

## Cape, Jamaica build ties through workers



Glenroy Burke, aka Chef Shrimpy, at his new restaurant in South Yarmouth, the Jerk Cafe.

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SOUTH YARMOUTH — At the recently opened Jerk Café, Glenroy Burke — or Chef Shrimpy, as he likes to be called — works the grill and greets customers cheerfully.

The menu above his head features dishes that recall his native Jamaica — jerk chicken, rice and beans — and some — cheeseburgers, pastrami — that hint at the 11 years he has lived in the United States.

"I first started on an H-2B at the Wequassett Inn," said Burke, who became a U.S. resident when he married an American woman. "Now I'm a citizen and a business owner."

Burke's restaurant, and his family, are just two examples of the connections that have been forged between Jamaica and Cape Cod in the 20 years that the island has been sending temporary workers to the area.

For many Cape employers who were unable to get H-2B visas for their accustomed Jamaican workers this year, the loss is emotional as well as financial.

"It was like a member of the family not coming back," John Richards, owner of the Chatham Shellfish Co., said of his regular employee Dwight Ebanks, who is now unemployed in his hometown on the southwestern coast of Jamaica.

The Lighthouse Inn in West Dennis typically employs more than a dozen Jamaican H-2B workers each year.

When given news about Delores Burger, an employee for nine previous summers, one of the inn's owners, Gregory Stone, smiled and reminisced about her deep faith and perpetual optimism.

Bubala's by the Bay in Provincetown has hired close to 30 H-2B workers from Jamaica for each of the past 12 years.

Most of these workers are friends and neighbors that the restaurant's owner, John Yingling, met when staying at his vacation home on the southern coast of Jamaica. The ties among Yingling, his family and these workers have only grown stronger since the Jamaicans began traveling to Cape Cod.

Guillermo Yingling, the owner's son and the executive chef at the restaurant, has stayed in touch with the employees who were unable to make it here this year; on more than one occasion, he said, he has sent them money to help make up for their lost income.

Given the strong ties, it is perhaps not surprising that some Cape employers downplayed the troubles they experienced during an often trying season.

"When I would think about how hard it was for me, I would think about how hard it was for them," said John Yingling, "and I would think 'I got the easy end of the deal.'"