

Jamaica Red Cross wants first aid volunteers

Every year, more than 300 casualties are recorded on our roads as a result of motor vehicle accidents. Similarly, accidents within the home, at school and play may reveal even more staggering statistics.

The first few moments immediately following an accident could mean the difference between life and death, and first aid could be that life-saving factor. It is against this background that deputy director general of the Jamaica Red Cross Society, Lois Hue, has made a call for more individuals to be trained as first-aiders. Speaking with The Gleaner from Devon House in St Andrew last Saturday ahead of the start of events to mark World First Aid Day, Hue used the opportunity to appeal for more persons to be trained as first-aiders, as well as for volunteers with the organisation. "We need more persons to become first-aiders ... but we in the Red Cross can't do it without volunteers," she said. Though the rewards are not tangible, she said there are several benefits to having first aid knowledge as well as becoming a volunteer. Much of this, she however said, is dependent on the individual. Ability to save lives "You [will] get out of it what you put into it," she explained. "... the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping other human beings. You get the social interaction with people from different walks of life and have a new family." Most important, she said, more persons will be able to save lives. She went on to point out that the experiences are not limited to our shores as "we go way beyond the borders of the Caribbean sea, and so you also have an affinity and connection with 187 other countries in the world that you could have access to go to one day because of your first aid or your membership within the Red Cross". Meanwhile, Hue, who chose the Red Cross over a media job some 30 years ago, said the organisation has started mobilising support to push for legislation throughout its 137-member countries to make first aid education accessible to all. The non-profit organisation, which has been in Jamaica since 1948 when it operated under the auspices of the British Red Cross, also wants to see more vigorous enforcement of regulations for first aid training of employees within factories, as it "would save more lives and lessen accidents". And, although pleased with changes in the early-childhood sector which now require its practitioners to be first-aid trained, Hue insisted it should not stop there. Instead, she wants to see first aid training in schools at all levels. Gladstone Adams, a 30-year veteran of the Red Cross and first aid instructor, has carried out many rescues. He recalled his most memorable as the time, in 2003, when he pulled a pregnant woman, who had been pinned down, from the wreck of a motor vehicle accident along Mandela Highway. "About two years later, I was in Cross Roads, we had Red Cross Month ... and I was coming back from the church service, and this lady just came up to me and asked, 'Sir, were you the person who took the pregnant woman from the car some time ago?' And I said, 'Yes.' And the woman said to me, 'You know that I was that pregnant woman?' And I felt so good. Then she said to me, 'You know that the baby eventually died?' Today, Adams, whose sojourn with the Red Cross started at a summer camp way back in 1979, says he tells everyone: "Join Red Cross and see the world." The Jamaica Red Cross is headquartered in Central Village, St Catherine, and has branch offices in all 14 parishes islandwide. Its contact numbers are 984-7860-2, email: jrcs@infochan.com and website: www.jamaicaredcross.com. [Jamaicagleaner.com](http://www.jamaicagleaner.com)