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Humanities Festival Unites UVI and the Community

Crucians, St. Lucians, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, Filipinos and Indians were all represented at the University of the Virgin Islands International Night. Held on March 28, as part of the 2004 Humanities Festival, the event celebrated the diverse cultures of the people of the Virgin Islands.

The night included Middle Eastern belly dancing; St. Lucia, Dominica and St. Croix Heritage Dancers; Crucian storytelling; Native American Spirituality; Indian dancing; and Hispanic folklore from Puerto Rico, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The night of song, dance and storytelling drew a crowd of more than 500 people to the Cafetorium of the St. Croix campus, where most of the festivals' events were held.

"Every year the International Night is a big success because it brings people together," said UVI Professor Marvin Williams who helped to organize the festival.

"Word Power Sound: Caribbean Cultural Connections," was the theme of the week-long Humanities Festival. Along with the International Night, other aspects of the festival included a panel discussion, lectures, poetry and short story readings, literature contests and a film festival.

"The Humanities Festival went overwhelmingly well, with the International Night setting the pace," said Valerie Combie, a UVI professor and an organizer of the festival. "There were people from the community who were there for four nights," she said, recalling how some had asked for the University to organize more of those events throughout the year. The students, she said, also loved the festival.

Raconteur and social commentator Paul Keens-Douglas performed twice to a packed Cafetorium, educating his audience about communication and the various elements of communication. He emphasized the importance of diversity as he described qualities of Caribbean people. Keens-Douglas spoke on several issues of importance to Caribbean people including



Dancers perform during the Humanities Festival International Night held at the St. Croix campus Cafetorium.

health, crime, education and unemployment – managing to make people laugh as he discussed serious subjects.

The Old-time Calyposians Panel Discussion featured Stanley Jacobs of Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights, Camille "King Derby" Macedon, Louis Ible, Dimitri Copeman and James Wakefield – who after speaking about their struggles and inspirations performed.

An oratorical contest about same-sex marriages drew seven contestants. The winners were: 1st place, William "Spike" MacKean-Davis, a UVI student; 2nd place, Khnuma Simmonds, a UVI student; and 3rd place, Laurie Aaron, a Seventh-Day Adventist School student.

At the Short Story Contest Awards, noted Caribbean author Olive Senior read two short stories. The winners of the contest were: Berlina Wallace in the university category, Michael Bachoo in the community category and Peter Roussev in the high school category.

Olive Senior was the keynote speaker at the Student Literary Conference where she spoke about the significance of the festival's theme.

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Events Calendar

April 24	Student Awards	STX
April 27	SBDC Workshop	STX
April 27	Staff Council Meeting	STT/STX
April 28	Nursing Poster Display	STT
April 30	UVI Closed for Carnival	STT/STX
May 4	Golden Key Induction	STX
May 6	Academic Awards	STT
May 16	Upward Bound Luncheon	STT
May 26-27	Nursing Workshop	STX

UVI Says “Thank You” to Employees at Service Awards

Vernon R. Williams has watched the University of the Virgin Islands grow – literally. Williams began working on the St. Thomas campus of the then College of the Virgin Islands in 1968 as a general maintenance mechanic. After three and a half decades of service, Williams, the trades supervisor in the physical plant department, has retired. Williams and other UVI employees were honored for their years of service, retirement and attendance at the Annual Service Awards Ceremonies held on March 24 and 25 on the St. Croix and St. Thomas campuses, respectively.

“Saying thank you is never a minor event,” UVI President LaVerne Ragster told the award recipients at the St. Thomas campus event. “This time at UVI has been one of touching lives and impacting the future.”

A total of 33 people on both campuses were recognized for their five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years of service. Williams was recognized for 35 years of service and for his retirement. A total of 10 retirees were recognized and five employees were recognized for perfect attendance.

A highlight of the service awards is the announcement of the employee of the year, which remains a secret until the actual ceremony. Arthur Joseph was greeted with a standing ovation and applause when he was announced as the employee of the year on the St. Croix campus. As intended, Joseph, a maintenance supervisor, was surprised by the award.

Dr. Henry Smith was announced as the employee of the year on the St. Thomas campus. Dr. Smith is the Vice Provost for Research and Public Service and Director of the Water Resources Research Institute.



Left: UVI President LaVerne Ragster congratulates St. Croix campus Employee of the Year Arthur Joseph. Right: Dr Henry Smith, St. Thomas campus employee of the year; gives brief remarks after accepting his award.



“None of what I’ve achieved I’ve done by myself,” Dr. Smith said. He accepted the award on behalf of the Research and Public Service staff. “They are the ones that make my blunders look like innovations.”

Malcolm Kirwan, the guest speaker at the St. Croix campus ceremony, told employees that despite the financial hardships that the University has faced over the years, no one was fired. Kirwan is the interim director of the Research and Technology Park.

The guest speaker for the St. Thomas campus ceremony was Territorial Court Judge Audrey Thomas, who shared with the audience a series of affirmations.

“Choose your own direction; it’s never too early or too late to begin. Time has no favorites; time is the great equalizer,” Thomas said.

The service awards are organized annually by UVI’s Human Resources Department.

Humanities Festival . . . Continued

Another popular Caribbean author, Poet Lelawatee Manoo Rahming, read some of her work at a poetry reading.

Other activities included a film festival that featured three films by Guyanese Michael Gilkes, an author, critic, cultural activist and filmmaker; a short story and storytelling session on the St. Thomas campus; and a trip to Buck Island.

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