

## **NATIONAL SECONDARY STUDENTS' COUNCIL LAUNCHES STUDENTS' COUNCIL WEEK**

*“Responsible students empowered for change”* is the theme driving this year’s National Secondary Students’ Council (NSSC) Week. This was officially announced last Wednesday when the NSSC hosted the official launch of the Week that runs from February 15 - 21, 2009.

Over one hundred and fifty secondary school students were present at the function which was hosted at Campion College. The Launch kicked off by a ‘high beat’, entertaining performance by the St. Catherine High School drummers. The programme was chaired by Region 1 Vice President Whitney Givans, who welcomed all the persons present, including student councillors, teachers and representatives from the National Centre for Youth Development.

President of the NSSC, Chantal Cogle extended her welcome to persons in attendance as she presented her message for this year’s NSSC week. Cogle spoke on the current plague of crime and violence in Jamaica and implored the students of Jamaica to be more responsible in their actions. “We do have the power to put an end to crime and violence in schools,” she highlighted.

Immediate Past President, Kemesha Kelly echoed similar sentiments to Miss Cogle as she challenged councillors to lead the change that Jamaica needs. “The change we need in Jamaica cannot come from adults alone,” Kelly pointed out, making reference to the youth influence in Barack Obama’s victory in the United States.

The plans for the week were then outlined by General Secretary, Shanel Stewart. Among the highlighted activities was the NSSC Save Yu’ Life Campaign, which will commence on February 19, 2009 at the Mandeville Park in Manchester. National Public Relations Officer Robino Ricketts emphasised that this Campaign is a direct effort to reduce risky sexual behaviour being practiced by young people. The Save Yu’ Life Campaign involves students’ councillors targetting young people at major bus terminals and providing peer counselling on healthy lifestyle issues and HIV/AIDS.

The NSSC will ‘invade’ Troy High School this Friday, where they will host their National Students’ Conference. The focus will be placed on creating greater awareness among the student population on issues such as inappropriate sexual activity, violence in schools, and drug use among students. The NSSC week culminates with their Labour Day to be held at the Ascot High School in St. Catherine.

Passionate testimonials were given by Jermaine Hamm of Manchester High and Mickealia Thompson of Bellefield High, as they outlined the benefits that involvement in the students’ council movement has had on their personal development.

The National Centre for Youth Development reiterated its commitment to the students, announcing that technical and financial support will be provided to the NSSC, for executing the activities of Students’ Council Week 2009.