



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

January 5, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: HIGH

Minister Cox honours oldest registered centenarian, Rita Smyke - 110 years

On Friday 29th December 2023, Rita Smyke celebrated her 110th birthday making her the oldest registered centenarian under the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services' National Centenarian Programme and quite possibly, the oldest person in Trinidad and Tobago. Today, Friday, January 5, 2024, Ms. Smyke received a heartwarming surprise visit from Minister of Social Development and Family Services Senator the Honourable Donna Cox.

During the visit, Minister Cox expressed deep admiration for Ms. Smyke's exceptional journey, recognizing her as not only the oldest registered centenarian but also the living link to the heroic history as the oldest descendant of the Merikins - African American marines who fought during the war in 1812. According to relatives, the Lengua Road, Princes Town native is also the oldest member of the Seven-Day Adventist faith. The mother of five (5), grandmother of twenty-three (23), great-grandmother of sixteen (16) and great-great-grandmother of six (6) now add to her list of titles "supercentenarian", which is an honour reserved for those who attained the age of 110 and over.

Minister Cox asked Ms Smyke how she felt about achieving the remarkable milestone. In her response Ms Smyke told the Minister that she simply feels "nice" and also accredited good food as a secret to her longevity. Minister Cox then presented Ms Smyke with her Certificate of Honour and Achievement, Centenarian Medal, and a new wheelchair. Minister Cox also presented a hamper sponsored by NAMDEVCO and a birthday cake sponsored by the Kiss Baking Company. She also extended her best wishes on behalf of Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services encourages persons to register for the 2024 National Centenarian Programme. Persons may visit the Ministry's website at www.social.gov.tt for more information or contact the Division of Ageing at 623 – 2608; Ext 2001 to 2009 or 800-OPIC (6742).

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For more information:

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Ms Smyke is escorted on her brand new wheelchair by Minister Cox.



Minister Cox visits the oldest registered centenarian under the MSDFS' National Centenarian Programme, Ms. Rita Smyke.



Minister Cox and family members of Ms. Rita Smyke. Ms Smyke celebrated her 110th birthday on December 29, 2023.