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## New Horizons Rehabilitation Centre hosts Inaugural Graduation Ceremony

Five teenagers – three girls and two boys – proudly walked across the stage at the Ottley's-Lodge Community Centre on the evening of Thursday, July 7th, 2022.

The Event was the first ever Graduation Ceremony for youth of the New Horizons Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre (NHRC)– which was held to mark the end of their residential and academic programme, and to celebrate the hard work done during the years of residency.

Opened in 2013 as a facility for youth in need of rehabilitation, the Centre has supervised many males and females through the years, many of whom have gone on to write CXC exams with exceptional success, as the facility has recorded an almost 100% pass mark for students writing exams between the years 2015-2021.

Mr. Clyde Williams - Event Chairperson and NHRC Headmaster, congratulated the residents on completing their psychosocial and academic programme, noting that there had been many disruptions throughout the years, the most recent of which was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted, *"You are the first cohort to experience a graduation ceremony – you represent all the past students who successfully completed the Ministry of Education's academic programme. We applaud your resilience and hard work over the years"*. He also thanked the NHRC staff as well as officers of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Development & Gender Affairs, and affirmed that the Centre *"is able to produce graduates who are capable of joining their peers in any sector of society"*.

Probation & Child Protection Services Director Mr. Gerald Connor Connor reminisced that *"many of you started off this journey uncertain and scared of the unknown, but as time went on, you were empowered and refused to let the situation define you"*, while Chief Education Officer Mr. Francil Morris cautioned persons not to look down on the graduates but to continue encouraging them, as *"we all have made mistakes"*.

The residents were then inspired by featured speaker Mrs. Eleanor Phillip, who admonished them to be SMART - *"Set Goals, Maintain Focus, Achieve Goals, Review Goals, and Treat Yourself"*, after accomplishing their objectives.

The graduates (whose names and photos have been withheld to protect their identities) participated actively in the Ceremony through song and spoken word, much to the delight of the many supporters who had come to wish them well.

In wrapping up the Ceremony, Mr. Williams proclaimed the positive attributes of each resident, remarking, *"We will remember you. All of you have impacted us in a special way, and we consider ourselves blessed to have played a part in shaping your lives to ensure success in the future"*.

The Graduation Ceremony is expected to be an annual fixture in the NHRC's Calendar of Activities.

End of Release

July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022