



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Office of Public Relations

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**DIVISION OF VIRGIN ISLANDS CULTURAL EDUCATION CELEBRATES
WINNERS OF VI HISTORY MONTH CHALLENGES**

The Virgin Islands Department of Education Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education is delighted to announce the conclusion of the "We Are All Stewards of Virgin Islands Culture and Heritage" campaign, which served as part of this year's 2024 VI History Month activities. This initiative successfully engaged students, teachers, and families across the Territory in a series of challenges designed to deepen their connection to our heritage and to embrace the role of stewards of Virgin Islands history and culture.

The award ceremony will be held simultaneously at VIYA retail spaces in both the St. Croix District and St. Thomas-St. John District on Friday, May 10, 2024, at 3:30 pm. Winners will be awarded prizes, photo opportunities, and interviews will be available for the media.

Jennifer Matarangas-King, Vice President of Public Relations and Governmental Affairs at VIYA, stated, "VIYA is pleased to collaborate with the Division of VI Cultural Education once again for the Annual VI History Month Challenges. We always proudly support educational contests that link technology with important VI History initiatives. By providing devices such as smartphones and MiFi resources as prizes for deserving teachers and students, we encourage the use of technology to stay connected to VI Culture. Together, we honor our past, empower our present, and shape a vibrant future for the US Virgin Islands. Congratulations to the innovative students and teachers who participated in this year's contests. May VIYA continue to keep them connected to our culture."

Students Digitized Storytelling Challenge: Students were tasked with sharing their family's unique stories and oral histories. Zyah Rogers from the St. Croix Central High School won by submitting video vignettes interviewing his grandmother about his great grandfather, Louis E. Brown, a former Commissioner of Public Works and Agriculture. In the St. Thomas-St. John District, students Robyn Eddy, Ymani Rios, and Denaiya Smith from the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School excelled in sharing traditional folk tales and personal valued memories of their family. They were supported by the guidance of Ms. Stacey McKay.

Environmental Stewardship Program Challenge: Mr. Josh Canning's class at the St. Croix Montessori School showcased their commitment to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. The class won this challenge by documenting their journey of experiential learning about our environment and their responsibilities to conserve it.

Teacher's VI History Door Challenge: Teachers decorated their classroom doors with VI History Month themes for a chance to win MiFi devices with one year of service. This year's winners include Joie Byrd of the Virgin Islands Montessori School and Peter Gruber International Academy, and Sharra Mae Estigo, winning for the second time from the Joseph Gomez Elementary School in the St. Thomas-St. John District. Also celebrating a second win are Karissa Thurland Perez in the St. Croix District, along with Jena Fuentes of the Lew Muckle Elementary School, and Arian Pineda Matzo.

Stephanie Chalana Brown, Director of the Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education, emphasized the importance of this campaign: "Building both teachers and students with the tools and knowledge to be stewards of our culture is crucial. Traditions and community memories have long been vested in small pockets of cultural bearers. As we venerate our cultural bearers, we must also empower our educators and students with the knowledge of our community's memory, enabling them to carry forward the Sankofa principle—taking our past and moving forward with knowledge gained into the future."

The Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education extends heartfelt gratitude to VIYA for their continued support in making these challenges possible and impactful, marking another successful year in celebrating and preserving the cultural legacy of the Virgin Islands.

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