

## **Paws Up To St. Matthew's Government School!**

To celebrate the efforts aimed at keeping a forest corridor healthy and thriving in Central Belize, (which our mighty jaguars need in order to maintain their populations), the Zoo, under expert guidance from Jamal Andrewin and Celso Poot, sponsored a creative arts contest for schools located within this "Jaguar Corridor".



### **Jertrudis Santos with her contest winning Jaguar Artwork**

The entries were asked to be a piece of art, an essay, or a poem. Quite a few excellent projects came our way. Zoo officials had a difficult time choosing the winners, but finally, we all agreed that a sensitive poem and a beautiful painting of a jaguar from Std 6 students Jertrudis Santos and Rosalinda Hernandez, should be awarded first prize. Both students attend St. Matthew's Government School which is located within reaches of the Jaguar Corridor. Excitement was at high levels when the big prize day arrived. The entire class with teacher Ms. Therese Young, arrived at the Belmopan Airstrip for their special event. Senator Omar Figueroa, who is also a prominent researcher studying the ecology of the jaguar within the Jaguar Corridor, was there to give a heartfelt congratulations to all the students for their obvious concern about this magnificent big cat. Then.....Wow! Jertrudis and Rosalinda, along with their mothers, actually flew over the Jaguar Corridor with the Wings of Conservation, Light Hawk. Pilot Rick pointed out the important territory where Jaguars roam, breed and hunt.



### **"Meet and Greet" Jaguar, Field Master**

After landing, the students experienced another surprise. Here comes the BDF Airwing! After an aerial salute to the crowd, the Defender flew to 8,000 feet and out of the plane jumped two parachutists! The jumpers landed within yards of everyone, walked over and handed Jertrudis and Rosalinda Junior Buddy Jaguar T-shirts.

Did the fun end there? No way! All of the students then traveled to The Belize Zoo to receive a "Paws Up" congratulations from Jaguar "FieldMaster" himself. Getting mere inches away from this beautiful animal reinforced to each student that their commitment to guard and protect the Jaguars of Belize forever, would always be an important part of their lives. Paws Up to St Matthew's School!!

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