

'Flora Fund' hands out its first grants



Colin Thompson

Rio Russell and Azalea Pontes are the first beneficiaries of a scholarship fund set up by Bermuda's multiple ITU women's triathlon champion and Commonwealth Games gold medal-winner Flora Duffy.

Russell, 14, attends the Langley School and Football Academy in Britain, while Pontes, 12, is a member of the Bermuda Gymnastics Association and also is on the national team.

Help from Flora: multiple ITU women's triathlon champion and Commonwealth Games gold medal-winner Flora Duffy, right, is shown with Alicia Russell, left, and Azalea Pontes. Ms Russell's son, Rio, 14, at the Langley School and Football Academy in Britain, and Azalea, 12, a gymnast, are the first recipients of Flora Fund grants, set up by the champion triathlete this year to aid young Bermudian student athletes in their development (Photograph submitted)

Both promising athletes have received an undisclosed grant to go in aid of their further development.

"I'm really excited to award the first two grants to Azalea and Rio," Duffy, who celebrated her 31st birthday on Sunday, said.

"I'm really grateful that The Flora Fund could play a small role in their sporting dreams. Both are young, driven and worthy of the support."

Russell and Pontes thanked Duffy for supporting their athletic ambitions.

"I am really grateful that I got this scholarship and that I am able to go to this school," Russell said.

"I am really happy to go to this school because I play football, the sport I love, and I'm able to manage school work and football.

"I play football every day for two hours. High intensity and good quality.

"I'm just so excited that I can be at this school to do good and be the best I am on and off the pitch, too."

Pontes added: "I am so grateful to have received a grant from The Flora Fund.

"Thank you for the opportunity which has assisted me with continuing my gymnastics career with the Bermuda Gymnastics Association.

"Flora is such an inspiration for me and I was extremely honoured to be chosen.

"Receiving this grant motivates me to continue to strive for excellence in the sport of gymnastics, which I love, and to make Bermuda proud of my accomplishments in gymnastics now and in the future. Thank you, Flora!"

Applications for grants must be submitted with a personal profile attached on bermudascholarships.com.

They are then forwarded to the Bermuda Community Foundation, which is the administrator of The Flora Fund.

Duffy has urged others in need of support to apply.

"I do believe there are more young Bermudians who could benefit from the fund," she said. "And I'd encourage those with sporting aspirations but financial challenges to apply."