

Chance meeting fosters Third World Awareness

By LISA RAINFORD
Staff Writer

In the late 1980s, west end Toronto residents John Callaghan and his wife, were returning from a holiday when they struck up a conversation with a group of students sharing their flight.

At first, admitted Callaghan, he thought the students were also returning from holidays but he soon found out they had been painting a school in Jamaica.

Intrigued by their mission, Callaghan, then a high school teacher at Brother Edmund Rice S.S., wanted to find out if anyone at the school would be interested in a similar assignment.

By the next year, 50 students had signed on to travel to Kingston, Jamaica where they would work in orphanages, nursing stations and at a squatter's camp.

When Callaghan retired in 1998 he figured that was the end of his Third World missions, however kids kept calling him saying they wanted to keep the organization going. Word of the Third World Awareness Organization traveled to friends and then to friends of friends.

"It's quite an incredible experience," said Callaghan. "The students forget about themselves and their lives here and put themselves right out there. They are confronted with their own humanity."

The trips are however, a tremendous economic sacrifice. Twenty-four people ages 21 to 24 from Toronto, Oakville and London will be dedicating their time in Jamaica this year.

From May 15 to 29, they will be working at places like Mother Theresa's home for the dying, Marigold Orphanage and Operation Restoration, a centre in Kingston's Trench Town.

The entire trip will cost about \$15,000. Students are responsible for their own flight, stay, food and transportation.

The Third World Awareness Organization is planning a walkathon on March 24, which will start at St. Clair Avenue and Bathurst Street and end at the Sunnyside Pool on the Lakeshore. There will be a barbecue for those who participate as well as the community.

It is the hope that proceeds from the walkathon will be enough to cover the transportation, food and activities that have been planned for the children in Jamaica - one of them being a trip to the beach.

"Many of them, even though they live in Jamaica have never been to the beach," Callaghan said.

For more information about the Third World Awareness Organization, call 416-653-5445 or log onto www.worldawareness.8k.com



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