

Cultivating a mindset of Excellence

**Opening Address
Governor's Youth Award For Excellence
by
His Excellency, the Governor of Sint Maarten, drs. Eugene B. Holiday,**

December 8, 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Evening and welcome to the 2020 Governor's Youth Award For Excellence.

It is my pleasure to extend a special welcome to Prime Minister Jacobs, Minister Samuel and to all present in this ceremony. Welcome also to all viewing this ceremony online.

Tonight's ceremony was to take place in the spring of this year. It was postponed to this evening and reorganized to observe safety protocols due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

My reason for introducing the Governor's Youth Award For Excellence is based on my belief that excellence drives durable progress. The future progress of Sint Maarten therefore calls for us to invest in cultivating a mindset of excellence among our young people. And in doing so create a strong foundation for the building of Sint Maarten's future. It is after all the natural order of life that our youth will emerge to take up positions in civil society, business, or in government. It is as such our duty as a society to ensure that they are well prepared to do so; well prepared to ensure the continued progress of Sint Maarten. Investing in cultivating a mindset of excellence among our young people is thus essential to the growth of our society.

It is therefore important that we invest in, promote, and recognize the development of our youth. That is their development in the broadest sense of the word.

The Governor's Youth Award For Excellence is as a result aimed at encouraging young persons to cultivate a mindset of excellence as a basis for their future positive contributions to our Sint Maarten community. The Award therefore recognizes youths, ages 13 through 19, who have excelled in one of five specific fields on Sint Maarten. These are: academics, sports, arts, environmental protection, or community service.

The Governor's Youth Award For Excellence recognizes excellence as a mindset in that it seeks to capture the candidates':

- outstanding skills in terms of achievements in their specific field of interest,
- their dedication to their education, and
- their special qualities in terms of their determination, respect for peers and teachers and their potential to inspire.

All of the nominated candidates went through a thorough evaluation by our distinguished panel of judges under the leadership of Mrs. Oldine Bryson-Pantophlet. Thank you Mrs. Bryson-Pantophlet and all our judges for your exceptional work in the limited time available. Thank you for evaluating and scoring each nominee and for your decision on the recommended 8 finalists. Regretfully all invited finalists could

not be present in person this evening. Through technology we are however able to have all invited finalists participate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming to a recommendation and selecting the winners for the categories had its challenges, because all the finalists were deserving.

To all the nominees whether you receive the award or not, I wish to remind you that excellence is a mindset of continued improvement at whatever you do. Because improvement is the key to your growth and the progress of our community and our country. It is therefore my hope that this evening's award ceremony will inspire you to continue to strive for excellence.

The award recipients will be announced in a few moments. Based on the panel of judges' evaluation, no nominees were recommended or selected for the categories: sports or community service. Finalists were selected and will receive awards in three of the five categories. These categories are:

- Environmental Protection;
- Academics; and
- Arts.

It is my pleasure to applaud the parents, teachers, and nominators on their effort to develop and nurture the young talents present with us this evening.

To all the finalist I hereby congratulate you and I trust that this award ceremony will inspire you to continue to strive for excellence and to be a role model for your peers.

With that I thank all of you for coming and declare the 2020 Governor's Youth Award for Excellence Open.

Thank you.