Jamaican Youth Aims to Feed 5,000

Motivated by Christ’s famous miracle, in which he used five loaves and two fish to feed 5,000 people, 18-year old Jordan Bennett is aiming to feed a similar number of homeless Jamaicans.

In carrying out the ambitious mission, he has started a non-profit organisation called: ‘Feeding of the 5000’ with the tagline ‘Young Jamaicans helping Jamaicans’. Already, some 1,500 people living on the streets of Kingston have been fed by the organisation, since its launch in April 2012. Jordan’s charitable work has not gone unnoticed and last month, he received the Youth in Service Award at the Prime Minister’s Youth Award for Excellence 2012 held at Emancipation Park. “It was such a great honour to know that a country has seen what you are doing and appreciates it…I really didn’t expect any of this and I am grateful and I just have to keep humble and give God all the thanks and praise,” he tells JIS News. The Northern Caribbean University (NCU) student says he has always had a passion for helping people, which dates back to his days at Kingsway High School in Kingston. He recalls that he sold $20,000 worth of sweets to help fellow students, who could not afford graduation costs. “It is something that I always wanted to do. I always had that passion to give back,” Jordan says. His mission to feed the multitudes started April last year, when the young Rotary Club member decided to forgo an Easter vacation overseas and devoted the time organising a feeding programme for homeless people in Kingston. His team of young volunteers distributed some 250 lunches to persons in different locations of the city. “We went out to different communities. We mainly targeted the inner-city communities and we had assistance from the police, my friends and three family members and we went out and we served,” Jordan said. At first, Jordan says he was thinking of a one-day event but plans changed after the overwhelming support from his friends and donations from private sector organisations. The enthusiasm led him to come up with the organisation’s name, which was printed on the back of T-shirts to promote the activity. His friends later suggested the idea of posting the pictures on social media. “After that, I got so many messages and realised that there were many people interested in giving back and I got so excited and I thought, ‘wow’ let me plan to do something more,” he notes. His work was quickly recognised thanks to exposure on Facebook and the electronic media. With help from his friends and a few organisations, which came on board, Jordan said he arranged a second event on December 23, when he fed about 1,300 persons. “We had a lot of support that day from the volunteers. We went out in the morning and then went back in the night, because there was so much food,” he recalls. Jordan has high praise for the many donations received from the volunteers as well as sponsors, Jamaica National Building Society, Continental Baking Company Ltd. and Big Jo. “It was such a great feeling. It was a big success,” he says with pride. While sharing the meals, Jordan says he always tries to show love to the people he meets and insists that his colleagues do the same. “I emphasise on that love because that is what sticks with them. The food is just there for an hour or two, so when we go out we show them love and show that we appreciate them and understand whatever they are going through,” he says. Jordan, who is pursuing a Bachelors of Business degree, majoring in Marketing, admits that organising the meals can be stressful at times, especially nearing his examinations, but he remains dedicated to the effort. “I just say it is my passion…so I just look at it in a good way,” he states. Currently, Jordan and a four-member organising committee are spearheading plans to raise funds for another feeding in December this year. “It should have been in April but because of the lack of funds we’ll be doing one in December,” he informs. He adds that this time, the organisation will not only be feeding street people in the downtown and Half-Way-Tree areas, but in other communities on the outskirts of Kingston. He says that preparations are also underway for a charity concert scheduled to take place on July 13 at the Young Men Christian Academy, 21 Hope Road, Kingston 10. “We are trying to raise as much funds as we can, so that’s what we are mainly focusing on now, the marketing of that and trying to get out people is our major focus now,” he informs. Because the organisation relies heavily on voluntary service, a meeting was recently held in Vineyard Town to discuss upcoming activities and plans to encourage persons to become volunteers. “So, we are trying to get people to register now and we have application forms so that persons could register and state why they want to be a part of it,” Jordan says. He notes that the organisation has about 100 persons, but usually the turnout at any event is about 50 persons “so we are trying to get more people involved.” Jordan tells JIS News that the work of the organisation will not stop, even after they reach the target of feeding 5,000 people. “I would never want to stop. I would never limit myself to 5,000 so I’m planning to do it on a much wider scale, so I wouldn’t be stopping at 5,000,” he says. Source: JIS