



News Story

To: The News Editor

For Immediate Release

NextGen Leaders Gain Firsthand Lessons from JN Group Professionals

Eight young Jamaican participants in the United States-based Valda Mae Care Foundation's (VMCF) NextGen Leadership Programme gained practical exposure to leadership, business and professional development during a recent visit to the JN Group Corporate Offices, organised through a collaboration between VMCF and the JN Foundation.

The activity brought the young leaders into direct contact with executives and professionals from JN Group departments and subsidiaries, who shared knowledge on a range of areas, including communications, life insurance, legal and general counsel, corporate credit, hospitality, office administration, information technology (IT), business strategy and human resources.

The visit was designed to broaden the participants' understanding of how different professional functions contributed to the operation of a large organisation, while giving them an opportunity to gain insight into the professional journeys of employees, which were not always straightforward. Throughout the presentations and tour of the offices they heard how career paths could evolve through unexpected opportunities, challenges, changes in direction and continued learning.

Earl Jarrett, the JN Group's chief executive officer (CEO), in a pop-up interaction with the participants encouraged them to make use of the opportunities available to them and to view leadership as a responsibility rather than a position. The spontaneous exchange gave the young leaders a chance to engage with him in an informal setting and ask candid questions about leadership, including some of the toughest decisions he has faced in his role and how leading the JN Group has shaped his perspective on other matters.

"I'm just like you; I started in the same place," Mr. Jarrett said. "Being a leader makes you question everything. You can't simply accept what you are given as gospel. You need to be willing to challenge everything, test it against the facts and determine whether it is accurate and appropriate as you move forward," he advised.

The messages resonated with the participants including 12-year-old St Andrew Technical High school student, Kofi Massey, one of the youngest in the group. Kofi, who has his sights set on law enforcement, said: "I learned numerous things, including the importance of consistency and

discipline. I also learned that I should keep trying. My favourite part was the tour because one of the professionals we met helped me learn more about the career I would like to pursue.”

For Cornwall College student, Joeldean William, who is approaching 19 and preparing to transition from high school to the next stage of his education, the visit provided practical insight at an important point in his development.

“It was an interesting experience because I have never been inside an institution like this before, so I learned a lot. I learned about the importance of structuring yourself to grow to achieve the career you’re interested in.”

15-year-old Kayla Buckle of St Hugh’s High also welcomed the experience noting that, “This was important for us because we are young and still becoming, so having this kind of positive influence is necessary. A lot of us had questions and they were clarified extremely well.”

She shared that her biggest takeaway from the visit came from the first presenter, Hugh Reid, general manager for JN Life Insurance Company, who reinforced that “the only constant in life is change.”

“That really resonated with me because I don’t personally handle change very well. It was important for me to understand, though, that just because something is different does not mean it is inherently bad,” she said.

The visit to the JN Group Corporate Office formed part of VMCF’s broader efforts to support youth development and leadership across the Caribbean. The US-based foundation’s work is focused on assisting the elderly and developing young people in economically disadvantaged Caribbean communities, with the NextGen Leadership Programme providing opportunities for participants to build leadership skills and gain exposure to professional environments.

Dejoron Campbell, president and founder of the VMCF, said the collaboration with the JN Foundation was intended to provide the young leaders with meaningful exposure to the realities of professional life and leadership closer to home.

“This opportunity created a space for them to acknowledge how far they can go when they see people who look like them, who have been in these different executive or senior leadership roles right there in their hometown,” she said. “I hope to create other spaces like this for other young leaders as well and continue the partnership.”

Sydney Preddie, lead for youth and education programmes at the JN Foundation said the collaboration reflects the JN Foundation’s ongoing commitment to supporting the development of young people across Jamaica.

“We want our young people to recognise that their aspirations do not have to be limited by what they have seen or experienced. We are proud to have supported this activity with the VMCF, exposing their NextGen leaders to different career paths and encouraging them to ask

questions. We hope the experience helps them see themselves in these spaces and think more intentionally about the future they want to create,” she said.

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