

From: "Sr. Angella Harris" <ichsprincipal@cwjamaica.com>  
To: ICHS Chapter Presidents

Dear Alumnae,

Blessings for 2009!

School resumes tomorrow and I will not allow that to happen without writing to you. Get a drink and sit back, because this is a rather long What's-Been-Happening -at-ICHS email...long overdue. In fact it is so long, I have not proof read. Hope all everything is crystal clear. Let me know if there is anything of interest to you that I have left out.

Last term was bitter sweet. We were off to a settled start in spite of Gustav. Our biggest problem was that a teacher and a few students who live on the 'wrong side' of the Hope River's bridge in Harbour View were unable to get to school for two days because a chunk of the bridge buckled under the force of the flood waters.

### **LIBRARY**

The Library is beginning to look Immaculate.

### **BOOKS**

Thanks for the many books collected in Florida! Thanks too to NY. We also invited book merchants to mount displays. Teachers and students made selections, then the HSA made purchases based on their choices. Last year when we learned that the book ship Logos would be in Montego Bay, Brigitte Pinto and I decided to go visit it. The day before the date set, I received a call from a parent asking if her daughter could miss school in order to go to the ship. Herona had placed first in the Jamaica Library Service's Reading competition for 2007, so I knew she was an avid reader. I told her Herona could accompany Miss Pinto and me. A second student made a similar request, so four of us headed to Mo Bay. It was wonderful! Believe me, the Library looks VERY different now. And do not believe anyone who says that young people do not read. The Librarians have been kept busy. We employed a cataloguer to help with the processing of the books from Florida

The HSA spent a significant amount on books, software, shelving, bulletin board, circulation desk. We now have to deal with a new problem. Sad to say there are some girls who sneak books out without having them processed so the HSA is investigating the feasibility of using magnetic strips.

### **COMPUTER LAB**

About five years ago the then government imposed a levy on telephone calls to Jamaica. The millions collected from this are earmarked for introducing and improving ICT in education at all levels (e-Learning Programme). ICHS is a pilot school. We were earmarked to receive 70 desktop computers, 40 of which were for the Library, for research. It was a dream come true! e-Learning would also construct the partition in the Library to create the lab. Everything was in place to begin early July 2008. Then the bomb was dropped. Government had changed their policy and we had to not only put up the partition but do the necessary electrical wiring. I was livid! We were looking at \$1m for which we had not budgeted. The gift we received from Karlene from the NY Chapter came just in time!!!!

The Lab was blessed late September. The idea is that any teacher - Science, Geography etc. - can take her girls to the lab and use the technology available.

The computers donated by Toronto Chapter about 2 years ago are still in the Library. They are available to Sixth Formers who need to use computers when the Lab is occupied by a class.

### **NEEDS?**

A colour printer comes to mind right away.

## **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

Our fifth form girls made a clean sweep of the CSEC (the CXC equivalent of GCE O'Level) awards from the Scientific Research Council. Jhodi Bennett placed first in Jamaica for Mathematics, Kaydi-Ann Newsome first in Physics and Theresa Wong placed first in Chemistry and Physics. I am sure there are firsts in other subjects but these are just for the Sciences and Mathematics. We will not know about the other subjects until later this year.

## **SPORTS**

[Alexia Royal-Eatmon](#) is a third form student and one of our top junior swimmers. She represented Jamaica at the games in India last October. The swim team won the ISSA Swim meet in November, amassing over 450 points. Their nearest rival was St. Andrew High with approx. 290 points.

The lawn tennis team won the Cable & Wireless competition, also in November.

This term we will compete in hockey, football, track & field, table tennis.

## **NOVEMBER TO REMEMBER**

This is the phrase I used in my report to the School Board a few weeks ago. We had to cope with the sudden death of Head Girl Pia Phillips on November 1 (All Saints Day). Then three days later the unexpected death of past Vice Principal (retired April 2007) Dancel Taylor was added to our plate. The hardest part for me was seeing the girls in so much pain and having to allow them to grieve.

On Monday morning after Pia died I had three additional security guards on hand to deal with the media. I knew they would want to wander around the campus interviewing persons and I only wanted us to be alone to grieve. Alone????!!!!!! That morning we were far from alone. Every media house was present, but they were so respectful of the restrictions I placed on them. Vice Principal Aba Polson and student Kaithlyn Williams were the only persons they were allowed to talk with. But I tell you, the images on TV and in the newspapers spoke volumes more than any words could. The girls were grieving deeply. I had no idea that Pia was such an influential person. That Monday morning we had parents, recent past students, other alumnae, well-wishers, counsellors, students from other schools were present for assembly. We closed the school day at 12:30 with a visit by the Minister of Education (Andrew Holness) and the Minister of Security (Trevor McMillan). Throughout that first week, hundreds of persons signed the condolence book that we had.

I have sent you the programme for the Thanksgiving Service we had here at school on November 14. The service was held under a large tent and we moved from the tent - all 2,000 of us - to the lawn with the Blessed Mother for the release of the balloons. The girls' tributes were AWESOME. The movement towards the statue was actually done in silence and that in itself and that was so moving. Pia's friends and classmates released 7 coloured balloons for her 7 colourful years at ICHS. Then they released 18 gold ones for her 18 years of life...you do know that Pia died on her 18th birthday. The most moving part was that one of the students who had a balloon could not bring herself to release it. There was not one dry eye anywhere. After the service I took up a sheet of paper I found under the tent and it turned out to be the reflections of a sixth form student. That is the attachment, The Atypical Mourner.

Pia's funeral mass (she was Roman Catholic) was held on Saturday the 15th, the day after the Thanksgiving service. The church had arranged a vigil the previous for tributes, so only two were given at the funeral. One from the Principal of her previous school, Quest Preparatory, and I had the privilege of giving the other. I have included it so that you can get another feel of this phenomenal young woman. The Prime Minister attended. Again, it was such a painful experience. I had rented two buses and all 58 seats were occupied with students and teachers who went to Dovecot for the interment. I have heard of persons threatening to jump into a grave but did not experience it until that afternoon.

On Friday, December 12, her classmates and Form Teacher had a brief service to bury the many tributes they had privately written to Pia. That too was moving.

November was difficult but the blessings received may not have come any other way. We are a stronger, closer school community for sure. Please pray that the girls will bounce back quickly as they prepare for exams.

### **CLOSE OF THE 150TH ANNIV. YEAR**

For the planning committee to have maintained such momentum and drive and execute a series of events as they did is marvelous. And of course there was such participation and support from alumnae with so many of you from overseas not skipping a beat.

I cannot say often enough how fantastic you all are with your faithfulness and love for ICBS. It continues to be a blessing.

In St. Francis,  
Peace!

Sr. Angella



[book merchants.JPG](#)



[logos purchases.JPG](#)



[new circulation desk.JPG](#)



[other computers.JPG](#)



[new library lab.JPG](#)



[library lab.JPG](#)