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# NewsRelease

## **Pr. Juliana Int'l Airport “surpassed expectations” as Blue Flag sponsor to keep St. Maarten clean**

*~Hosts info sessions, donates bins for Carnival~*

**SIMPSON BAY, St. Maarten (April 23, 2012)**—Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM) is continuing its campaign to keep the island clean.

In its most recent initiative, the airport, as the ‘Blue Flag Business’ for the month of April, placed 46 garbage bins with the Blue Flag logo in the Festival Village. PJIA is encouraging Carnival revelers to use the bins and avoid littering, said Kalifa Hickinson, the airport’s manager of the Marketing and Communications Dept.

Rueben Thompson, Project Manager of Love the Lagoon and Environmental Protection In the Caribbean (EPIC), commended the airport’s initiative.

“Placing garbage bins at the Carnival Village is an initiative we commend. Foundations encourage the permanent placement of bins at all our beaches and are working with the Tourist Bureau to make this a reality. We also encourage government to find solutions to the island’s severe waste management challenges,” Thompson said.

According to him, the airport “has surpassed our expectations” as a Blue Flag program sponsor of the month.

“We expect PJIA to continue to support the environmental organizations and work toward the protection of St. Maarten’s natural heritage.”

To further bring awareness among its staff, SXM (which is also abbreviated as PJIA), hosted three days of information sessions with Nature Foundation and EPIC on April 16, 17, and 19.

“Management and staff were informed of EPIC’s programs, Nature Foundation’s activities and EPIC’s Blue Flag program for beaches and marinas,” Thompson said.

Then on Friday, EPIC and Nature Foundation provided lagoon tours to PJIA staff, which according to Thompson, were well received. He said the staff was informed of the environmental issues the Simpson Bay Lagoon faces and the importance of protecting the island’s wetlands.

According to Tadzio Bervoets, Manager of Nature Foundation, during the lagoon tours on the foundation’s patrol boat, the staffers, five groups in total, were provided with information on the background of Nature Foundation, and the challenges it faces.

“We spoke about the Marine Park that is naturally protected, the seahorses and sea-grass (which can be found in Simpson Bay, Great Bay, Little Bay and the Simpson Bay Lagoon). They were able to understand that not everything is lost,” said Bervoets.

Bervoets said at the Cole Bay corner of the lagoon, there was a small oil spill and the staffers were able to see how the Foundation deals with such an issue.

“After that, they were able to see a more pristine aspect – Mullet Pond. They looked at the mangroves, and the birds that make their home there. ... All in all, it was very informative,” Bervoets said.

Thompson, meanwhile, said that the environmental foundations are grateful for SXM’s sponsorship and was pleasantly surprised by the staff’s enthusiasm and overall positive feedback. It is not the first time the airport has been this involved in environmental issues and he is encouraging it to continue.

**Photo caption1:**

Nature Foundation manager Tadzio Bervoets (R) conducts environmental information session for SXM personnel last week.

**Photo caption2:**

Personnel of the Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM) on an environmental tour of the Simpson Bay Lagoon, the island’s largest wetland.

**Photo caption3:**

One of the Simpson Bay Lagoon tours conducted for SXM personnel by environmental managers Tadzio Bervoets (R) and Rueben Thompson—aboard Nature Foundation’s patrol boat.

**Photo caption4:**

A flock of SXM personnel, sporting the Blue Flag logo, about to board Nature Foundation’s patrol boat for a Simpson Bay Lagoon tour.

**Photo caption5:**

SXM personnel enjoying tour of the Simpson Bay Lagoon last week as part of the Princess Juliana Int’l Airport’s Blue Flag environmental activities.