

## Jamaica Gleaner Online



Digicel CEO Mark Linehan chats with Kathy Chang (second right), co-founder of the Jamaica Autism Support Association (JASA). With them are Dr Amanda Keating (second left), licensed psychologist at the University of South Florida, and Kerry-Jo Lyn, Digicel Foundation's programme manager. They were at the recent workshop. - Contributed

**The [Jamaica](#) Autism Support Association (JASA) hosted its annual workshop for parents, teachers, caregivers and others at the Genesis Academy on July 6 and 7. The workshop focused on innovative approaches to autism and was held in collaboration with the [Digicel](#) Foundation.**

"Since we started JASA, one of my visions was to have a two-day workshop where one day would focus on techniques for parents and the other for teachers," noted Kathy Chang, co-founder. "Now that the Digicel Foundation has come on board, we are finally able to host a two-day event," expressed Chang.

Dr Amanda Keating, licensed psychologist at the University of South Florida, discussed the importance of schoolwide positive behaviour support and the importance of using everyday moments to teach new skills.

### **MUCH MORE TO BE DONE**

"Although there has been improvement, especially with the work of JASA, Jamaica still has a poverty of interventions, skilled practitioners, and evidence-based treatment that show improvement in the lives of those living with autism" commented Dr Keating.

With the absence of adequate support for those diagnosed with autism, Dr Keating notes, "It's difficult to transfer the information learned in a textbook to real life. This is why it is important to talk with professionals who are familiar with the Jamaican context who can assist in applying the textbook knowledge to the situation here in Jamaica" she said.

The presentations were geared towards informing teachers about how to better meet the learning needs of children with autism and on material that would be particularly useful for parents.

Several professionals, including psychologists and occupational therapists, presented on the following topics: 'Recognising Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom'; 'Using Everyday Moments to Teach New Skills'; 'How to Approach Sexuality Issues; Toilet Training; Coping with Meltdowns'.

### **Surfing for Autism**

In addition to supporting the 'Coping With Autism' Workshop, the Digicel Foundation also partnered with JASA in its 'Surfing for Autism' event along with its awareness-building activities during World Autism Awareness Month in April of this year.

Coping with autism - innovative approaches - Social - Jamaica Gle...

<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20120713/social/social9.html>

"We have a very special place in our hearts, not just for children with autism, but for the entire community with special needs," remarked Samantha Chantrelle, executive director of the foundation, "This is why we are committed to building three special-needs schools by 2014."