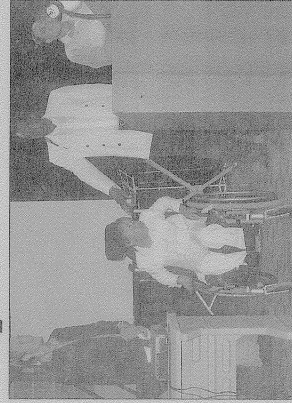


# Gala benefit held for boy with cerebral palsy



*The Simmons family on-stage at the benefit dinner. From left, Sexton, Christopher, Dad Pete and Mom Christina.*

ST. EUSTATIUS--Christopher Simmons is a six-year-old child born with cerebral palsy, a non-progressive, non-contagious physical disability caused by damage to the motor control centres of the young developing brain. Christopher's lower limbs are cramped and virtually useless.

The American Medical Students Association (AMSA) put together a gala benefit dinner to assist Christopher and his family, which was held last Saturday night at Fort Oranje.

Damage to motor control centres can occur during pregnancy, during childbirth, or after birth up to age three. Because Christopher lives in a country with limited medical facilities, it seemed that he would be confined to a wheelchair, and perhaps placed under institutional care, for all of his life.

Recently a young man named Tyler Sexton came into Christopher's life. Now 19, Sexton has undergone 15 surgeries to help fight his own cerebral palsy. Through determination and hard work, Tyler can now walk and take care of the many activities necessary to go about his daily life.

Before coming to Statia, Sexton worked with sick and injured children at Shriner's Children's Hospital in Tampa, Florida. He has also spoken to many youth rallies, church groups and others to share his message of hope and determination.

After meeting Christopher, Sexton contacted his former employers at Shriner's

hamstrings.

The treatment was made possible through many donations from businesses and individuals, including American Airlines tickets from Nagco Insurance and coverage of housing and medical expenses from Shriner's.

Five hundred people attended last Saturday's gala event. Pre-sales of tickets netted approximately US \$6,500 and even more was raised during the evening from the sale of food and raffle tickets as well as outright monetary donations. Christopher's parents thank all who had contributed. Christina said, "God has answered my prayers. He sent an angel." Her husband Pete said, "God has given my son an opportunity."

Sexton also offered thanks to the many donors and helpers who had contributed to the effort to help Christopher Simmons to lead a healthier.

Children's Hospital to obtain a suitable, child-sized wheelchair for Christopher. Then he worked with Dr. George Odongo of Queen Beatrix Medical Center and Dr. Lori Trout of the School of Medicine to determine what more could be done.

Christopher will travel to Tampa on October 13, where he will undergo at least two, and possibly more, surgeries to loosen his heel cords and