

Curphey Home in Manchester, Jamaica: “Home of the Brave”

April 25, 2023



DCS Arms of Love, in collaboration with Carla’s Escape Day Spa, and Curphey Home Chairman at the home entrance (Photo Credit: Contributed)

By **CNW Contributor**

– **Trishagaye Kelly**

Far enough away from excessive noise and pollution, in bushes where the breeze is cool and the view of the sea is marvelous, lies a home that

not many people seem to know exists. But this is not your typical home for permanent residence or where elderly family members are taken; it's a Jamaican retirement home for ex-soldiers.

Curphey Home, situated between Newport and Cross Keys in South Manchester, Jamaica, was established in 1958 and is known for its accommodation to retired soldiers from World War I and II, the Jamaica Regiment, and the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC), among others.

After Jamaica gained independence in 1962, the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) was formed and was added to the list of accepted residents to the home. The home was named after the late Colonel Sir Aldington Curphey, who at the time was concerned about the retired soldiers who received unfulfilled promises to be gifted land either in the United Kingdom or Jamaica.

He created this home for the veterans who were struggling with accommodation upon returning to the island. Currently, the home with the capacity to facilitate 35 residents, only has eight as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftereffects, but is now looking forward to accepting new residents once more.

Chairman of Curphey Home, Windel Redley, noted that the ages of the current veterans range from 60 to 102 years old.

“At present, the only surviving World War II veteran is 102 years old- his name is Stanley Francis. There was also a female here that actually served in the WRAC but she died a year ago,” he said.

Contrary to popular belief, many veterans fall on hard times; some linger on the street while others face multiple challenges. For this reason, the organization has a welfare officer, who is stationed in Kingston at Curphey Place. Redley mentioned that the home is charity-run and continues to serve its original purpose- to assist struggling ex-servicemen and women.

“Anybody who has seen an ex-soldier on the street or suffering, would get in touch with the Jamaica Legion and then the protocol would be done and the background checks to get them to the home,” he said.

Like any other organization, financial availability determines what gets done and when. One of the main fundraising initiatives for the home is the National Poppy Appeal, which is done annually on the second Sunday in October.

The initiative spans from workplaces to schools, in an attempt to help civilians give back to those who first gave and was implemented under the patronage of Governor General, Sir Patrick Allen. The home also receives a small subvention from the JDF, as well as donations from the Jamaica Ex-Soldiers Association, based both in Jamaica and overseas.

Additional assistance is given through donations from churches, schools, and well-wishers, which, according to Redley, “has helped the home tremendously”.

One of the continuous donations to Curphey Home is from the ‘*Arms of Love*’ (AOL) charity initiative in the Department of Communication Studies (DCS) at Northern Caribbean University (NCU).

DCS Chair and facilitator of the program, Noreen Daley, believes giving back is something everyone should do.

“I grew up in a home where I saw my parents giving of themselves so I believe it’s a part of me. When you give back, it’s not just about money, it’s of yourself, especially with the elderly- your presence is so important to them,” she said.

AOL was developed by Daley when a few students came together to donate to a home, and she believed this could be done on a regular basis.

“Because of COVID, the initiative was dampened, but in recent times we have donated chemicals to them and the most recent thing we’ve done was a spa date where we pampered them,” she said.

From time to time, students from the Department of Nursing at NCU also visit the home, where they offer physical check-ups for the veterans there.

Bianca Dempster, a visitor with AOL, said she would do it again in a heartbeat.

“I’ve been there twice and both experiences were fulfilling. I have a soft spot for the elderly so being there made me feel humbled and grateful. It reminded me a lot of my great grandfather, so being around them felt like home,” she said.

Redley believes the residents enjoy the various encounters they get to have with different members of the public- from church members having worship with them to social workers talking to them and giving encouragement.

“Because of the pandemic and the confinement, mental health issues come in. So whatever is donated, sometimes even gift baskets, it’s a tremendous help to the residents and they really appreciate it,” he added.

The facility accepts all donations, whether cash or kind, perishable or non-perishable items.

Members of the public who wish to assist the Curphey Home through donations can call the Jamaica Legion, situated at Curphey Place in Kingston, at (876) 926-2382, or call Curphey Home directly at (876) 817-8314 or Mr. Redley, the chairman/manager at (876) 375-5853.