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**international**

## *Jon the Caribbean*

**Celebrating Caribbean-American Month**

Photo By Maurice G. Fitzgerald



▲ At the Jamaican Women of Washington's Fourth Annual Tea-Off to Good Health Fundraiser Tea and Silent Auction last weekend, Yauntlet Pinna (l), Ethlyn Grant (c) and Yvonne Goulbourne (r) review brochures for vacations to Jamaica.

## Jamaican Women Tea Off

By Marsha Michel  
WI Contributing Writer

"Is everybody down here hot, or is it just me?" asked Karen Francis, vice president of Jamaican Women of Washington (JWOW), as she was putting the final touches on preparation for the 4th Annual Tea-Off to Good Health last Sunday. The theme of this year's event was "Teenage Pregnancy and the Power of Prevention," as the nation's capital has some of the highest incidences of teen pregnancy and HIV in the country.

Some of the women organizing and volunteering were at the event early to make sure things were running smoothly. "We go through this every year and have it under control," said Francis.

The Tea-Off took place at the Four Seasons Hotel at in Northwest D.C. beginning with a silent auction. Among the many items auctioned off were vacation packages to Jamaica and Europe, dinner and lunch vouchers to well known restaurants in the area,

and spa and wellness treatments.

The sound of Caribbean rhythms from a steel drum pulsated the air. There were at least 300 people present, the majority of whom were women of all ages with elaborate hats of different sizes and colors.

JWOW was created by Jamaican Dr. Jacqueline Watson, along with her friends and colleagues from various professional backgrounds, as a way to give back not only to Jamaica but also to Washington, D.C.

In her opening remarks, Watson stated that JWOW was created by ordinary people who wanted to make a difference. "We must not rely solely on government officials to do things, but we as private citizens have a responsibility as well," she said.

Emcee Karen M. Dale opened the event by thanking everyone for their continued support. Among the very few men at the event was John A. Junor, Jamaica's former minister of health and a Howard University graduate in political science. He emphasized the importance of gender equity in policy making and the valuable

contribution of women.

According to Brenda Miller of the D.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, whose organization received \$3,000, the problems facing women and teens are the same regardless of nation or creed.

The alarming statistics of teen pregnancy attest to the importance of Miller's organization. According to Dawnette Hinds Furzer of Women Media Watch in Jamaica, more and more kids are having unsafe sex at a very early age. Furzer's organization was granted \$10,000.

For the first time, the Judith Bennett-Sader Leadership Award was given to acknowledge the work of Dr. Shireen Lewis, executive director of EduSeed and the founder of EduSeed's Sister Mentors program. The award was named after Bennett-Sader, of Jamaican descent, who lost her life to cancer in 2005 and was a pillar of the community.

Over the years, JWOW has donated over \$100,000 to non-profit organizations based in Jamaica and the Washington, D.C. area.