



Governor Eugene Holiday with the winners.

Youth Award winners share experiences with governor

HARBOUR VIEW--Governor Eugene Holiday met with 2020 Governor's Youth Award For Excellence winners Nigel Alexander Adriana and Baharani Khemchandani (academics recipients); Sarah Bharwani (Environmental Protection); and Ray-Angel Clarence Antrobus Boasman (Arts) on Thursday, June 17.

Adriana, Baharani, Bharwani and Boasman took the opportunity to ask the Governor about his education, career, hobbies, the role of the Governor and how the Governorship impacted his life. The winners exchanged thoughts on college life during COVID-19 and the importance of technology on their life, studies, and future work. They also shared their views with the Governor Holiday about their aspirations,

hobbies, interests, and study plans.

Holiday congratulated them on their winning of the first Governor's Youth Award for Excellence, encouraged them to continue to be the best they can be going forward and reminded them that they can be anything they want to be once they have worked for it. The awardees thanked the Governor for the opportunity.

The first Governor's Youth Award For Excellence was hosted on December 8, 2020. Adriana was off-island for his studies at the time of the awards ceremony. The meeting was closed off with Holiday's presentation of the Governor's Youth Award for Excellence in Academics to Adriana. The other recipients had received their awards on the evening of the ceremony.

The second annual Governor's Youth Award for Excellence ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, June 24, 2021. The evaluation committee has selected finalists from the 20 nominees and the winners will be presented with their awards on June 24.

The Governor's Youth Award for Excellence Program has been designed to recognise youths, ages 13-19 who have performed above and beyond and excelled in education, sports, arts, environmental protection, or community service. As winners of the Governor's Youth Award for Excellence the recipients have participated in national events such as the Memorial Day ceremony on May 4 and the Flag Day celebration ceremony on June 13.

VMT hosting pop-up vaccination at Jose Lake Ballpark Saturday

PHILIPSBURG--The Vaccination Management Team (VMT) encourages everyone who hasn't received their vaccination yet to come to the vaccination pop-up at the Jose Lake Ballpark on Saturday, June 19 between 9:00am and 4:00pm or until the supply lasts.

All the persons who received their first dose three weeks ago, are invited to come for their second dose, but first doses are also given to all who wishes to be vaccinated.

"The VMT is pleased to see a steady 150 to 200 persons every day walking in for their first dose but emphasises that we still have a long way to go to reach herd immunity and to go back to normalcy," said the VMT in a press release on Thursday.

The VMT said that the country is currently at 46 per cent while "we need to get to 85 per cent," the team added. "Only when we reach that level can life return to normal again, which means easing COVID-19 restrictions, unrestricted travel, economic recovery (more

jobs), and celebratory events such as Jump-ups and Carnival."

Additionally, the mass vaccination with the Pfizer vaccine will stop on July 31, meaning that July 9 will be the last day persons can come for their first dose and then to get their second dose three weeks later.

"Vaccination will always be a personal choice, but every choice has consequences. The world around us, is changing. So, when you choose not to get vaccinated, you endanger the health of others and put the future of our island at risk. However, with your choice to take the vaccine, you reduce the chance of infection and infecting others by 95 per cent," said the team.

According to the release, 1.4 billion persons worldwide have taken the vaccine, which is scientifically proven to be safe. "Your choice is also a social one, as the future of our island depends on it," said the VMT.

The VMT encourages everyone to not only get vaccinated but also encourage

others to do so. "Inquire if people in your social circle are vaccinated and try to spread correct information instead of fake news. Offer to drive and accompany someone to a vaccination location. We are stronger together, and we can only reach our goal collectively," the team urged.

Persons who wish to volunteer with the outreach campaign can send an email to mrichards1130@gmail.com, and organisations who wish to organise an information session can email bvdmeijden@whiteyellowcross.org.

Lastly, the VMT also encourages local businesses to stand up and promote vaccination, not only to their staff but the general public. "Getting our country sufficiently protected against the COVID-19 virus and variants is in everyone's best interest," said the VMT.

"The VMT encourages everyone to join the movement, become creative, and do whatever they can to promote our Drive to 85! We have to do it together."

Police, prison more than half of Justice Ministry's budget

PHILIPSBURG--The St. Maarten Police Force KPSM and the country's prison system account for 51 per cent of the Justice Ministry's expenses in the 2021 budget.

Justice Minister Anna Richardson presented her ministry's NAf. 82 million budget during Thursday's Parliamentary debate. The Justice Ministry's 2021 budget is about NAf. 2.5 million more than the amended 2020 budget.

Personnel cost takes up the majority of the Justice Ministry's expenses, making up roughly 59 per cent of the total. The other 41 per cent has been earmarked for operational cost.

The Justice Ministry has the most staff of all the ministries, with the 2021 budget having space for 657 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Richardson told Members of Parliament (MPs) that there are 612 FTEs on payroll, and some 45 "critical" vacancies still need to be filled.

KPSM – which has more than 200 officers in its ranks – accounts for roughly NAf. 21.2 million in personnel cost, followed by the prison system at NAf. 8.3 million. In total, some NAf. 26.3 million has been allocated to KPSM and approximate-

ly NAf. 15.5 million to the country's prisons.

About NAf. 5.5 million has been earmarked for the Immigration and Border Protection Service (IBPS), with 96 per cent of this figure going toward payroll.

Exactly NAf. 4 million is budgeted for the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard (DCCG), and NAf. 2.6 million and NAf. 2.1 million are earmarked for Customs and the National Detectives, respectively.

The expenses of the Prosecutor's Office stand at NAf. 3.8 million in the 2021 budget, while the Office of the Attorney General takes another NAf. 2 million.

The minister's combined salary and benefits come in at NAf. 223,658, while the operating expenses for the position have been budgeted for NAf. 661,300. The expenses of the justice minister thus stand at almost NAf. 885,000, or roughly one per cent of the total budget.

The minister's cabinet has been budgeted for a similar figure, at NAf. 877,337. Of this, personnel cost accounts for NAf. 810,276.

Subsidies account for almost NAf. 3.3 million in the Justice Ministry's 2021 budget, of which approximately NAf. 1.8 million is slated for the country's proba-

tion services and NAf. 1.2 million for Turning Point Foundation.

Another NAf. 6.7 million is earmarked for the court system and advisory councils, with NAf. 5.5 million going to the Joint Court of Justice, NAf. 950,000 to the Law Enforcement Council, and NAf. 250,000 to the Constitutional Court.

"Is this the budget the ministry requires to achieve the needed service level? No. However, with total understanding that we must adjust and work with what we have, the approach is to apply the approved and available budget, by enforcing a policy spending method that allows for proper management of funds, time, projects, and activities," said Richardson. "This is the way this ministry intends to function."

MPs Sarah Wescot-Williams of United Democrats (UD), Claudius "Toontje" Buncamper of United St. Maarten Party (US Party), Angelique Romou of National Alliance (NA), Melissa Gumbs of Party for Progress (PFP), and Rolando Brison of United People's (UP) party all posed questions to Richardson during Thursday's meeting.

Richardson probably will answer these questions during the meeting's continuation today, Friday.

Royal Caribbean donates \$25k worth of PPE to CPS via SMDF

PHILIPSBURG--Through a facilitated effort between Royal Caribbean Cruises, Port St. Maarten, and the St. Maarten Development Fund (SMDF), the Collective Prevention Services (CPS) was the recipient of US \$25,000 worth of personal protective equipment (PPE) to combat the local spread of SARS-CoV-2 and support its vaccination efforts.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and upon seeing the alarming uptick in cases, Royal Caribbean Cruises reached out to Port St. Maarten to donate US \$25,000 worth of PPE to St. Maarten. SMDF was later entrusted to facilitate this effort, which involved launching a public tender in search of local suppliers of quality PPE. SMDF worked directly with CPS representatives to identify their

specific needs, preferences, and quantities of items required.

Following communications, it was determined that the items in short supply at CPS included face masks and shields, gloves in various sizes, hand sanitizer, alcohol, disinfecting – wipes and solutions and cleaning supplies.

Upon completion of the tender process, local businesses Divico Distributors, Martijn Trading, and Watkan Trading were selected as recipients of the bid and quickly proceeded with sourcing and delivering the relevant PPE items to CPS. Due to the pandemic, suppliers faced global shortages of certain items alongside delayed shipping times. Nevertheless, the project was recently completed in June 2021. Now, the acquired PPE will go towards minimizing the ex-

posure of COVID-19 to the island's healthcare workers and consequently the persons they tend to.

"As an organisation, we seek to facilitate development efforts however we can. It was a pleasure to assist with this initiative between Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and the government of St. Maarten," said Makhicia Brooks, Managing Director of SMDF.

Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labor VSA Omar Ottley thanked the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines for its generous donation of PPE supplies during these trying times. "PPE supplies are a necessity to protect the safety of our front liners, who have been diligently working to serve our community during the COVID-19 pandemic," Ottley said.