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Local Lupus Support Group Hosts Activities for Lupus Awareness Month

By Samone Davis
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Vice President of Lupus 242 Shonalee Johnson (center) and member of Lupus 242 Sarahlee Williams accepts a cheque donation from CIBC FirstCaribbean Financial Controller Stacia Williamson (right) to assist with a series of events for Lupus Awareness Month.

Nassau, Bahamas - For the past five years, the month of May has been recognised as Lupus Awareness month in The Bahamas and once again this year one local organisation will seek to raise awareness of the autoimmune illness.

Every year, local support group Lupus242 organises a series of events to raise awareness about this chronic disease, providing information while supporting those who have been diagnosed. Understanding the need for public education and the devastation of families who have lost loved ones to the disease, CIBC FirstCaribbean made a donation to Lupus242 to assist its ongoing efforts.

Lupus is a prolonged autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body (skin, joints, and/or organs) and is routinely misdiagnosed. Once afflicted, it presents sporadically during a lifetime in episodes lasting anywhere from six weeks to several years.

"The more information that people have about Lupus, the easier it would be to detect it and treat it. Your knowledge about the disease can potentially save your life because Lupus is one of those diseases that can disguise as anything...so you're never really sure. That is why it is important to educate yourself about your health," said Shonalee Johnson, Vice President of Lupus242.

Just two months ago, Johnson's sister and former president of Lupus242, Shanelle Brennen, lost her battle with the disease after more than 20 years. In the midst of adversity and mourning Johnson vowed to continue her sister's work with Lupus242.

Johnson said that this month's activities for Lupus Awareness includes POP (Put On Purple) Fridays, where members of the public are encouraged to wear purple every Friday in the month to support Lupus survivors. Lupus242 has partnered with other corporate companies to raise awareness and increase public participation.

"Shanelle was an amazing person and her death is a huge loss for our family and our foundation. I am so happy that people got the chance to connect with her. We are continuing the work that she started with Lupus242," Shonalee said.

CIBC FirstCaribbean Managing Director, Marie Rodland-Allen, said that "Lupus is one of those diseases that many of us are still trying to understand and that many people may not have heard of. We're very pleased to support Lupus242 in spreading awareness and educating the public about this awful disease."

According to the Lupus Foundation of America, at least 5 million people worldwide suffer from some form of lupus.

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