

# *Registrar General' Department*

*An Executive Agency Since April 1, 1999*

Highlights of the

## NORTH AMERICAN OUTREACH



JULY 10 -16, 2004

Prepared by: Marketing and Planning Department

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## Florida

On Saturday July 10, 2004 the RGD team left Jamaica at 7:00 a.m. to start a planned tour of the USA and Canada. This tour was coordinated with assistance from the Jamaican Consulates and Missions in the cities selected. Cities were selected based on the several requests made from Jamaicans residing in these areas and the magnitude of the Jamaican population in the area.

Chief Executive Officer and Registrar General Patricia Holness led the RGD team; other members were Sydian Brissett, Marketing and Planning Manager, Cecile Banton Mobile Manager West and Damion Porter Customer Service Representative.

The first stop on the North American Overseas Outreach (NAOO) for the RGD Team was the state of Florida.

Deputy Consul Suzzane Jones and Vice Consul Vance Carter at the Jamaican Consulate Office in Miami met the team at the Miami International airport.

The team used the weekend to meet and organize the format planned activities would take and arrange for the required equipment

While in Florida the following locations were visited:

1. The Jamaican Consulate General's Office, Downtown Miami
2. The Jamaica National Building Society, Tamarac, Lauderdale
3. The Norlands United Methodist, Fort Lauderdale

At these locations between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 midnight the following activities were conducted:

1. Met with and offered information and advice to approximately 100 persons
2. Accepted payment for 44 applications for Birth, Death and Marriage certificates, Deed Poll, Re-registration and sale of Genealogical research handbook
3. The CEO participated in two Radio Interviews on WAVS Radio, Miami and WLCK, Atlanta
4. On Monday, July, 12 commencing at 6:00 p.m. the team delivered a presentation to 30 Jamaicans at Norlands United Methodist Church. Following and during this presentation the team answered questions and queries from members of the audience. This segment proved to be very time consuming and up until 11:30 p.m. members of the audience were still waiting for individual attention with some special cases.

The Outreach meeting at the Norlands United Methodist Church was attended by Consul General Mr. CP Allicock who also introduced the team.

Some of the observations made by the team as well as issues which were raised by Jamaicans in Florida, are as follows:

- a) There needs to be more attention to public education for Jamaicans living overseas particularly in the areas of record updating and death registration
- b) A specially designed Marketing strategy focused on the promotion of genealogical research to Jamaicans overseas.
- c) There needs to be a closer relationship between the RGD and Jamaican consulates and foreign missions to ensure they are aware of developments in the agency. Though the existence of the online query system has been communicated through mainstream media the Miami consulate staff was not aware of the implementation of the RGD online system.
- d) When customers apply for certificates and a particular record updating procedure is required, there needs to be speedier and clearer communication to the customer on the nature of the record updating activity and reason why it is required.
- e) Receipts need to be returned to customers before certificates are mailed so that they are able to check status of their applications on-line
- f) Online query information needs to be printed on back of receipts
- g) Several customers expressed their desire for an RGD location in Florida or more frequent visits by the agency.
- h) Several Jamaicans expressed desire to be able to pay for applications using credit cards on-line.
- i) An opportunity was created for an RGD and You “television version to be broadcasted on PAX TV a TV station which broadcasts Jamaican programming in Atlanta and Florida

The highlight of the outreaches in Florida was the solution of a case involving a woman who did not have her correct name registered on two of her Children's birth certificate.

In terms of media coverage the JIS officer in Miami, Cheryl Wynter, provided coverage for the events.

The Florida leg of the NAOO was concluded on Tuesday, July 13 and the team moved on to the second stop, Atlanta.

## Atlanta

The team arrived in Atlanta on July 14, 2004 at 1:30 p.m. and was met by the Honorary Consul General, Mr. Vin Martin and a contingent of four other Jamaicans. Immediately after arriving in the city, the CEO, Marketing Manager and Mobile Manager visited the neighbouring city of Newnan in Coweta County an area where historical and genealogical searches are very prominent. The visit was used as an opportunity to view the Coweta County African American Museum. The team participated in a television interview on the programme “A Story to Tell” hosted by Cynthia Rosers on News Channel 5.

The following locations were visited in Atlanta:

1. Honorary Consul's Office, 4504 Memorial Drive, Stone Mountain
2. Decatur Jamaican Atlanta Association Meeting Place, Hillside Presbyterian Church Hall

At these locations from 9:00 a. to 10:00 p.m. the team conducted the following activities:

1. Met with and provided information to approximately twenty-five persons
2. CEO Met with Jamaica Tourist Board Representative regarding promotional strategies for Registry Wedding to tourists
3. Met with and discussed concerns of Honorary Consul
4. Visited the Coweta County African American Museum and garnered information on genealogical research methods used by Museum coordinator
5. Delivered presentation to Jamaicans at Outreach meeting
6. Answered questions from members of the audience
7. Collected applications for Birth, Death and Marriage certificates

While in Atlanta the outreach team enjoyed true southern hospitality from the Honorary Consul General and his team. It must also be noted that the visit was well organized and promoted by the Honorary Consul, however an unexpected major tornado storm warning kept many Jamaicans away from the Outreach meeting.

Issues raised by Jamaicans in Atlanta and Observations by team:

1. There is a keen interest in Genealogical Research in this area and thus the area should be targeted for promotions of this service.
2. Equal to the requests for genealogical research, the requests for information on adoptions were also quite prominent
3. There needs to be greater communication on information for adoptions and status'
4. Jamaicans in this area are also very interested in historical searches

5. The group seemed very uninformed of some of the cases of fraud to which many Jamaicans unknowingly fall prey.
6. The group was particularly interested in the agency's record management strategies, plans for computerization and the internal management of the RGD as an Executive Agency.
7. The Honorary Consul expressed a need for verification of certificates service to be offered to his office.

A representative of Caribbean Star Newspaper in Atlanta, Mr. Derrick Scott, covered the event. A total of 22 applications for birth, death, marriage certificates and other RGD services were submitted in Atlanta. The genealogical research handbook and the concept of the service offered in this area was quite popular at this location.

The highlight of the Outreaches was an American from Jamaican ancestry who applied to start researching the genealogy of her great grandparents. The customer has the intention of tracing as far back as 10 generations.

The Atlanta leg of the NAOO was concluded at 10:00 p.m. on July, 14, 2004 and the team prepared for the trip the following morning to Washington DC.



A few hours after arriving in Atlanta the team visited the Coweta County African Americans' Museum where they received information on genealogical research methods.



A section of the audience in Atlanta



A section of the audience in Atlanta

A section of the audience in Atlanta



Mrs. Cecile Banton assist a customers in completing application forms at the outreach meeting held in Atlanta



Dr. Holness (right) on the set of "A story to Tell"  
In Atlanta the team participated in a television interview on the programme " A story to tell" hosted by Cynthia Rosers (left) on News Channel 5

## Washington DC

On July 15, 2004 the outreach team flew from Atlanta to Washington DC via Chicago, however the first flight was delayed, causing the team to miss the connecting flight in Chicago and having to take a later flight to Washington DC. The team arrived in DC at 5:00 and had very little time to check into the hotel and prepare for an outreach meeting at the Jamaican Embassy at 6:00 p.m.

The Washington DC outreach was particularly significant, since it was the first overseas public event, to be attended by the newly appointed ambassador to the United States Professor Gordon Shirley. Professor Shirley had been presented to the President of the United States only the same morning and was in attendance at the outreach and introduced the team.

The meeting at the Embassy was an overwhelming success. Sixty-five (65) persons were in attendance, this was a record for Washington DC where usually there are only a few persons in attendance at a meeting of this nature.

Customers in Washington submitted a total of 31 applications for RGD services. A number of persons wanted information on record updating activities and genealogical research.

The IRIE Search facility was very popular with customers in Washington, many persons were quite impressed that the RGD could provide a facility to electronically search for the details of a birth and give the information almost instantaneously.

Once again Genealogical Research sparked great interest from the audience, in fact the majority of Genealogical Research handbooks brought for sale by the team were purchased in Washington DC. The books were completely sold out by the end of the evening.

On the second day of the team's visit to Washington DC, a meeting between staff at the Embassy where the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Courtney Rattray were also present and the RGD team brought many issues to the forefront. They are as follows:

1. Dr. Holness, CEO of the RGD indicated that the RGD would be willing to provided access a version of RGD database for verification services to overseas mission.
2. It was suggested that Consulates consider using a system similar to the Application Track System used at the RGD to better manage requests from customers.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for the team to make a presentation on the agency's development to Executive agency and outline successes to date to members of staff at the embassy. Who were quite impressed by the developments.

Other key issues highlighted from the Washington DC visit were:

1. The need to intensify the promotion of genealogical research in this area.
2. The need to ensure greater clarity in information relating to record updating activities, particularly when customers overseas are being instructed to conduct one of these activities.
3. A need for more frequent direct contact with the overseas community.
4. The importance of direct 'face to face' contact with the overseas community, this approach seems to reap more positive results.
5. Receipts or Receipt numbers need to be returned to overseas customers in advance and not along with certificates as is the current practice. This will enable them to check the status of their applications online using receipt numbers.

From a customer service perspective, the highlight of the DC outreach was the team being able to locate an electronic record for a seventy-one year old Jamaican who was residing in the US for thirty-one years and unable to retire to claim pension because he was not in possession of his birth certificate. This was primarily because he was unaware that he was using his "pet name" all his life. After interviewing the customer, his correct name was identified and an application submitted for his birth certificate.

In terms of media coverage, the previous evening's outreach was covered by the JIS officer posted at the Washington DC embassy and the Information Specialist for the Organization of American States, Mr. Ian.



Dr. Holness making a presentation at the outreach meeting held in Washington DC



Customers in Washington DC making use of the opportunity to apply for certificates.



Mrs. Cecile Banton (seated) assist a customer in completing an application form at the outreach meeting held in Washington DC.



Dr. Patricia Holness (middle) assists a customer in completing an application form during the outreach meeting held in Washington DC.



Mrs. Cecile Banton (seated left) checks a customer application form before accepting it for processing.



The outreach stops to capture the moment with Deputy Chief of Mission Courtney Rattray in Washington DC L-R Miss S. Brissett, Mrs. C. Banton, Mr. Rattray, Dr. P Holness and Mr. D Porter

## **TRI-STATE AREA**

The NAOO team left DC for Outreach in the Tri –state area on Saturday, July 17, 2004. This leg of the outreach was coordinated by the Consulate General's Office in New York and covered Hartford Connecticut, New Jersey, Manhattan and Brooklyn.

### **Hartford Connecticut:**

As soon as the team arrived in New York, the CEO prepared for and participated in two interviews to promote the Connecticut Meeting. One was done on WESU Radio with host Maxine Victor at 4:30 p.m. and one on WCOF Radio with Micky Howard at 9:30 p.m.

The team traveled to Hartford Connecticut by way of a three-hour commute on Sunday, July 18, 2004. The meeting in Hartford similar to that in Washington DC had a turn out of sixty-eight (68) persons.

The West Indian Club of Hartford Connecticut must be commended for the effort which they made in competing with a Jamaican entertainment event which was being held at the same time, in the same city. The clubs' president Mr. Andrew Lawrence solicited the support of eight local restaurants, who together provided a sumptuous Jamaican dinner for attendees.

The Consul General for New York, Dr. Basil Bryan who introduced the CEO and the team, also attended the event.

While in Hartford the following activities were conducted by the NAOO team between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.:

1. Presentation delivered to over sixty-eight "Jamaicans from Hartford and surrounding communities.
2. Accepted a total of fourteen (14) applications for birth, death and marriage certificates as well as other RGD services.
3. Established links with representatives from Hartford West Indian and Jamaican Community.

Some of the key issues raised by Jamaicans in Hartford and observations by the team was as follows:

1. There were several questions relating to the process involved in addition of Father's Particulars to a birth record.
2. Death Registration proved to be another area of massive importance to Jamaicans in this community, several persons previously had negative experiences with this process and were particularly enlightened by the information they received on how to conduct the process.
3. Like in the other locations, genealogical research and the genealogical handbook was a very popular topic. However no more books were available for sale.

4. Several Jamaicans in this community were also quite concerned about the issue of fraudulent certificates. Many wondered if they could unknowingly have such certificates in their possession.



A section of the audience at the outreach meeting held in Hartford Connecticut



Mr. Damion Porter during a one and one consultation with customers in Hartford Connecticut



Mrs. Cecile Banton (right) assist a customer in completing an application form at the outreach meeting held in Hartford Connecticut



Mrs. Cecile Banton (right) assist a customer in completing an application form at the outreach meeting held in Hartford Connecticut

## Meeting with the Consulate Staff

The following afternoon at 2:00 p.m. the NAOO team had a meeting with the Consulate Staff at the Jamaican Consulate Office in Manhattan. The CEO used the opportunity to outline the modus operandi of the RGD to consulate staff. She also made them aware of the many internal developments since becoming an Executive Agency.

The consulate staff used the opportunity to query many areas which they were unfamiliar with concerning vital documents. In fact the New York office presented the CEO with several birth certificates, which they had concerns about their authenticity.

Resulting from the meeting with the consulate staff the CEO highlighted to the staff the RGD's intent to provide speedy verification services.

The meeting had to be concluded prematurely to facilitate the staff moving on to the scheduled outreach meeting in Irvington New Jersey.



## New Jersey

The commute to New Jersey, which usually takes approximately two hours was extended to three and a half hours due to traffic congestion caused by road work being conducted on the road leading to the city.

The outreach meeting took place at the Faith Tabernacle Church in Irvington, New Jersey. The team delivered a presentation on the services offered by the agency and collected only six (6) applications.

The outreach meeting in New Jersey was not as successful in terms of attendance. However the twenty-six (26) persons who were present were appreciative of the information shared.

Several questions were raised concerning:

1. The process involved when adding the father's particulars to a birth record
2. Once again Death registration was an area which sparked many queries. Many persons seemed unclear on how to register a violent and sudden death and in some cases a death by natural causes.
3. Persons wanted to be reminded of the cost of RGD services and the required waiting time for certificates

Present at the meeting was City Council Woman Elsa Dublin who is also a Jamaican by birth.

## 'Setting Up Office in Manhattan'

The NAOO team was scheduled to offer services from the Consulate General's Office in Manhattan on Tuesday, July 20, 2004 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. By 7:30 a.m. on that day several persons were anxiously awaiting the team's arrival. During that six (6) hour period the team collected a record of sixty-one (61) applications and provided information and consultation to over one hundred persons. It must be noted that this consultation often required giving detailed answers to record updating queries and in most cases making contact with the Head Office in Jamaica.

By the end of this outreach the NAOO team began to really feel the effects of what had been a very exhausting two weeks. However the show had to go on. Early waking hours, late lunches, late dinners, sleeping in planes, scurrying through airports, long commutes and very active meetings had become the norm. However all persons were coping and performing with the highest level of professionalism; this was the general view expressed by those in attendance at outreaches.

After concluding activities at this location, the team immediately prepared to move on to Brooklyn, New York for an Outreach meeting in that community scheduled for 6:00 p.m.

## **Brooklyn**

Similar to the outreach meeting in New Jersey, the meeting at Lennox Road Baptist in Brooklyn saw a low turnout. Only twenty-five (25) persons were in attendance. Those who were present raised concerns about:

1. How to conduct Record-updating procedures, particularly, addition of father's particulars.
2. How to Register a Death
3. How to obtain a marriage certificate
4. The no-impediment search service

It was interesting to note how many persons in this community were mis-informed about information on the cost of the agency's services and the time period it took for an application to be processed. Some were given misleading information by family members and friends in Jamaica who they had asked to make applications on their behalf. In fact some were told they were required to pay exorbitant sums of money for services from the RGD.

It should also be noted that some persons at this meeting presented certificates which had information which required corrections of error. Additionally some photocopied certificates had to be verified for authenticity.

After the presentation was concluded and questions raised by the audience almost everyone remained to get one consultation from NAOO team members relating to individual cases.

The evening in Brooklyn ended at approximately 11:00 p.m. The NAOO team returned to Manhattan to prepare for the trip to Toronto, Canada on the following day.



Dr. Holness making a presentation during the outreach meeting in New Jersey.



Miss S. Brissett making a presentation during the outreach meeting in New Jersey.



Dr. Holness explains application procedures to a customer



Dr. Holness chats with members at the audience at the outreach meeting held at the Consulate Office in New York



RGD outreach team (left) checking applications before accepting them for processing during the outreach meeting in held in New York.



RGD outreach team hard at work in New York.

## Toronto

The team was met at the airport in Toronto by Vice Consul Valencio McKenzie and Derick McIntosh. The hospitality experienced in Toronto was parallel only to the southern hospitality of Atlanta.

The Consul General, Miss Vivia Betton, hosted the team for Dinner. The pleasant evening was appreciated and provided well-needed relaxation from what had been a very hectic four days in the Tri-State area.

At twelve midnight the same evening the CEO conducted a Radio interview on WCLK, with host Jai Mohammed to promote the outreach activities to be carried out the following day.

The Outreach activities for Toronto began on Thursday July 22. Members of the outreach team endured a very hectic schedule, which included the following activities:

1. Met with the Consulate General and staff
2. Accepted applications and provided consultation to approximately sixty customers.
3. Delivery of a presentation to twenty-six persons at the Jamaican Canadian Association

The staff at the consulate office in Toronto was extremely supportive and in full attendance at the Outreach meeting. At the meeting with staff concerns were expressed by members of staff about identifying certificates which may be fraudulent and providing more detailed information for Jamaicans who come into the consulate. The consulate staff were also quite impressed with the technological developments in the agency and the changes since Executive Agency. Staff members expressed a need for more in depth information on RGD services.

At the outreach meeting the following concerns were raised:

1. The length of time it takes for delivery of certificates
2. How to contact the RGD from overseas
3. The death registration procedure

During the visit to Toronto the team collected thirty-nine applications for birth, death and marriage certificates.

## Montreal

The **NAOO** team arrived in Montreal On Friday, July 22, 2004. The team was met by Jamaica's Honorary Consul in Montreal, Mr. Noel Patric Brady. After checking into the hotel, the team prepared for an outreach meeting at the Jamaican Association in Montreal. Thirty-five (35) persons attended the meeting. Jamaicans in Montreal raised several concerns about the process of obtaining essential documents.

Some concerns were as follows:

1. The process of adding Father's particulars
2. The operations of the mobile units
3. Cost of Birth Certificates
4. The Death Registration procedure

The outreach meeting lasted from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and the team was commended on delivering a very informative presentation.

The following day was spent at a Jamaica Day event organized by the Jamaica Association which was also attended by the Jamaican High Commissioner to Ottawa, Mr. Carl Marshall and used as an opportunity to honour Jamaican Canadian Sprinter, Mr. Donovan Bailey. Approximately 1500 persons were in attendance and several visited the RGD booth for information and consultation. In terms of application intake, the kind of success experienced in Toronto and Manhattan was not replicated in Montreal. The team only collected four (4) applications for birth, death and marriage certificates.

On Sunday, July 25, which was scheduled as the team's review meeting day and to make preparations to return to Jamaica. The CEO provided information on the agency's service to approximately eighty(80) persons on Sunday July 25, 2004 at The Mount Zion Apostolic Church.

While in Montreal the team was supported by the Deputy High Commissioner in Ottawa, Mrs. Patricia Rodney Evering.



Dr. Holness (left) chats with Consul General for Jamaica to Toronto Miss Vivia Betton



Dr. Holness (left) chats with Consul General for Jamaica to Toronto Miss Vivia Betton & President of the Jamaica Canadian Association (middle)



Dr. Holness (left) shares a moment with Consul General for Jamaica to Toronto Miss Vivia Betton & President of the Jamaica Canadian Association (middle)



Mrs. C. Banton (left) checks BDMS database while assisting a customer during the outreach meeting held in Toronto.



Some members of the audience attending the Toronto smiles for the RGD outreach camera



## **Challenges and Successes**

While on tour the NAOO team experienced several challenges some of the most significant was trying to move around with large heavy pieces of luggage especially since long commutes from one community to another was a regular occurrence. In the case of the trip from Atlanta to Washington, the flight from Atlanta was delayed causing the team to miss the connecting flight in Chicago. The team spent long hours at the various meetings and events however, pre-event preparations and post-event review were always done to ensure that activities remained on target and a record of events was maintained.

Although the tour schedule was an exhausting and extremely hectic experience, the agency seems to have made a significant impact on Jamaicans overseas. Many persons expressed their appreciation for the service being brought to their community. The team was also commended for the level of professionalism that they displayed and for the obvious team spirit. Many persons were particularly impressed with service innovations at the RGD and the plans for the future.

Upon the team's return from the tour, the CEO conducted two interviews one with Cliff Hughes on Power 106's Nationwide and one with In Baltimore.

The North American Overseas Outreach proved to be a successful venture for the agency. In terms of customer service, revenue collection, public education and public relations. A total of applications were collected. Several persons benefited from direct contact with an RGD representative. Detailed explanations of the record updating process and RGD's Operational processes were shared with overseas customers.

The team and the agency is thankful to the overseas Jamaican community leaders, Consulates and Foreign Missions, the Jamaica Information Service both locally and overseas for all the support and assistance provided. Special thanks to God for his protection and guiding mercies throughout a very challenging period, under the hectic circumstances, no member of the team experienced any form of illness.