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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Breaking Barriers - MBJ Charity Run Awards Transform Lives

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA – 09 DECEMBER 2024:

In a recent demonstration of the transformative power of education and community support, MBJ Airports Limited distributed \$22 million in grants to 150 students and six institutions across Western Jamaica and St. Elizabeth, impacting the lives of over 1,000 students. The fourth annual MBJ Charity Run Awards Ceremony, held in Montego Bay, brought together recipients, sponsors, and community leaders to celebrate and gift the recipients as the award-winning airport operator again delivered on its commitment to supporting the educational pursuits of students in the region.

MBJ's CEO Shane Munroe announced that this year's record-breaking fundraising achievement was made possible through the support of 87 corporate sponsors and over 2,300 run/walk participants. "Every dollar raised from this event will be invested entirely in educational opportunities and community development across Western Jamaica, directly touching the lives of our young people and strengthening the future of our community," Munroe emphasized.

Three "Beyond Barriers Superstars" shared their compelling journeys, highlighting how the MBJ grants are helping them overcome significant obstacles. Anika Harty spoke of the challenges she faced as a first-generation university student from a household of six. These included losing her job during the pandemic and having to shift from full-time to part-time studies to help with family bills.

Another recipient, Cheryl Thompson-Tingling, a 43-year-old street vendor pursuing a degree at Sam Sharpe Teachers College, demonstrated that education has no age limit. "I never got to attend school regularly as a child," Thompson-Tingling revealed, "but I still had this deep dream." Now a mother of three, she earned six CXC subjects while maintaining her business, proving that determination knows no bounds. "You don't have to give up because there is light at the end of the tunnel. I don't have a laptop. I use my phone," She shared as she encouraged her fellow recipients to never give up.

Natasha Pritchard, a finance and management student at Montego Bay Community College, shared how she paused her education for two years to support her family after both parents faced serious health challenges. "Watching your parents, your backbone and support system, in their most vulnerable state creates a constant fear," Pritchard shared. Despite these challenges, she resumed her studies and is now in her fourth and final year with the support of the MBJ grant.



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Deputy Prime Minister, Honourable Dr. Horace Chang, who also addressed the audience, stressed the importance of education in national development. "Education, peace, and productivity are what will make our nation strong, wealthy, and safe," he stated as he commended MBJ's commitment to community development.

The ceremony also highlighted institutional recipients, including Hampton School, which will use its grant to repair hurricane-damaged facilities, and Herbert Morrison Technical High School, which will enhance its mechanical engineering unit. The Wingz Kidz program, supporting at-risk youth, received funding for the second consecutive year. The other institutional recipients were the Autism Centre, St. James High School and Spot Valley High School.

A highlight of this year's ceremony was the announcement of the MBJ Foundation, which will serve as a permanent cornerstone of the company's commitment to education and community development across Western Jamaica. As the MBJ CEO explained, this foundation will enable the expansion of their impact and create sustainable long-term programs, with their first major infrastructure project being the construction of a school facility for early childhood education in the community of Flankers.

The award recipients were encouraged by keynote speaker, Georgia Crawford-Williams, who delivered an inspiring charge to the recipients: "Dream big, work hard, and show gratitude." These three elements, she emphasized, are fundamental to achieving greatness, regardless of one's starting point.

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Awardees at the Grant Award Ceremony



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About Sangster International Airport:

Sangster International Airport (IATA: MBJ, ICAO: MKJS) is an international Airport located 3 mi (4.8 km) east of Montego Bay, Jamaica. The Airport is capable of handling nine million passengers per year. It serves as the most popular Airport for tourists visiting the north coast of Jamaica. The Airport is named after former Jamaican Prime Minister Sir Donald Sangster.

About MBJ Airports:

MBJ Airports Limited, the operator of Sangster International Airport, connects Jamaica to more than 60 international destinations. A record 5.267m passengers used the Airport in 2023. MBJ operates SIA under a 30-year concession awarded in 2003 and the Airport provides employment to more than 7,500 persons. SIA has been named the Caribbean's Leading Airport by World Travel Awards for 16 years.



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