

Special Olympics SVG honours stalwarts

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The Board of Directors of Special Olympics St. Vincent and the Grenadines observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Tuesday by presenting plaques of appreciation to two stalwarts of the local Special Olympics movement: Velma Jackson and Tyrone “Tweety” Spence.

Special Olympics, founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, is the world’s largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, providing year-round training and competitions to more than 4.2 million athletes in 170 countries.

At the time of the introduction of Special Olympics to SVG, Jackson was at the helm of the School for Children with Special Needs Kingstown and was asked to serve as the first national director for Special Olympics SVG.



Velma Jackson, right, receives her plaque from Errol Allen.

She was also the first person to accompany a special group of athletes to represent this country at Special Olympics summer and winter games.

Her most outstanding achievements were in 1995 when SVG was represented at the World Games in New Haven, Connecticut, where the team amassed 15 medals, and again two years later in York, Canada, at the World Winter Games, when the athletes netted their largest tally of gold medals — 12.

At the handing over of the plaque “in appreciation for the many years of dedicated service, devotion and commitment” at her Frenches home, SOSVG chair, Errol Allen, commended Jackson for her years of dedication to the movement and enrichment of athletes’ lives throughout SVG.



Onoro John looks on as Tyrone “Tweety” Spence receives a plaque from Janice McMaster.

Spence is no stranger to sports in SVG, the Caribbean and the international arena, specifically in the game of football. “Tweety”, as he is commonly known, was a defender on the SVG national team at the peak of its success in the 1980s.

After his professional career came to an end, he came to Special Olympics SVG as a volunteer in the early 90s, passing on his passion for the game to athletes who were not often given a chance to showcase their skills in sporting activities.

As coach, he took a team of special athletes to represent SVG at the 1991 World Games in Minnesota, Minneapolis, where his team took fourth place. But Tweety, who worked only to get the best from his team, continued his work, and four years later, he took his team to the very top, gaining the gold medal in 1995, making it the first time that Special Olympics SVG has ever done this in football.

This made our country realize what he and others would have already known, that given the opportunity, persons with intellectual disabilities can make a difference. Tweety continued to work with Special Olympics until it was no longer possible for him to do so, owing to health challenges. As the plaque was presented to Tweety at his home by national director Janice McMaster, the SOSVG chair expressed the appreciation and gratitude of the Board for his work with the special athletes and his excellent record of results and indicated the Board’s intention to continue to look out for this great, but humble sports icon.

The delegation also comprised directors Earl Tash and Cecily Norris, and was accompanied by special athlete Onoro John.

Special Olympics SVG will be participating in the 2015 World Summer Games in Los Angeles, California, from July 25 to Aug. 2, 2015.

In his message to mark United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, called on governments, members of the UN system, businesses and civil society to break barriers and open doors of opportunity for all persons with disability and build an inclusive society for all.

The Day was celebrated under the “Break Barriers, Open Doors: For An Inclusive Society For All”.

For more information on Special Olympics SVG, email info@sosvg.org , call (784)532-8525/530-5278 or visit at www.sosvg.org or www.facebook.com/specialolympicssvg