

The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

Highlight Performance for NGC Sanfest 2013

Tuesday September 19th 2013

10:00 a.m.

Remarks by Mrs. Cassandra Patrovani Sylvester

Vice President, Human Resources and Corporate Relations

SALUTATIONS

Good morning.

There are few experiences more delightful than seeing children performing on stage, in full regalia, and proud of all they have accomplished. As a parent myself, I am deeply moved by the sheer self-confidence and fearlessness that these young ones have displayed throughout the 2013 edition of the NGC Sanfest. I'm willing to bet that many of us adults would be hard-pressed to prevent their knees from knocking if they were up here with these talented young artistes, not just performing before a large audience, but competing in the presence of judges.

This is the strength of character and devotion to one's craft that the NGC Sanfest has tried to develop over its 43 years of existence. As the Festival has grown, it has continued to reach more children, in more schools throughout the country. I'm told that this year there was an increase in participating schools, even though Tobago schools were regrettably unable to participate due to logistical problems. But I see no reason why next year's NGC Sanfest would not be welcoming even more schools to vie for the top spots, or even simply to get up on stage, show what they can do, and enjoy themselves.

You have probably heard many times about the tremendous talents that have been unearthed in young aspiring performers over the years, right here at Sanfest. The list is long, and many of them have gone on to national and international stardom.

As impressive as that is, to me the true value of the NGC Sanfest lies in the small changes it makes to the lives of the average child, who may not yet have established a sense of self, and who may be asking, "What am I good at? What is special about me?"

It is often through music and art education that children find the answers to these questions. They discover their strengths, find their passions, and push the limits of their universe outwards.

They also learn self-discipline, obedience, and adherence to the rules and conventions of their craft...and these traits will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.

Finally, the participants make friends with those in their own school and with other schools. It's not unusual to see children in different school uniforms chatting, sharing a snack, or sitting together watching a child in yet another uniform perform. These children display a sense of sportsmanship we adults would do well to emulate: applauding a great performance by a competitor, or encouraging weaker performers to face the fear and do it anyway.

In other words, NGC Sanfest does not just build artists, musicians, dancers, and poets. It builds character. It builds relationships. It builds citizens. And this is why NGC has been so proud to have been a sponsor since 2003.

We have been so pleased with the way the Festival has grown, and the acclaim it has won from the enthusiastic audience who faithfully attend year after year, that starting last year 2012, and until 2014, we took our sponsorship even further. After an agreement with the members of the San Fernando Arts Council, Sanfest is now known as the NGC Sanfest, as we take on the role of Title Sponsor.

And although NGC's sponsorship of the performing and fine arts has taken many forms, from steelbands to art exhibitions, there is something special about a Corporate Social Responsibility programme that focuses on performers who are so very young. There is so much promise in them, a soft, quiet glow which, if carefully tended, will grow into a blaze of accomplishment.

This year's NGC Sanfest was an exciting one. We've seen new twists introduced in the form of pre-festival open air concerts at the Brian Lara and the Harris Promenades in which the children laid out their accomplishments for all to see, and a vigorous multimedia campaign that raised awareness of the NGC Sanfest and increased audiences.

And, today, we will be blessed to witness the best of the best, the cream of a very talented crop. As the Title Sponsor, NGC would like to congratulate these young stars on the splendid performances that brought them here. We also congratulate the other participating schools, winners all, for keeping us entertained over the past two months.

We acknowledge the teachers and administrators who were willing to coach and accompany the children without letting up on their already demanding academic sched-

ules, and the parents and mentors who contributed their precious time to empowering these young participants.

Thank you all for keeping Sanfest alive and prosperous. And thank you to the San Fernando Arts Council for allowing NGC to be closely associated with a project that leaves behind so many happy hearts wherever it goes. Believe me when I say that our sponsorship of the NGC Sanfest is as rewarding for us as it is helpful to you.

Children, congratulations to all of you. Keep going, and keep growing.

Thank you.