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NewsRelease

PJIAE teams up with businesses in super send-off for St. Maarten students

Students encouraged to return and take island “to a much higher level”

SIMPSON BAY, St. Maarten (July 29, 2012)— Scores of parents, family members, government officers, airport officials, and schoolmates converged here in the check-in area of the Princess Juliana International Airport on Sunday morning to say “Bon Voyage” to 58 students traveling to the Netherlands to pursue tertiary education.

The “Bon Voyage” program was hosted by PJIAE in collaboration with Domino’s Pizza and UTS. Mothers in tears holding on to their sons and daughters, fathers looking on proudly, girlfriends and boyfriends saying goodbye to each other, smiling young faces, anxious students burdened with coats, luggage, and public oaths of returning to their island after successfully completing their university studies could be seen and heard throughout the check-in hall.

The “Bon Voyage” ceremony opened with PJIAE employee Zhaira Richardson giving an extraordinary rendition of the St. Martin Song.

In her brief address to the students, Managing Director of PJIAE Regina LaBega said that, “The reason PJIA decided to do this Bon Voyage is to let you all know that we are counting on you to do your best, and return through this same airport, to take your rightful positions on this island.”

LaBega said that even though it is time of great emotion the students should know that this journey is a critical one in their lives. The airport’s managing director reiterated to the young people that they are needed on the island and that, “We don’t want you, your parents don’t want you to become part of that dismal statistics of children we send abroad and who never return, or never complete their studies.”

“You are leaving as students today, and when you finish your various courses, in a few years, you will be returning as men and women, prepared to take St. Maarten to a much higher level,” said LaBega.

Irene Gaari-Arridell from the government’s Division of Studies and Financing spoke on behalf of Minister of Education Silveria Jacobs. She bid the anxious student assembly farewell and thanked the corporate entities that helped to make the Bon Voyage event a reality.

LaBega and Gaari-Arrindell then cut the farewell cake, which was designed as a teal vintage valise, with black and white accents. The cake was designed and baked by Aurora Jeffers.

Following the cake cutting and sharing among students and well-wishers, students were asked to clear security minutes before 11 am in order to expedite an on-time departure of their KLM flight 785.

As Caribbean tunes and various pop music hits echoed from the speakers of DJ Outkast students bid their final farewells. Just before they stepped on the escalators up to the customs and security check points the departing youths were presented with portfolios, ID holders, and other promotional items by PJIAE marketing officers Audrey Jack and Suzy Kartokromo.

Groups of students are also scheduled to leave the island in August and September to further their studies abroad.

Photo caption1:

St. Maarten students departing for their freshman-year university studies in the Netherlands, at Princess Juliana International Airport with family and friends (7/29/12). *(PJIAE photo)*

Photo caption2:

Departing student seems to be reflecting on PJIAE managing director's comments at the Bon Voyage ceremony: "This is a rather emotional moment for most of you, but ... a unique occasion to bid farewell to our sons and daughters leaving to further their education." *(PJIAE photo)*

Photo caption3:

Traveling student about to receive promotional gifts from PJIAE marketing officers Audrey Jack (L) and Suzy Kartokromo (2nd R). *(PJIAE photo)*