

Trinidad Golf Tournament Spurs Idea for Nonprofit Support of Island Athletes

By **Andrea Milam**
St. John Tradewinds

After spending a significant amount of money to bring her son, 11-year-old Lincoln Sinclair, to a Trinidad and Tobago golf tournament, St. John mother Jennifer Sinclair was struck with an idea — she hopes to found a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping island athletes travel to tournaments and competitions.

Though their journey to the southernmost part of the Caribbean island chain was aided by donations from The Caribbean Golf Association, the Hugh Smith Jr. Fundraiser, and the St. Thomas St. John Ladies Golf Association, the Sinclair family, which owns Copeland Charters, still paid more than \$1,000 out of pocket for their son to experience the tournament.

The Sinclairs' experience is not unique among the families of young St. John athletes; every off-island tournament or competition they attend in the hopes of furthering their young athlete's career incurs travel costs of several hundred dollars to more than \$1,000.

"I know so many families on St. John whose kids play tennis, or soccer, or they sail, and it breaks them to go to these competitions, or else they just can't go," said Jennifer. "In the states, Lincoln was playing golf tournaments every week because there, you can pile kids in a minivan and drive three states away affordably. Kids on St. John who are at the competitive level should have as much opportunity as possible to advance and compete."

"If the kids are showing the drive, dedication, passion, and skill, they should be able to travel to these off-island competitions so they can be recognized and possibly play college sports, professional sports, or even go to the Olym-

pics," she added.

Lincoln made the long trip and money spent worth it by finishing a respectable 10th out of 18 boys in his age group at the three-day 18-hole Republic Bank Caribbean Junior Golf Open Championship, and he even won the Spirit of Sport award for his excellent sportsmanship.

"It was hard," Lincoln said of the tournament. "My long game was better. By the end of the tournament, I was exhausted."

Lincoln, who practices one to three times a week at the Mahogany Run Golf Course on St. Thomas with coach Art Egger, handled the long days of golfing with grace, his mother explained.

"We were delayed getting there and he didn't get to play the very tough course before it was time to compete, but he played very well and I was impressed with how he held it together when he wasn't playing as well as he usually does," said Jennifer. "Not only was this three days in a row of playing 18 holes, he had to pull his own golf bag. Parents couldn't help or coach the players' decisions, so this was the first time he's ever been totally left on his own to make decisions during a tournament."

Though this was Lincoln's first tournament since moving to St. John a year ago, there are several that he could have participated in if the funds were available, Jennifer explained. Next, he hopes to compete in a Puerto Rico tournament in June and a Barbados tournament in July.

"There are at least two or three San Juan kids golf tournaments over the next two months that if we could get to, we'd go in a second," Jennifer said. "We're very grateful for the help we got in getting to the Trinidad tournament, we just wish it wasn't so difficult to find funding. We'd like



St. John Tradewinds News Photo courtesy of the Sinclair Family

Giffit Hill School student Lincoln Sinclair, above, had a great experience and won the Spirit of the Sport award at the golf tournament.

more kids to be able to participate in off-island competitions."

To contact Jennifer for collaboration or support of her idea of a nonprofit organization for St. John athletes, call her at 435-659-1125.

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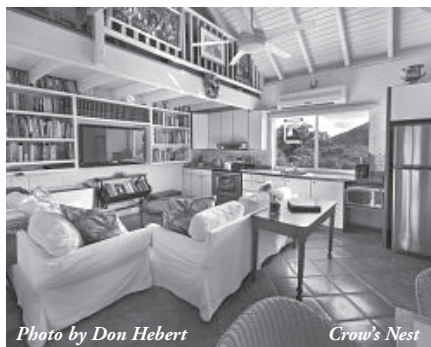


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