



If you search the words “involved,” “hard working” and “motivated” in the dictionary, you will find the bubbly, zestful face of Mrs. Debbie Hutchinson Edwards. This effervescent child of the lush Portland soil is the epitome of industriousness.

Growing up as a child of a single parent, the Titchfield High School alumna, was enthusiastically involved in her community, church and school. A former festival queen contestant and track star, this petite bundle of light and exuberance packs a heavy punch. A former champion girl in 1998, Debbie held the record in the 400m race at the Eastern Championships until 2002. Revered in her community for her activism and athletic feats, Debbie is the daughter of a loving household rooted in faith, love, and unlimited possibilities—a household that preached determination and steadfastness within Debbie from an early age. A self-described “Head cook and bottle washer,” Debbie never shied away from demanding work and contributing to her community.

“As the former President of the Police Youth Club, I would conduct youth group meetings, youth pageants and social gatherings from my home. My aim was to inspire young people to develop a sense of involvement and activism ranging from sports, debates and a variety of other projects.” Debbie’s family, while not rich in dollars and cents, radiated wealth in knowledge and education. “My late grandfather who was then a JBC journalist for the parish, instilled in me the importance of education. We didn’t have the books, but he was determined to ensure that I read the newspapers and listened to the news.” In fact, Debbie credits her academic success at the CXC level, to the

fortitude of her grandfather in ensuring that reading was pervasive in their household.

She recalled a famous quote from her late dear relative “Never you wear a shirt without knowing what is written on the front”—impassioned words that have journeyed with Debbie throughout her endeavours.

To know Debbie is to know the value and love she places on family. She credits her mother whose incredible tenacity equipped her to adequately provide for her family despite a great deal of personal sacrifice. This characteristic embedded a sense of resilience in Debbie and created a solid infrastructure for her own life.

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In 2002, Mrs. Hutchinson-Edwards was awarded a scholarship to study in Cuba. It was there she received her bachelor’s and master’s (one of) degrees in Physical Education and Sports. She was nominated for her outstanding educational accomplishments and her involvement in athletics from the Ministry of Education.

During her first year in Cuba, Debbie persevered with her spirit of activism and involvement. She entered a cultural pageant in Cuba, known as The Jamaican Congress, for which she garnered the top prize. She was crowned Miss Jamaica Cultural Queen in Cuba and won a coveted flight to her homeland!

Academically, the Cuban experience was incredibly challenging. Within her first year, acquiring the Spanish language was an arduous adjustment. However, Debbie, unwavering in her determination to master the language by the end of her tenure, defended her thesis with such fluency and adeptness that not only did she earn a distinction, but she also astounded her colleagues. Soon after, Debbie was chosen to

become the official translator for a Nicaraguan conference in Jamaica.

In 2001, Debbie was selected as the only representative from her parish to travel to Canada as a youth ambassador. She spent four months in an immersive cultural exchange that broadened her worldly perspectives and created international bonds.

In 2007, after returning from Cuba, her journey at The Mico University College began. Strapped with a master's and bachelor's degree in Physical Education, Debbie was earnest to begin transforming young minds in her field—all while juggling her role as Second Vice President of the Physical Education Association for Jamaica between 2009 and 2010.

In 2012, Debbie commenced a second master's degree and completed a diploma in teaching during her first few years as a Lecturer.

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Even with over 14-and one-half years of dedication and service to her field, department and The Mico, Debbie is not short on motivation. She divulges that she is still driven by the mantras instilled within her upbringing—arduous work, determination, and involvement.

Debbie maintains that her passion for her field is her main motivator. She is unabashed for her love for Physical Education, a seed of love rooted within her from her childhood days as a track champion. She asserts that the diversity within her industry especially in a track-ardent country like Jamaica is what continues to inspire and evoke her curiosity.

Debbie is steadfast in distilling the myth that track and field is about “Running up and down.” She is enthusiastic about the science behind track and

is committed to the growth and development of physical education in Jamaica.

She is tenacious in her mission in ensuring that her students are knowledgeable and develop a sense of appreciation for the field. She insists that more local research needs to be conducted to underscore the importance of the industry. “Jamaica has the fastest sprinters in the world. We have so much raw talent, so much potential. We need more stakeholders and more investors to come on board to nurture and foster the growth and development within the field.”

Debbie is passionate about touting the multi-faceted dimension of Physical Education and the comprehensiveness of the programme at The Mico. “Our students go on to teach, coach, work in fitness, become consultants, administrators, and Education Officers. If students want to pursue their master's, they can venture into fitness therapy, sports medicine, sports journalism, sports psychology, and physiotherapy.” She boosts “The Physical Education programme at The Mico embodies a wealth of opportunities for our students.”

She adds that the demand for graduates from the department is on a large scale. However, there is one thing she would like to change and that is the image of the physical educator especially at the primary and secondary levels. She insists that teachers trained as physical educators need to develop a sense of brand awareness. She believes that dressing the part is seminal to their success.

“Representation is important—changing the decorum of the physical educator—one constantly decked in track suits and sports gear is a profile that needs to be altered,” she adds with passion emanating from her voice. “How you represent yourself is paramount to the changing image of the physical educator.” She is adamant that a robust shift in the typical decorum of the physical educator will project a balance of athlete and intellectual.

Professionally, Mrs. Hutchinson-Edwards is far from finished! She is ready to embark on pursuing her doctorate in the field she holds dear to her heart. Research is also something at the top

of her agenda. In 2014, she received a warm reception and accolades for her presentation at the International Diabetes Conference in Ocho Rios. This reaction has been propelling her tenacity to further her education and to make an even more entrenched impact on her field.

Within her tenure at The Mico, Debbie's contribution is beyond noteworthy. She has taken on many leadership roles, some within just two years of her employment. She has confidently stepped into positions of Acting Head of Department, Lecturer in charge of writing self-study and accreditation documents for her department, lecturer in charge of Sports Day, functioned as practicum coordinator for her department and has taught across multiple departments.

In addition to her academic involvements, she continues to juggle her role as a master trainer for the National Standards Curriculum for Physical Education with the Ministry of Education and Youth and, in the true spirit of involvement, has played a role on several committees since her tenure at The Mico. These include The Nathan Brissett Competition, where she oversaw the Dance category; The Mico University College Scholarship Committee; MASA, where she is responsible for organizing staff social events as well as a member of the Professional Development Committee. Debbie has also written several courses for her department since the inception of the degree programme

and has supervised many students both at the bachelor's and master's degree levels. She also reviewed both CAPE and CSEC syllabuses for Physical Education and Sports for the Ministry of Education and Youth.

Debbie's commitment to Physical Education is unwavering. With passion oozing out of her voice, Debbie exclaims, "After having my son, I really haven't done much research! I want to do more; I want to know more! I really want to use my expertise. I want to contribute more to society!" Edwards is itching to change the perception of athletes, especially young Jamaican athletes. She is determined to thwart the notion that athletes are void of intellectual aptitude and dispel the myth that they are academically incapable.

Finally, and with absolute joy in her eyes, Debbie speaks candidly and lovingly about her son. "My son inspires me. He is four, about to turn five, and he is so smart and incredibly sweet. He is an avid reader, who keeps me on my toes and is incredibly protective."

Few persons are aware that Debbie's secret passions include writing cultural poems and dancing, especially salsa. She loves to catch the latest dance moves. She enjoys reading, socializing with friends and family and, of course, being involved with her church and community. Debbie shares one last nugget of wisdom for persons on their academic journey. She advises them to be "patient and humble." She asserts the importance of being willing to "learn, research, re-learn." These are wise words from the gleaming festival queen, devout Christian, bilingual track star and daughter of the lush Portland soil.