



## MEDIA RELEASE

September 15, 2023

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

#### **Orthelese “Pooni” Thomas celebrates 100**

Born in Caratal Road, Gasparillo, Ms. Orthelese Thomas celebrated her one-hundredth birthday on September 14, 2023. Celebrating the milestone with the new centenarian was her 91-year-old sister Drucilla Sylvester, her four children, grandchildren and loved ones. When asked how she felt about turning 100, she quoted a line from the 1965 film, *Sound of Music*. “*Well Lord God, according to the Sound of Music, somewhere or somehow in childhood, I must have done something good that the Lord granted me that,*” said Ms Thomas.

Better known as “Pooni”, the slender framed centenarian said she gained the nickname “ponni” at birth. “*They said when I was born I was a puny little baby and when I grew up they called me puny and puny turned to “ponni” and that name remained with me all throughout my life,*” she said.

Ms. Thomas attributes her longevity to hard work and explained that she began working when she was fifteen years old. “*I liked to work because I like to dress and thing,*” said the former domestic worker who paid a seamstress for a new dress for the special occasion. Recounting some fond memories of her work journey as a teenager, she said “*When I was fifteen years, I say I going and get a little work and I got a work in a family house. They used to call it maid work back then. You doing washing, you doing babysitting, you doing everything but you had stay in there. I got three dollars and fifty cents a month. I worked there for a few months well and I buy nice clothes, pretty clothes.*”

Ms Sophia Kennedy, Inspector I of the Division of Ageing joined the celebrations and presented Ms Thomas with her Certificate of Honour and Achievement, birthday cake from the Kiss Baking Company and hamper courtesy of NAMDEVCO.

The Ministry was proud to honour Ms Thomas under the Ministry’s National Centenarian Programme and encourage persons to register via the Ministry’s website at [www.social.gov.tt](http://www.social.gov.tt) to complete the online form or print a downloadable form for completion. Completed forms may be dropped off at the nearest Social Welfare Office or emailed to the Division of Ageing at [opic@social.gov.tt](mailto:opic@social.gov.tt). For more information, persons may contact the Division of Ageing at 623 – 2608; Ext 2001 to 2009, or 800-OPIC (6742).



*Birthday girl - Ms Orthelse Thomas celebrates her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.*



*Ms Kennedy Inspector I of the Division of Ageing presents Ms Thomas birthday cake from the Kiss Baking Company.*





*Ms Thomas and her 91-year-old sister Drucilla at her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.*



*Ms Thomas with her relatives and loved ones at her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.*

**-END-**

**For more information:**

Communications and Education Unit  
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services  
(868) 623-2608; Ext 5400-5411  
cceu@social.gov.tt