UNION of JAMAICAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS (USA) Inc.
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Thirty-six years of ~ Dedication ~ Commitment ~ Service

EDUCATION IS EMPOWERMENT, ONLY THE EDUCATED ARE FREE

2025 - 2026 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Annual General Meeting
16th September 2026

The Annual General Meeting on September 17, 2025, marked the end of three years of my tenure as president of our Union. We continued down the path of fiscal responsibility and austerity, and we added Evelyn Godden as an ex-officio member in recognition of the work that she had been doing with our primary schools. I felt it was important that she was able to continue that work as our first ex-officio member ever. Merlene Mullings of Montego Bay High School Alumni Association and Sharon Wynter of Meadowbrook Past Students Association completed their first full year as Board members and were now ready to continue as part of our great organization.

This past year was filled with many successes, and we should be proud of what we accomplished, and excited by the groundwork that has been laid to position us for continuity. I want to say thank you to all of our members for what you have done over the last twelve months. We must acknowledge the successes as well as the trials, celebrating the triumphs, and giving thanks for the contributions that made many lives better both here in the United States and in Jamaica. Hopefully, we will be able to recognize our stalwarts in a more meaningful fashion in the coming year.

Let me get something out of the way at the very beginning of this report. There is some negativity perpetuated in some quarters. Some would sacrifice their organizations for personal gain and accolades. Most of us do this work simply because we care. Let us never forget that UJAA is bigger than each of us. The mission must come before the missionaries.

We began the 2025-2026 year with a later than usual one-day retreat. In fact, the retreat did not occur until December as we had so many things going on from September to November and finding a time that worked for all the Board members was not easy. We recognized that organizations were struggling and that we had to help our own when they needed help – as they helped us in 2023 when we were struggling financially. Once again we drafted a budget and set aside a reserve for unexpected situations. I want to thank the Finance Team for its work to keep us fiscally responsible. The lessons learnt from Hurricane Melissa were at the front of our minds and we resolved that we would not overspend in 2025-2026.

The 30th Mega Drawing was held once again at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, and we had to brave the elements to make the drawing occur as scheduled. The afternoon had a terrific thunderstorm but with MC Irwine Clare's guidance we threaded between the showers. Kudos to the Mannings team for selling the winning ticket for the $30,000 grand prize and to St. Andrew's Alumnae Association for winning two prizes in their first year back in Mega.

Yes, we saw a reduction in the number of Mega participants from 39 to 34 but we added some tickets for a special Industry Cove Basic School fundraising sale. We printed 126,000 tickets printed and sold 70,116 for a gross intake of approximately $350,588, - our highest sales numbers ever in the 30-year history of Mega. Our organizations netted $297,555 up from $267,000 and UJAA netted $52,025 up from $47,000 the year before. In a time when selling tickets seem so much harder I want to say than you to everyone who made this possible. I know that working in the non-profit space is a thankless job, but you are all stars in my book!

This year our shipping efforts were mainly related to hurricane Melissa. Several schools benefited from UJAA shipments and care packages, including Montego Bay High, Mannings, STETHS, Knox, Industry Cove and Operation Restoration Christian School. We covered the shipping costs for many of these shipments and covered the clearance fees either wholly or up to 50%. Our resources were available to assist with paperwork for you, allowing you to have some comfort in knowing that UJAA was behind you and the guidance of UJAA was there when you needed it most.

This year we continued our support for Robotics in Jamaica. The ***FIRST*** Technology (Robotics) Challenge was held once more, but we did not sponsor the Dean's List Award as the program was not showing the results that we had anticipated. We limited our financial commitment to the FGC team to $20,000. While this was not ideal we recognize that we cannot continue to give this venture a blank check. More schools must benefit from our financial backing. Fortunately, ***FIR****ST* Global agreed to pay for up to five students and two coaches for the third year in a row.

I want to talk a bit about Hurricane Melissa and its aftermath – a painful chapter in our history and in the history of our island home. Jamaica was hit on Tuesday October 28, 2025. Seven parishes were devastated. Our FIRST Global Competition (FGC) team was scheduled to leave for Panama on Sunday October 26th and that trip had to be canceled initially . With God's bountiful mercy were spared a direct hit and the Diaspora began to mobilize almost immediately. Norman Manley Airport opened on Wednesday evening and we got the team on a flight on Thursday by mid-morning. Evelyn Godden, Clair Menzies and I flew to Panama City on Friday to be with the team. Karlene Largie worked diligently to help to get us all ready with the appropriate protocols in place. Team Jamaica Robotics consisted of five team members, three reserve students, two coaches and a Chaperone.

This year, Team Jamaica Robotics will travel to South Korea on October 3 arriving on October 5, and the competition will be held October 7-10. We will share the team's journey with you as the competition draws closer.

Immediately after Hurricane Mellissa hit, you may recall that a team of Dr. Paula Morris, Evelyn Godden and Sharon Wynter began work on a disaster recovery plan – note recovery, not relief - as we were acutely aware that recovery would be a long-term process. Natasha Davids began soliciting funds, primarily to assist Industry Cove Basic School (ICBS) netting over $14,000 as part of an overall Melissa fund which eventually reached over $19,000. ICBS lost its roof and we were told that since it was not a government school no help would be coming anytime soon to replace the roof. Norma Jarrett and other identified sources for donations. UJAA members gave their time, use of their personal vehicles, and storage space to assist the relief effort. Even a local store in Brooklyn – Brooklyn Bourne – collected and donated supplies to UJAA for our relief efforts. Truly, this was a team effort of immense proportion.

Today, I can tell you with great pride that ICBS has a new roof, new interior walls, refurbished desks and chairs and a staff that is energized to start the new school year only one week late. In fact, school opened two days ago with 35 of forty kids present. None of this would have been possible without partners. I want to recognize the Usain Bolt Foundation, which gave almost $9,000 towards the work. I want recognize the Irie Jam Foundation which gave $5,000 towards the work. I want to recognize Mr. Ansell Williams, who used his local contracting company and managed the work for UJAA at a cost just under $10,000 where other contractors were charging over $15,000 for similar projects. Principal Sara Williams had days when she was ankle deep in water, but today there is a new roof in place and school began this past Monday. Thank you UJAA family!

Our various committee meetings continued regularly on Zoom. We did not have a Fun Day this year, but I promise you that it will be back in 2027, as the Membership team is already putting plans in place. Monthly Board of Directors meetings and our quarterly Presidents' Roundtable meetings continued, conducted mostly virtually.

The 17th Annual Thanksgiving Service took place in person, in Hollis, for the second year and for the fourth time since COVID began in late 2019. We enjoyed a wonderful repast immediately afterwards.

Our hurricane relief packages were through the Lasco Chin Care Packages program, which was started in 2020. Kaleeb Plummer found a local supplier of packages in Westmoreland, and we bought 40 packages through them. Several of our organizations provided packages to their students and some teachers as well.

The 36th Annual High School Graduate Awards were hosted virtually once again.

More details of our accomplishments are included in the various annual reports for our committees which were previously distributed, but I would like to highlight several noteworthy achievements. In July, we were able to continue our involvement in the Jamaica Diaspora Taskforce Action Network, (JDTAN), Education Conference. The group celebrated its 11th anniversary and over 170 teachers and administrators were hosted at York University in Toronto Canada. We had an opportunity to help teachers who are non-JTA members attend the conference, and I am proud that a teacher from Leeds Primary, which has received tremendous assistance from our own Morant Bay, after a devastating fire, was present at this event for the second year in a row. This is in keeping with UJAA's efforts to have non-JTA teachers at the event, an effort started in 2022 when the conference was held in New York. It is my hope that in 2027 more associations will sponsor teachers to this event. The next conference is slated for July 2027 in Toronto Canada once again.

Our Annual High School Graduate Awards program entered its 36th year and we distributed over $16,000 to our twenty-two (22) applicants with the help of more than twenty-seven organizations and individuals. Please join me in wishing our recipients well as they move forward with their collegiate life. The future continues to be bright for our young Jamaicans. Ms. Natasha Davids and Ms Karlene Largie led the process and their work must be recognized as they continue to make this signature project successful.

Our Primary Schools Team continued to break new ground this year. With the energy and foresight brought to the team by Chair Ms. Evelyn Godden, the Primary Schools Team remain on fire with their work. Once again, we thank her, as well as Mr. Joel Webbe from Caribbean eBooks Limited, for the work that was done to make the training a success. Joel has continued to provide ongoing support once the formal training ended and we are proud to have recognized him as one of our UJAA 35 Awardees just this last year.

Our Adopt-A-Primary School Program is now in its fifth year - with four (4) member associations – Immaculate Conception HS Alumnae Association, Knox Association of Past Students NY, Wolmer's Alumni Association and York Castle HS Alumni Association – adopting four (4) primary schools. Work is being done to add four more schools this year. Our focus on this project remains strong as we enter the 2026 -2027 school year. It is my hope that, in the years to come, this program will become another UJAA pillar of success.

Despite challenges, we fulfilled our commitment to provide water tanks to Basic schools. Eight of those thanks are paid for but no delivered due to the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa. We will restart the program later this year as we remain committed to providing more water tanks as funding permits.

The Membership committee, now led by UJAA Director Wilbert Davis, continues to look for ways to provide more value to you. The Annual Year In Review journal was not produced but your

stories will be shared on our website Allow me to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Paula Morris for spearheading this task despite personal and work-related challenges.

The Conroy Allison Tri-Stare Family Fun Day was held in August. However, support for it was lukewarm even though this marked 26 years for the event. .

We also celebrated the fifth Alumni Day with our fellow alumni umbrella organization in Jamaica, Jamaica Alumni Association of High Schools, JAAHS, on the 2nd Wednesday of October 2025. Alumni Day represents an opportunity for us to reinforce the significance and contributions of alumni to those who are currently in our schools and who will one day become alumni. We must continue to make this day a special one, as we share what alumni are doing to make current students have a better life at school, day after day.

The fifth iteration of Leadership Development Academy, LDA, took place this year. Once again the goals of the academy were based on your feedback. As an expansion of the UJAA leadership development program of 2018, with the first Leadership Academy being held in 2022, Ms. Cherika Wilson of Campion and I, ably supported by our Vice-President, Mr. Michael Salmon, led the team. We are grateful to all the members of the team, but especially to Mr. Perry Bloomfield and Shaun Abrahams for their input. We delivered two leadership seminars, and a summit led by Ms. Lesleyann Samuel that was well received by those in attendance. Plans are in place for an LDA-in-Action program beginning in October. I look forward to increased participation by everyone.

This year the website team was integrated into the Marketing and Public Relations team (MPR). Our website is regularly updated and webmasters Durval Heirs (Titchfield) and Baldwin McIntosh (Maldon High), continues to focus on improving the site. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who worked on the site in the past. We would never be able to pay Desmond Duncker for all that he has done, and I salute him for a job well done.

The Marketing and Public Relations team continues to work in the background. It provide social media posts and flyers at a remarkable pace. Our social media presence, and other activities, has contributed to further name recognition for UJAA across the Diaspora and in Jamaica. I hope that others will join this team as it continues to build the UJAA brand. Please note that, on average, over 8,000 persons visit our website each month.

Our first Advisory Committee started in 2020-2021. Their term ended in September 2023. Our current Advisory Committee consisting of Dr. Corrinne Graham, Ms. Sharon Gordon, and Vice President Michael Salmon, and I want to acknowledge them as they seek to advise the Board in key areas.

This past year, our MLK Jr Committee held its annual MLK Jr. Day Celebration in January and invited two local schools – The Garvey School, and Elmont Memorial High School - participated in our third African American Knowledge Challenge Competition. I would like to thank our Vice-President, Mr. Michael Salmon and Ms. Evelyn Godden, and the rest of the MLK Jr. Committee for spearheading this relatively new UJAA endeavor once again.

In closing, I extend my gratitude to the UJAA Board and all association members for their unwavering dedication and hard work during this past year. I want to thank Mr. Michael Salmon in particular for being my sounding board, confidante and friend. I look forward to the day when he becomes the eighth president of this organization. Thank you, Dr. Paula Morris, Karlene Largie (term limited) , Clair Menzies-Forbes (term limited), Ansell Williams (not seeking re-election), Evelyn Godden (ex-officio), Wilbert Davis, Merlene Mullings, Kaleeb Plummer, Sharon Wynter, and Warren Grant. for your work with me over this past year. Together, we have accomplished much, navigating changes and internal challenges while continuing the mission of UJAA. I am proud of our achievements, and I hope I have served you well this year.

AS an organization, we must remain united and focused as we move forward. We must be resilient, deliberate, and strategic as we tackle the challenges ahead of us. Our country is in a state that may cause each of you to be concerned for the future. Please remember that this UNION is about the collective will of all of us. As I have said on so many occasions since last October, WE ARE JAMAICANS, WE WILL RISE. Indeed, we shine brightest when the odds are against us. Thank you.

Donovan Wilson

President
16th September 2026

Presented at UJAA's Annual General Meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, 16 September 2026.