the breakdown of her family unit and abuse at the hands of family members.

"As a child I did not receive the love and care that I needed. I always believed that no one loved or cared for me. This led me to become addicted to alcohol," Ms. Samuels said.

She stated that the counselling she received through the programme assisted her in breaking addictive behaviours.

“The counselling sessions have helped me to control my impulse to drink alcohol. Obedience is the key. You have to be obedient and willing to learn and follow instructions in order for transformation to take place,” she shared.

The goal of this community outreach social intervention is to provide rehabilitation, reintegration and resocialization services for individuals who have been referred for help with substance related challenges.

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