

Winner of essay contest gets to meet Queen

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SURPRISED: Christineil Thompson

Naparima Girls High School pupil Christineil Thompson is going to London where she will see the Queen.

This is Thompson's prize for winning an essay competition organised by the National Secretariat for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Thompson was announced by Prime Minister Patrick Manning as the winner of the CHOGM 2009 Commonwealth Essay competition in the 14-18 age category.

The 16-year-old La Brea resident heard her name being called at the conclusion of the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

Thompson said she was still in shock.

'I am very ecstatic and happy,' she said.

'I didn't think my essay could win a competition. My friend said she knew I was going to win. She even made a bet with me. My dad said he also knew as well.'

Thompson and other pupils at her school were encouraged to enter the competition by their English teacher Gangadaye Jattansingh.

Participants were required to 'write a letter to a visiting Commonwealth Leader about what Trinidad and Tobago can teach the world'.

In her essay, a letter to Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Thompson wrote about the rich cultural and racial diversity of Trinidad and Tobago.

For the one hour it took Thompson to write the essay, she will be flown to London in March 2010 to carry the national flag of Trinidad and Tobago at the Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey. The event is attended by Queen Elizabeth and is the largest interfaith celebration in the United Kingdom.

The first prize in the Under-14 age category went to Kara John from Northgate College, St Augustine.

She won a laptop computer.

Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, said he was delighted with the number and quality of essays received.

'It is encouraging to see that so many Trinidad and Tobago students are able to articulate their country's role in world affairs so powerfully. We hope visiting leaders take the opportunity to read some of these wonderful essays and learn about Trinidad and Tobago,' he said.

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