

Award for heroism in Kenneth John's name

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Cabinet has approved the institution of a special award to recognise the bravery and heroism of St Lucians.

Named in honour of Kenneth David John, the Babonneau parliamentarian who lost his life trying to rescue a drowning woman four years ago, the award will be presented at a ceremony slated for November.

The new award is just one of a number of awards set up by the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) to recognise the contribution of volunteers towards disaster preparedness across the island, and to mark the 10th anniversary of the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Relief Agency.

According to NEMO's acting deputy director Marinus Pascal, a committee was set up earlier this year to discuss the establishment of a system of awards. The committee had been in the process of seeking nominations from its district offices when the idea for the heroism award was first mooted.

"We felt it was important to recognise persons who have put themselves at risk to undertake activities to help others," Mr Pascal said. "This award will be presented to persons who have shown heroism and bravery in undertaking high risk rescues and other activities in an effort to save the lives of others."

Mr Pascal said Kenneth John's name "quite naturally came up" as an example of someone who put themselves on the line to try to save the life of another.

"His name has been very strongly linked to the words heroism and bravery so this award will be called the Kenneth John Award for Heroism."

The proposal for the award was put to Cabinet and approved yesterday, which was also coincidentally the fourth anniversary of Kenneth David John's death.

Kenneth David John died on July 1, 1998 at Grand Anse Beach when he tried to save the life of a young woman who had found herself in difficulty swimming in the strong current. Tragically both Mr John, the MP for Babonneau/Castries North West, and the young woman died in the incident.