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Six St. Croix 2020 Graduates Awarded Scholarships Totaling \$16,000 by St. Croix Foundation and Partners

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The St. Croix Foundation has announced that \$16,000 in scholarships were awarded to six St. Croix graduates on Monday during a virtual presentation at the foundation's headquarters in Sunday Market Square. Scholarships were made possible through the third annual cycle for the Patrick and Amelia Williams Opportunity Fund and SCF's Foundation Scholars Fund.

Four scholarships totaling \$14,000 were awarded through the Patrick and Amelia Williams Opportunity Fund, which was established by Junior Gaspard in 2018 to provide opportunities to youth who have persevered despite overwhelming challenges. Whether they are forced to push through Category Five Hurricanes, global pandemics, or the myriad socioeconomic obstacles young people face, the Williams Opportunity Fund supports students who see education as a means to achieving personal and professional success, the foundation said.

Awards were presented to the following students:

- Djamel Boucenna, Arizona State University, Major: Biomedical Engineering
- Jayme Colbert-Williams, Florida A & M University, Major: Biochemistry
- Jhyllie Roebuck, University of the Virgin Islands, Major: Undecided
- La'Monique Berrios, Morgan State University, Major: Engineering An additional scholarship was awarded to Quincy King (Civil Engineering) and Shadéjah Charles (Biology/ Medicine) through the Foundation Scholars Fund (in conjunction with Pro Communications) for attendance at Howard University and Nova Southeastern University respectfully.

To date, the Patrick and Amelia Williams Opportunity Fund has provided a total of \$35,000 in scholarships to eight students who have had to overcome obstacles to continue their education, particularly in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and now COVID-19, according to the foundation. Applicants were required to meet specific criteria that include being a graduate from St. Croix, maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher, demonstrating financial need, and most importantly, submitting personal essays that spoke to the reality of their challenges and their journey to pursue their dreams. All recipients are required to submit reports to the foundation.

A native of St. Croix and a graduate of Central High School and John H. Woodson Junior High School, Gaspard and the rest of the family wished to honor his grandparents in a meaningful way in the aftermath of the hurricanes of 2017. It was deemed that launching a named scholarship fund would allow for a longer-lasting impact on the lives of students in the community and allow the lessons learned from his grandparents about resilience and perseverance to be passed on to the next generation of leaders, the foundation made known.

Junior Gaspard, who presents awards annually, stated, "Hurricanes, COVID-19, economic uncertainty and life circumstances - all of these continue to present challenges to our recipients, but their character, perseverance, and grit have helped them overcome those challenges. We are excited to see what the next chapter holds for each of these extraordinary students. We are also proud to be able to support these students in this time, just as our grandparents would have wanted."

Scholarship recipient Djamel Boucenna expressed his appreciation. "A river lies between my dreams and reality. At first, I thought I would have to swim across, filling my pockets with the student loans and debt that attempt to hinder me from realizing my goals; however, with the Patrick and Amelia Williams Scholarship awarded to me by the St. Croix Foundation, the river seems to be drying up and crossing has become much more possible. I am truly grateful for this opportunity and thank you so much for supporting me in my dreams," he said.

"As the territory continues to recover from the 2017 hurricanes and another hurricane season begins, this time against the backdrop of a pandemic, these scholarships represent a pathway for our youth to access systems that lead to real opportunity," said St. Croix Foundation's Senior Program Officer Lilli Cox. "The original purpose of these funds becomes more relevant and more critical with every passing year."

The foundation extended its deepest appreciation to the Gaspard family for their partnership and philanthropic spirit as well as the Foundation's Grants Review Committee for its engagement. The Patrick and Amelia Williams Opportunity Fund welcomes gifts to allow for additional students to be provided the chance to pursue their education, according to the release. The foundation also thanked the ProTouch Cares Fund for its partnership and contributions to the Foundation Scholars

Fund.

For more information about the Williams Opportunity Fund, and how you can support this special scholarship opportunity and those like it for the territory's young people, contact St. Croix Foundation at 340-773-9898 or visit our website at www.stxfoundation.org to learn more.

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