

Spanish Town youth mayor to empower peers

Ruddy Mathison
Gleaner Writer

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD
UNIVERSITY of the West

Indies student Rickardo Mitchell has vowed to use the platform of Junior Mayor of Spanish Town to empower

youths in St Catherine to get involved in the political process. Mitchell, who was recently selected from a group of 13

other contestants drawn from different municipal divisions in St Catherine, told **Rural Xpress** that youth generally are too



PHOTO BY RUDDY MATHISON

have largely remained detached from the political process makes it very difficult to know the magnitude of talents available to add meaning to the process," he added.

Mitchell, who spoke on the topic 'Local Government Reform Good for Jamaica', won the hearts of the judges at the selection forum when he passionately supported the proposed reforms, including the widening of municipal autonomy.

CHANGING THE CULTURE

"The nearness of the local representatives to the people, and not having to go to central government for funding to undertake community projects, will go a far way in changing the culture," argued the junior mayor. "Being able to deal with their community problems will also promote greater participation by citizens in voting and other important civic activities," Mitchell observed.

The symbolic youth mayor selection is done annually to coincide with Local Government Month. Mitchell, who represents the Threadways division, is duty bound to undertake a very substantial project in the parish before his one-year tenure expires next year. A current major in public policy and management at the University of the West Indies, Mitchell told **Rural Xpress** that he will be undertaking the refurbishing of the farm at Charlemont High – which has been inoperable for quite sometime – as his project.

"I will be making it sustainable to feed the school population and to sell the excess to generate income for the school," he explained.

The money to undertake the project will be a \$500,000-grant from the Ministry of Local Government that will be disbursed through the Municipal Corporation.

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Nineteen-year-old **UWI** student Rickardo Mitchell seen here after he was selected junior mayor for Spanish Town.

detached from the process of politics and government.

"I believe we young people have fresh ideas, we are into technology, we could have some of the possible solutions to the current problems facing the country," reasoned Mitchell. "The fact that young people