

PRESS RELEASE

SLHTA Honours Levern Spencer, Cheryl Skeete and Eileen Paul

(CASTRIES, Saint Lucia – Monday, September 2, 2019) – Saint Lucian high jumper, Levern Spencer, was last Friday inducted as a SLHTA Goodwill Ambassador when the Saint Lucia Hospitality & Tourism Association (SLHTA) held its 55th Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Finance Administrative Centre at Pointe Seraphine.

Spencer, who recently won a gold medal at the Pan Am Games in Lima, Peru, is the island's most decorated athlete, having won a slew of other medals at various meets locally, regionally and internationally.

The SLHTA cited Spencer, an Olympian, as “an absolute jewel” and “phenomenal daughter of the soil”, adding that the Cocoa, Babonneau resident and multiple winner of the Female Sportswoman of the Year title “has shown by her achievements that despite being from a small nation, we can achieve big things”.

Spencer, who broke Saint Lucia's national high jump record as a fourteen-year-old back in 1998 while a student at Entrepot Secondary School, was selected by the SLHTA Board of Directors during a recent meeting for her “humility, dedication, persevering spirit and her heart of a champion”, said SLHTA's Chief Executive Officer, Noorani Azeez, as he read the citation last Friday.

“Without hesitation, it was agreed to honour Ms. Spencer with the Award of SLHTA's first Goodwill Ambassador,” he said. “Over the coming year, the SLHTA and Spencer will collaborate to raise funds for various charities and establish legacy projects aimed at the development of our youth.”

In order to qualify as a SLHTA Goodwill Ambassador, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate commendable representation of Saint Lucia at international functions
- Demonstrate a willingness to build partnerships between SLHTA and other organizations
- Serve as a role model for young Saint Lucians
- Be a change agent in the areas of sports, entertainment, arts and culture, environment, health, education and the performance of civic duties

Spencer's longtime manager, Gregory Dickson, was present at last Friday's AGM to receive the honour on her behalf.

Hotelier Cheryl Skeete was inducted as an Honorary Member during last Friday's AGM. Skeete, who owns and operates Habitat Terrace, was praised for her sterling efforts geared towards raising the profile of small properties on the island.

To become an Honorary Member inductee, the candidate must:

- Show support for the development of the SLHTA by raising the visibility and reputation of the organization
- Show support for innovative programmes introduced by the SLHTA [e.g. the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), Young Leaders, etc.]
- Be a champion for advocacy and lobbying efforts of the SLHTA

Following the video presentation featuring hoteliers praising Skeete for her invaluable work over the years, Skeete received a bouquet of flowers and standing ovation from the audience. When asked to say a few words, she said: "I'm not too well with words, because I'm more of a doer."

Meanwhile, the Eileen Paul Secondary School Scholarship Fund was also launched at last Friday's Annual General Meeting. The fund will seek to provide, on an annual basis, bursaries to deserving secondary school students in need of school supplies, uniforms, books, and transportation to attend school.

The scholarship fund, which will become operationalized during the current new school year, will be administered in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Services which will identify the recipients.

The initiative is named after Eileen Paul, whose long and varied career spanned over five decades. She was a certified teacher of Speedwriting Shorthand and, between 1984 and 1989, taught Secretarial Practice part-time at the National Secretarial Institute, which turned out a cadre of secretaries who have assumed higher positions in the commercial and corporate sectors, some even owning their own businesses.

Described by many as "the heart and soul of the SLHTA", Paul joined the Association in 1973 when only six hotels and seven restaurants comprised the membership. She was instrumental in taking what was then referred to as the "Hotel Association" to a completely new level after working tirelessly for years, getting her first real office space in 1990.

By 1988, through Paul's passionate work, the growing membership resulted in a name change – the Saint Lucia Hotel & Tourism Association. Aside from running the daily operations of the SLHTA office, she also attended various overseas promotions, training programmes and leadership conferences and helped to introduce gala events, such as fundraisers, to supplement membership subscriptions in order to introduce new projects for the Association.