Morvant student wins Open Schol

By RACHAEL ESPINET

GUNSHOTS ringing out in the night would not distract 18-year-old Janaazie Coppin of Morvant from achieving his goal of travelling the world, and becoming a law student.

Coppin was one of four students from St Georges Secondary School who were awarded CAPE scholarships. Coppin was the only one out of the four to win an open scholarship.

Yesterday Coppin along with classmates Denisha Duke, Chikelu Ekwue and Levi Ramcharan were honoured at St George's annual Achievement Awards Ceremony.

"It feels good. This is my way of escaping. Not everyone seizes that opportunity. There is always a means for people to escape. There have been times when I wake up to gunshots, or I have seen blood in the road. It would bother me, but those things would only compel me to do better," Coppin told *Newsday*.

Staying away from negative influences, Coppin said he did not lime outside with the other boys in his area.

"I was seldom outside. I was either studying, or watching TV. When I was younger, I used to play with the boys in my neighbourhood, but I stopped. Their attitudes became stronger and I did not want to be around them anymore.

"My family has a strong religious background and we separated ourselves from any activities that went against our religion," Coppin said.

Coppin was awarded an open scholarship in modern languages. For the Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examination (CAPE) he studied French, Spanish, English Literature, Music, Caribbean Studies. He obtained distinctions in almost all the subjects except from Literature in which he received a one. The Music exam was done at Cambridge where he got a B.

Coppin, who is currently studying law at the University of the West Indies, has applied to a school in England to study law.

His mother, Shirvon Coppin is an administrative assistant with Coca Cola company and his father, Floyd Coppin is a taxi driver and plumber. He said his parents were very supportive while he studied, and they were now very proud of their son's success.

NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS: From left are Janaazie Coppin (Open-Modern Languages); Denisha Duke (Additional – Modern Studies) Chikelu Ekwue (Additional - Sciences), and Levi Ramcharan. (Additional – Sciences) during the St George's College Achievement Awards ceremony, at Farrell Hall, St George's College, Barataria yesterday. **PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB**

"They are extremely excited, particularly my mother. She has not stopped talking about it. I don't think there is a single person she knows that has not heard about my scholarship. My dad is excited, particularly about me living abroad. He is trying to save up money for me just in case I need it when I go to England," he said.

Coppin said his "secret" to success was having a balanced life. While he had a regular study schedule, Coppin also did extra curricular activities which included both music and sport activities. He plays the trumpet in the St Augustine Orchestra. He even takes part in a parang band, and describes playing volleyball as his stress reliever.

Coppin said there are lots of people from the Morvant/Laventille area who were successful in their academics. He said there was one boy from his area, Solomon Baptiste, who went to St Georges as well, and he was awarded an additional scholarship.

Coppin said he has experienced people putting him down because of the area in which he lives. He recalls how a primary schoolteacher said he was not smart enough, but Coppin was not deterred. He said that insult added to his drive to succeed.

Addressing the stigma of young men from that area not performing, Coppin said it was an inaccurate view and there were people there who want to achieve.

Giving advice to young people in his area who also want to get out of difficult situations, Coppin said there is hope.

"The is a way. The opportunity exists once you put effort into your studies. I am not the first person to break the stereotype. The opportunity is available to anyone in any situation," Coppin assured.