

# ROAR brings about smiles

Education: Family helps out

By Tanis Gillis  
Contributor

The heat of the Jamaican sun had nothing on the warmth two girls from Okotoks helped bring to school children on the tropical island this winter.

Sisters Anika Cripps, 10, and Olivia Cripps, 8, were part of a group of 18 volunteers who travelled to Windsor Forest Primary School, located in the Jamaican parish of Portland, in February 2012.

Their goal was to build and equip a resource room for the school children, some of whom had never used a computer.

"I participated in a lot of ways," Anika said. "The first thing I did was play with the kids. Then I painted some of the walls and swept some of the staircases."

The girls also raised more than \$500 earlier this month from a stuffed animal sale they organized at Ecole Percy Pegler School in Okotoks and through other donations from the community.

The proceeds will be sent to Jamaica to help buy tables and chairs for the resource room.

Project ROAR (Reach Out and Restore) is an offshoot of Calgary ReggaeFest.

It's the brainchild of Leo Cripps, the girls' father, and their stepmom Cindy Nield, both founding members of the annual reggae festival. Cripps, who currently lives in Calgary, was born and raised in Jamaica and attended Windsor Forest Primary School as a child.

"I had to walk two to three miles to get to the closest library," Cripps said.

"What we have left the school with is a fully-functioning library. They don't even have to leave the school to find out what's happening in the world around them."

Thanks to the efforts of the Canadian volunteers and local trades people, what began as a dusty storage shed was over the course of one week transformed into the new school resource room, complete with computers and books.

The budget for the resource room construction project was \$15,000 and Cripps proudly said the final cost came in at \$14,826.

Fundraising efforts held through the Calgary Reggae Festival Society last year brought in \$13,000, while donations from friends and family helped make up the rest.

Along the way, the sisters

had a chance to find out about daily classroom routines in Jamaica. The girls said the physical sizes of the classrooms are smaller, but student numbers in those classrooms are larger. For example, they said the Grade 6 class at the Jamaican school contained 42 students.

"In our class we have a smart board and our desks are only for one person," Olivia said. "But in the classroom of Jamaica they have desks that are for three people, and a white board."

Although there is still work to be done, Cripps said his greatest reward came from seeing school staff sitting on the benches and working on the computers in the resource room.

"To think of what it was when we got there a week earlier and to see it being used was just a joy for me," he said.

"One of the things I dream is to see us as expats, as people who have benefitted from these institutions, reaching out and giving back in whatever way we can."

The needs still exist, Cripps said, adding news of Project ROAR's achievements at Windsor Forest Primary School is spreading throughout the area. Cripps said he's already been approached by the local high school, a pre-school and a soccer team for help with various projects.

He said one of Project ROAR's goals is to encourage the local community to contribute their skills to the various restoration efforts.

Cripps is also looking at utilizing his contacts with reggae musicians to organize a fundraising reggae concert, which could possibly be held in Jamaica next year.

And while their hard work brought smiles and tears of gratitude to the faces of staff and students at Windsor Forest Primary School, the Okotoks sisters came home with the gift of a new perspective. They attended classes, played soccer in the school yard and shared hot lunches, which included goat head soup, with the Jamaican students. Those experiences taught them more than any textbook ever could.

"I learned that if you have lots of money or not much, it doesn't really matter because you're still a person in the world," Olivia said.

To find out more about Project ROAR, or to make a donation visit reggae-fest.ca.



TANIS GILLIS/OWW

Anika and Olivia Cripps are surrounded by a mountain of stuffed toys at Ecole Percy Pegler School in Okotoks earlier this month. The sisters raised more than \$500 for Project ROAR through their stuffed toy sale and from other community donations. The money will help furnish a resource room at a Jamaican school.

### Showhomes NOW OPEN

# HERE, OFF LEASH AREAS DON'T JUST APPLY TO DOGS.

A photograph of a family (father, mother, and child) running and playing in a grassy field under a blue sky with a colorful kite flying.

## MOUNTAINVIEW

IN OKOTOKS

RECONNECT WITH NATURE. Perched on a spectacular escarpment in northwest Okotoks, MountainView boasts views of the rugged Sheep River and majestic Rocky Mountains. This quaint community is made exclusively of single-family homes and seamlessly blends untouched environmental reserves with expansive lots to give you the space to enjoy life outdoors in your backyard or beyond.

A map showing the location of MountainView in Okotoks, near the Sheep River and Rocky Mountains.

We are proud to present this new and exciting community

**APEX**

EXCEL HOMES

Phone: (403) 982-0040  
excelhomes.ca

**Sterling**

Phone: (403) 453-1880  
sterlinghomesgroup.com

Find your place in MountainView today, visit [MountainViewOkotoks.com](http://MountainViewOkotoks.com)

A logo for MountainView featuring a mountain and a person.

MOUNTAINVIEW  
IN OKOTOKS