



FOOD FOR THE POOR

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GOODWILL EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTRE ***Port Antonio, Portland***

***"As often as you did it to one of the least of my brothers
and sisters, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40***

Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre

Port Antonio, Portland

BACKGROUND

Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre was established on September 6, 2016, when, Mrs. Tanisha Smith-Thompson and three teachers took a leap of faith and left the school where they were originally employed at the time, to start a school of their own. With the full encouragement of parents, who pledged their continued support, Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre started with only eight children, all under the age of six years old, in a shared building in the parish of Portland.

After years of enduring the challenges associated with the location, space and accommodation, Principal Thompson finally received word in 2019 after applying to Food For The Poor in 2008, that the building will be granted. Unfortunately, weeks after, she was informed that the decision had to be differed because her population was far too low. Mrs. Thompson did not stop at that juncture, she persevered, worked on increasing her numbers and continuously followed up with the organization.

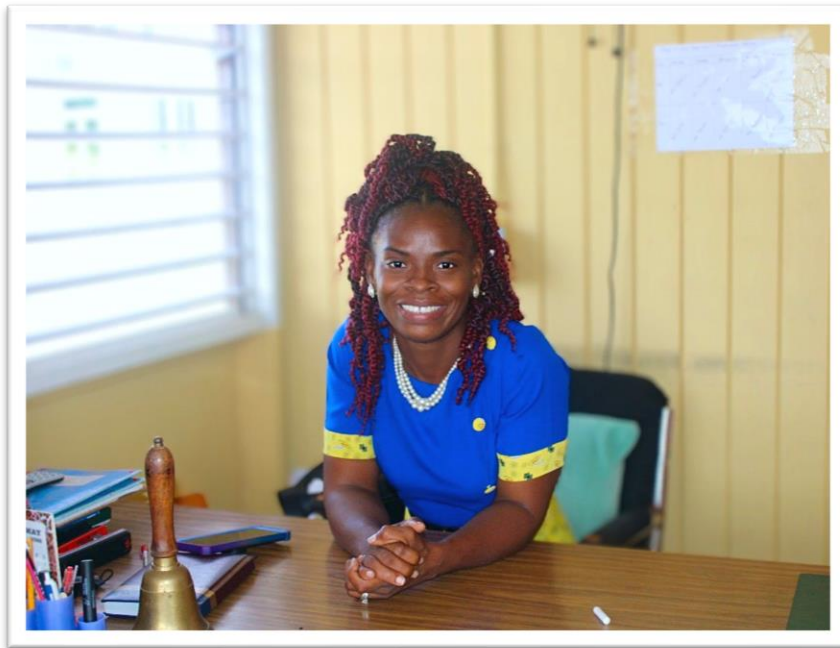
Following a series of events, after all documents, land arrangements and construction were complete, **Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre opened its doors on January 6th 2022 because of the generous financial donation from Helping Hands Jamaica Foundation and in memory of their founding board member, Denise Jones.**

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TESTIMONIALS

- ◇ *Tanisha Smith-Thompson is the founder and principal of Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre. Speaking to her motivation, Mrs. Smith-Thompson said, “I eat, sleep and drink Goodwill...everything is about Goodwill. When I get here at 7am, sometimes I am here until 6pm. Even when the construction was going on, I was here every day, checking in and watching my dream come true. I want to leave a legacy...twenty (20) years from now, I want Goodwill to be the best learning centre in Portland. As the motto says, ‘changing lives, shaping the future.’”*



Principal, Mrs. Tanisha Thompson, sitting in her office at Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre. This is the first time since Goodwill started in 2016 that Mrs. Thompson has had her own office.

The two previous locations required the students to share bathrooms with other adults who were also occupying the space. This was both unsanitary and inconvenient for the children and teachers at the school.

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Mrs. Thompson said, “*we had to share bathrooms at the two places we were before but, now we have our own bathrooms...the children no longer have to wait on anyone to use the bathrooms, we have our own space.*”



Infant-sized toilets in the bathrooms at Goodwill Early Childhood Centre. A stool is in the bathroom for students who need an extra boost! 😊

Mrs. Thompson is incredibly happy that her office also has a bathroom. She has never had that before in all her years of being principal. “*I have a bathroom in my office, so I do not have to be going out and walking through the classes to go to the restroom. The teachers also have a restroom for themselves. We now have two bathrooms (cubicles) for boys and two for girls.*”

The structure is an ‘L shaped’ building painted in blue, white, and yellow. Mrs. Thompson loves the design. She said, “*I chose the ‘L shape’ because I just feel that design was better and now that it is done, it really suits Goodwill. I have been waiting on the approval since 2016 and I do not regret the wait, it was worth it.*”

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Goodwill Early Childhood's L-Shaped Building.

Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre now has four classrooms. Before the building was donated, the smaller children were mixed with bigger/older children because there was just not enough space to separate the groups. Thanks to the generous donors, the students can now learn in a comfortable environment.



The classrooms at Goodwill are spacious, well-lit and properly ventilated. There is enough room for a nap corner, reading corner, teacher's desk and games area.

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Mrs. Thompson said *“I love the classrooms. The size of each classroom is ideal and meets the standard that the Early Childhood Commission requires. The construction team executed well. I have sixteen (16) students in the two-year-old kinder class, twenty (20) students in Class 1, fourteen (14) children in the four-year-old class and twelve (12) five-year-olds in Class 4. That is a total population of sixty-two (62) students. We lost some children because of relocation and some parents grew weary during the construction phase.”* The learning centre is right across from the sea and that improves the atmosphere, temperature and overall ambience. *“It is such an awesome view, even the other day we saw dolphins for the first time in front of our eyes. The children can see everything, even when helicopters are landing.”*

Teachers are the most important part of Goodwill’s excellence, they have five (5) teachers and one teacher trainee from the Heart Trust NTA, which is Jamaica’s number one (1) training agency.



Teachers and students at Goodwill Early Childhood Centre happily share in a group photo at the entrance of the new school building.

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“With this new building, we are able to serve the community; not just church members or teachers but we also have youth service workers who get the opportunity to come and gain experience, and that was part of the plan, to benefit the community and that is what we are doing even better now with a place to call ours. Our past students are doing very well, and our school is highly recommended because of our teachers and how we take care of the children. The Development Officer from the Early Childhood Commission also commends us. Words can’t explain how I feel, I am truly grateful to the team that made this possible. Because of them, I can look forward to a salary at the end of the month, the students have somewhere comfortable to learn, my teachers have a job they love, we didn’t need to go in debt with expenses because they did everything. My team and I are very grateful, since we got the building, we have been getting more students. In fact, we have to turn away some students because of the overwhelming interest from the parents,” Mrs. Thompson said with a smile. Appreciation was also extended to the team of construction workers. “To the surveyors, contactors and labourers who worked together, it was really a blessing seeing them show up every day doing their best. They did not delay; they were on time and professional. They were warm and nice people. They encouraged me to continue persevering.”

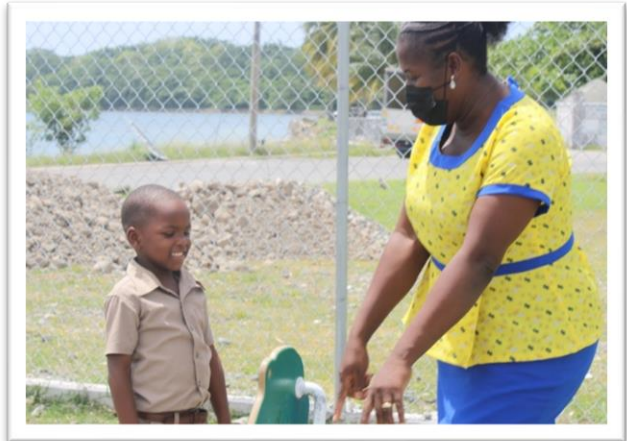
Since Goodwill opened its new doors, it has been the most talked about and the most sought-after basic school in the area. Mrs. Thompson told us that the parents are excited, and some are even saying they want their child/children to be enrolled at Goodwill September 2022. *“We will have to establish a cut-off point but the fact is, we could not have reached this milestone if it was not for our donors. I want to say thank you to Helping Hands Jamaica Foundation and thank you Food For The Poor,”* Mrs. Thompson concluded.



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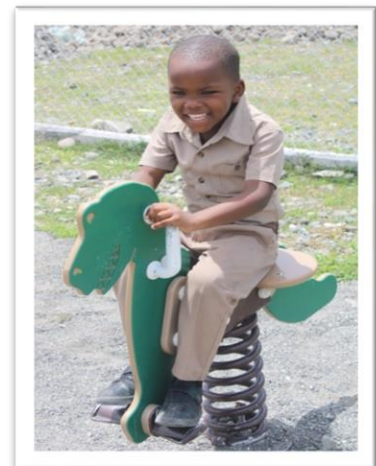
◇ *Fiona Haughton has been a teacher at the Goodwill Early Childhood Learning Centre since inception. A bubbly teacher of the three (3) year olds, she loves her babies (students) and is excited to show up for them every day.*



Mrs. Fiona Haughton interacts with a student in the schoolyard.

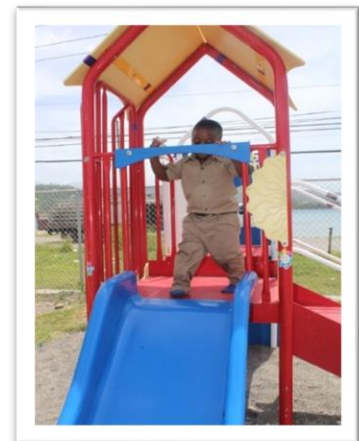
"I'm a teacher of three-year-olds and I enjoy it, it does not feel like work at all, because it is something I really love."

Mrs. Haughton is the longest serving teacher at Goodwill and would have experienced the many challenges, changes and milestones encountered. *"We were in Egypt; we were really struggling. When we found out that we would be getting the building, it was a dream come true. At first, I was sceptical but thank God, the donors came through for us. Everyone is now in their own classroom, and we can accommodate more children. It's really a blessing. Parents are now at ease; they are more comfortable, because the big kids and little kids are not mixed anymore. The students feel more comfortable in their own space and it improves the environment and makes it more conducive for learning."*



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Goodwill students are seen enjoying the new playground during their lunch break.

Mrs. Haughton shared that all other teachers are very pleased and happy for their new school.

“On behalf of all the teachers at Goodwill, donors, thank you for all you do, we pray for Food For The Poor every time we meet. Parents keep coming for their child to be registered so very soon we will need an expansion,” Mrs. Haughton laughed.

◇ *Mrs. Danette Anderson-Geohagan has been the Cook at Goodwill Early Childhood since 2016. A parent at that time, she saw the massive pressure that the staff members were under and volunteered to prepare meals for three (3) days of the week.*



Mrs. Geohagen is seen in the school's new kitchen preparing to clean up after lunch.

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"I have been the cook here since the school was at Port Antonio Open Bible. It feels good, and we really appreciate it. We are now well equipped to do our thing on our own. Before this, we were using the church's kitchen and appliances, including their stove, refrigerator and utensils. We did not have anything for ourselves. Mrs. Geohagan explained that the new appliances were needed and so was the kitchen. The kitchen has large windows and two doors to increase ventilation. "It is much more spacious. I appreciate the fridge so much; it is a significant improvement for us, and we can store our meats for the monthly supply. We appreciate the stove so much; we really appreciate Food For The Poor and the donors. There is more space even with the storage cupboards and shelves. When Goodwill was at its previous location, the kitchen was shared with others and that was not a sanitary situation. Now, we have our own kitchen space, there is no clutter, and the kitchen can be cleaned easier. Food For The Poor, thank you."



As part of the project, Goodwill received kitchen appliances including a Frigidaire Refrigerator and a four-burner gas stove.

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◇ *Mrs. Herfier Thompson, Grandmother of student, Michaele Thompson, said she is happy that Goodwill is now housed in its own building.*

When Ms. Thompson came to pick up her granddaughter from school, she spared a few minutes to comment on Goodwill's new look. *"It is a blessing in the community. My granddaughter and many kids in the area come here. It is like a home away from home for the kids. The teachers are like parents, they are wonderful, and the children are being blessed. It is all worth it. The building is great; clean, spacious, and well-kept. The teachers make Goodwill worthwhile for the students. from 8:30am-1:30pm, the children have a home and a haven. They learn, play and interact and they are happy. Big up to the donors!"*



Herfier Thompson and her three-year-old granddaughter, Michaele, striking a pose after school.