

Jamaican Students Shine in Regional Science Debate

Jamaicans have once again shown the world just how good they are by copping top prizes, as they successfully participated in a debate competition during the Caribbean Youth Science Forum (CYSF). The Forum held in August at the University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT), O'Meara Campus and the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus, integrated some two hundred and fifty lower and upper sixth form science students from across the region.

The 2008 Jamaican winners included Chevelle Burke (Denbigh High School), Petreena Campbell (Montego Bay Community College), Randy Goldson (Manning's High school), Troy Leachman (St. Catherine High School), Paul McFarlane (Ardenne High School), and Andre' Tate of Munroe College. The topic for the debate was; **"Be it resolved that forensic science negates the need for witnesses in solving crime"** to which the Jamaican team opposed. Their eloquent and thought provoking arguments won the audience over almost instantaneously and they were soon the favourites in the competition. As indicated by the audience they were clear winners and were awarded a trophy for the team and individual medals for their effort.

The students who were excited about the CYSF found the entire experience to be very enlightening and expressed appreciation for the chance they were afforded. Andre' Tate was grateful for the experience and the integration it offered, but was particular impressed by the number of scientists existing in the



Jamaican students at CYSF 2008: Jamaican students (from left) Randy Goldson, Andre Tate, Petreena Campbell, Troy Leachman and Paul McFarlane pose with Miss Patricia Lewin (second right), technical information officer at the Scientific Research Council at the Normal Manley International airport in Kingston, Jamaica minutes before boarding flight to the CYSF in Trinidad and Tobago. Missing from picture is Chevelle Burke a member of the Jamaican team.

Caribbean today. For Paul McFarlane it was an eye-opener since he had no idea before the CYSF how advanced the Caribbean was in science and technology. For others such as Petreena Campbell it was a source of valuable information that motivated her to become more involved in science. In general, all the students found the experience to be useful as it spoke to the importance of science in daily lives and the varied opportunities that exists within the field. According to Chevelle Burke of Denbigh High "this is an event I will never forget and recommend that as many students as possible should experience."

Students at the CYSF got a first rate science education experience in a non-formal but stimulating environment. They participate in lectures, field trips, projects, debates, sports and social activities and interacted with scientists.

This was embellished with the right mix of shopping, social and cultural activities.

Students have to go through a series of qualifiers in their home countries in order to represent their country at the CYSF. Each participating Caribbean country runs a series of competitions from which the top student is chosen to represent their country at the Annual CYSF. Each year the Scientific Research Council (SRC) puts on an Annual Oratorical Competition from which two top students from each section of Jamaica (East, Central and West) automatically qualify for the National Finals. Students from the National Finals are selected to attend the CYSF in Trinidad & Tobago. They are usually chosen from one qualifying school to represent their country, but from Jamaica there is an exception, as entrants from different schools can participate in CYSF. This is as a result of the special arrangement made by the Scientific Research Council with organizers of the forum.

The SRC also assist students to attend CYSF as they help to solicit sponsorship as well as make financial contributions where necessary to students who might have trouble acquiring the necessary funds. This year (2008), sponsorship came from The Western Mirror, Caribbean Producers Jamaica Ltd and other private sector companies. Ms. Patricia Lewin, Technical Information Officer at the SRC worked closely with the winning team for the event.

CYSF is the brainchild of the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST), a statutory body in the Republic of

Trinidad and Tobago established to promote the development of science, technology and higher education in that country. NIHERST covers the cost of accommodation, meals, ground transportation and Forum materials for all the participants while in Trinidad, but each participant has to pay their own airfare to and from Trinidad plus a registration fee.

SRC, cognizant of the importance of science and technology and to enabling youngsters create indelible imprints on national development, stands committed to supporting endeavours of this type.