

Blue Flag locations evaluated

PHILIPSBURG--Compliance of St. Maarten's Blue Flag locations Divi Little Bay Beach Resort and The Yacht Club Isle de Sol with the 2013 Blue Flag Criteria was scrutinized and evaluated by National Blue Flag Jury Members during the months of July and August.

The Blue Flag is an exclusive, voluntary eco-label, annually awarded to beach-

60 per cent financial aid recipients naturalised

PHILIPSBURG--Sixty per cent of the 525 persons in St. Maarten who are receiving financial assistance from government are naturalised Dutch persons, who were not born in the Dutch Kingdom, Social Affairs Minister Cornelius de Weever said on Monday.

During his "State of Labour Market" address at the "We Can Build St. Maarten Together" programme at Dutch Quarter Community Centre, the Minister said this cycle should not continue. He said St. Maarten cannot afford to "import poverty, as we cannot afford it.

"Should this continue, we can expect more reliance on social services/financial aid, and then government will have to look for ways for more income, so this cycle should not continue."

es and/or marinas that meet a specific set of criteria concerning environmental information and education, water quality, safety, services and environmental management. The eco-label has become an international symbol of quality, recognized by tourists and tour operators around the world, and can be used as a promotional tool for the awarded beach, marina, or destination.

The Blue Flag Programme is owned and operated by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an independent non-profit organization. Environmental Protection In the Caribbean (EPIC) has been a member of the Foundation for Environmental Education since 2008 and is the National Coordinator of the Blue Flag Programme on St. Maarten.

Divi Little Bay and Isle the Sol Yacht Club were first awarded the prestigious Blue Flag eco-label in October 2011, making St. Maarten the first and only country in the Dutch Caribbean to have Blue Flag locations.

Vice-President of the Foundation for Environmental Education Lourdes Diaz visited St. Maarten recently to inspect the island's Blue Flag locations as part of the annual evaluation process. During her visit Diaz provided a presentation on the Blue Flag and Green Key Eco-labels to representatives of the hospitality industry at



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the St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association's (SHTA) office.

The National Blue Flag Jury and EPIC have forwarded their findings to the International Blue Flag Coordination, which will in turn submit the document to the international Blue Flag Jury for final decision making during the month of September. The International Jury includes representatives of the FEE Board of Directors (Chairman), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Lifesaving Federation (ILS), Inter-

national Council of Marine Industry Association (ICOMIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and an Environmental education expert.

EPIC partnered with the St. Maarten Tourist Bureau in 2008 to work towards establishing the Blue Flag Programme in St. Maarten. Since then the programme has enjoyed the support of the successive governments, the St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association, the St. Maarten Timeshare Association and the Marine Trades Association.