



Stronger Ties, Brighter Skies: A THRIVING 2025

As we step into 2025, we are filled with optimism and excitement for what the year holds. The theme for our first edition of the Sister Islands Newsletter, "Stronger Ties, Brighter Skies: A Thriving 2025," reflects our shared vision for the future—a year defined by unity, growth, and progress. This year marks the beginning of fresh opportunities and stronger bonds within our communities. Through collaboration and shared purpose, we believe we can achieve brighter skies for all.

In this issue, you'll find inspirational stories of residents who are making a meaningful difference, activities that foster connection, and practical tips to help you embrace personal and collective growth. Together, let us build on the progress we've made and look forward to the incredible possibilities that lie ahead.

Here's to a prosperous year filled with stronger ties and brighter skies!



*Stronger
Ties,
Brighter
Skies:*

A THRIVING 2025

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW TO VIEW

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SISTER ISLANDER OF THE QUARTER

Dr. LuVerne Vanterpool- Baptiste

Anegada

LuVerne Baptiste nee Vanterpool was born on Tortola in the late sixties to Elbert (Lance) Vanterpool and Anna (Gloria) Vanterpool as the last of their nine children. She grew up and was educated in Anegada, graduating as the valedictorian of the second graduating class of the then Anegada Secondary School in 1987. As a recipient of the Stanley Nibbs scholarship, she attended St. Johns University in New York, where she graduated in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in Marketing. She completed her master's degree in Marketing Management from Baruch College in New York in 1996, completing the last two years after she had returned home in December 1994. In 2008, she completed her Doctoral studies earning an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership from Nova Southeastern University in Florida.

Dr. Baptiste started working at the Hamilton Lavity Stoutt Community College in January 1995 as a business faculty member. While in the department, she also served as acting Head of Department and as the Coordinator for the Performance Enhancement Centre. In 1999, she transitioned from the classroom to serve as the Senior Executive Assistant to the President, and then became the first Director of Human Resources. She celebrates her 30th year with the college this year, and has served as

Registrar, Associate Vice President, Acting Vice President of Academics, and Vice President of Operations. She now holds the title of Vice President of Policy and Administration. Dr. Baptiste is the author of *Out From Under My Rock*, and has penned several poems. She is an avid reader and a lifelong sports fan. Her favourite quote states, *'There's a reason the windshield is so much bigger than the rear view mirror; where you are headed is so much more important than what you've left behind.'*



GRATITUDE Corner



There are gems hidden throughout the Virgin Islands communities. Not just the beaches, boulders, or views, but rather, the people. They don't ask to be recognized and their efforts are not for gain. They contribute to their communities in a positive way out of love. Their collective efforts and acts of service help to preserve the fibre of Virgin Islands culture. The Sister Islands Programme Unit extends sincere gratitude to all who help to maintain this beautiful place in which we call "home".



Shelly Anne Varlack

With over 27 years of teaching experience - twelve (12) years in Guyana and the remainder in the British Virgin Islands, Mrs. Varlack has been a cornerstone of Anegada's educational and community development. As a dedicated volunteer, she provides tutoring for persons who were unable to complete secondary education, helping them to earn their diplomas and to regain opportunities for a brighter future through HOPE Academy on Virgin Gorda.

Mrs. Varlack is also a proud member of the Anegada Lions Club, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), and the Anegada Resilience Team, consistently giving back to the community through service and leadership. Her passion for uplifting others extends beyond the classroom, making her an invaluable asset to the Sister Islands. She has helped to mold and inspire her students by providing them with proper instruction, guiding and motivating them to do their best. Besides being a teacher, and a volunteer, Mrs. Varlack is a wife and mother as well as a great cook, well known for making her roti, curry dishes, and chow mien cuisine for different occasions on island. Gratitude is extended to Mrs. Varlack for her time, effort, passion and commitment to service.



Gransham Singh Balgobin

Mr. Gransham Singh Balgobin has been a resident on the island of Jost Van Dyke for almost twenty years. His generosity knows no bounds. By sharing the fruits of his labour with residents in his community, he not only nourishes tables but also strengthens the bonds that unite residents. His kindness and dedication to giving back reminds us of the power of community and the beauty of sharing. Thank you, Mr. Balgobin for planting seeds of care and compassion!



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Kirk O'Neal

Kirk wears many hats as a dedicated Aviation Firefighter, Real Estate Agent, and Beach Bar Manager. Recently, he was recognized as having one of the Top 5 Best Caribbean Beach Bars by the USA Today 10 Best Readers' Choice Award for 2025. But that's not all!

Every year, Kirk hosts a heartfelt initiative: a free grill-up for everyone in the Virgin Gorda community. He serves cheeseburgers, hot dogs, and refreshing lemonade—no strings attached! This year marks the third anniversary of this special day, which holds particular significance for Kirk as he focuses on the children of the Virgin Islands. He is passionate about nurturing the children who are the future of our community.

Kirk believes that giving back is more than just an act of kindness; it's a calling. He says, "Receiving gifts is a wonderful feeling, but giving back is an absolute joy that puts a smile on my heart." Kirk further expresses, "Blessed are those who bless others. I thank Almighty God every day for my blessings as I strive to walk in His image." Let's come together to support Kirk's incredible efforts and celebrate the spirit of giving!



green TIP

OF THE QUARTER

BY NICKLOUS KANHAI OF GREENVI

Collect shower water while waiting for it to warm up. This valuable resource can be used for watering plants, cleaning, or flushing the toilet. By taking this small step, you can help mitigate the challenges of water shortages and improve our water management systems. Every positive sustainable action makes a difference!



YOUTH Feature

Anegada | Jost Van Dyke | Virgin Gorda



Tamesha Lewin

My name is Tamesha Lewin and I am twelve years old. I graduated from the Jost Van Dyke Primary School as the valedictorian. I now attend the Elmore Stoutt High School. My favorite subject is Science and my favorite sport is track and field. I like the colour purple and when I grow I would like to be an athlete and an actress. I enjoy going to church and doing community service. One of my favorite hobbies is practicing to braid hair. I am funny, shy, and playful.



Shamaar Tomlinson

Shamaar Tomlinson, son of Lorraine Wheatley, graduated with honors from the Claudia Creque Educational Centre in June, 2024. With fishing deeply rooted in his family legacy through his grandfather, Lowell Wheatley, Shamaar spends every moment he can fishing, diving for conch, or pulling lobster pots alongside his adoptive father, Bozo Wheatley.

Eager to expand his knowledge and skills, Shamaar frequently pursues certifications in marine and boating safety. His passion for the marine industry inspired him to enroll at the Marine Mechanics Institute in September 2024, where he is currently training to become a Marine Technician Specialist. His dedication and exceptional academic performance have earned him a place on the Director's List.



Ryan Ramlall

My name is Ryan Ramlall. I am 19 years old and I live on Virgin Gorda. I have lived here my entire life, as my parents have worked very hard to raise me and ultimately make an impactful contribution to society. I credit all of my success to my parents and of course God. From an early age, I was motivated to do well academically. I graduated top student of BFEC Primary, then valedictorian of BFEC Secondary and #1 overall high school student in the territory, I then achieved a dual associate's at HLSCC (General Science and Business Administration), where I was awarded the top full-time student award. Needless to say, I achieved many accomplishments academically, including multiple spelling bee championships, debate championships and even sport championships during my time in school. I was also awarded an internship to work at Harneys, a top law firm in the BVI.

However, my greatest achievement is not found in my journey as a student, but rather as a teacher. In September of 2022, my mother fell sick, having to travel to do multiple eye surgeries, with an indefinite date of return and an uncertainty of her future health. My mother is the principal of Valley Day Primary School. At the age of 17 years old, I filled the role of principal while my mother was away, essentially running a school while attending college. Even when she returned, she was not at her full strength (and still is not), so I have been working as the Vice Principal and Grades 4-6 teacher from 2022 to present, all while excelling academically also. I have successfully prepared students for high school, changed lives and developed the minds of tomorrow. For me, that will always be my biggest accomplishment in this life. My advice to other youths and people in general would be to persevere, because life always throws challenges at you. However, it's just a test to make you stronger.

HEALTH

TIP OF THE QUARTER



Take Antibiotics Only As Prescribed

Antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest public health threats in our generation. When antibiotics lose their power, bacterial infections become harder to treat, leading to higher medical costs, prolonged hospital stays, and increased mortality. Antibiotics are losing their power because of misuse and overuse in humans and animals. Make sure you only take antibiotics if prescribed by a qualified health professional. And once prescribed, complete the treatment days as instructed. Never share antibiotics.

- World Health Organization (WHO)

SMALL BUSINESS Feature

by Latoya George



Smudge Art Studio

Founded in 2018, Smudge Art Studio was born out of a deep love for art and a desire to share its transformative power with the community. Inspired by cherished childhood memories of attending Saturday art classes with my grandmother and other local women, under the guidance of Joseph Hodge, I saw firsthand how art could bring people together and spark creativity.

Art, often overlooked in its significance, has the unique ability to inspire, heal, and foster mental wellness. Smudge began as a way to explore and share these hidden benefits, encouraging everyone—regardless of their skill level—to embrace their inner artist. Over the

years, we've evolved into a mobile art studio, bringing creative experiences in a variety of settings.

Smudge Art Studio offers a range of services, including the sale of art supplies, public and private sip-and-paint events, Summer and Easter art camps, art classes and workshops, and unique art-focused gatherings. Each event is designed to help participants explore art in new and exciting ways, nurturing mental clarity, relaxation, and self-expression.

As Smudge grows, my hope is to continue contributing to the community, fostering creativity, and doing my part to make art accessible and enjoyable for all.



RECIPE CORNER

Ginger, Turmeric, & Lemon Immunity Shot



What is this recipe good for? Combatting inflammation, fighting colds and improving digestion.

What you'll need for one serving:

- One small orange
- One small lemon
- ¼ tsp fresh turmeric
- 1 tsp fresh ginger
- Dash of black pepper
- Honey to taste

Directions

Remove the orange peel and lemon rinds, and chop or grate the turmeric and ginger. Add the orange, lemon, turmeric and ginger into the juicer. Add the black pepper and honey afterwards to taste. Or use a blender and strain the mixture through a dish towel (remember, turmeric stains), and add water to improve the consistency.



KIDS CORNER

A Little Interview With The New Year



Welcome to 2025! Before you start your new adventure, 2025 has some questions for you. Have an adult help you read the questions and write your answers.

2025: We finally meet! If last year were an animal, which animal would it be?

2025: What are two things you think will happen this year?

2025: What is one new thing you want to try this year?

2025: What day do you think will be the most special for you this year?



KIDS CORNER

A Little Interview With The New Year



2025: Your answers are amazing! I can't wait to start this year with you. Draw a picture of us doing something fun together. (You can draw me however you like!)



DID YOU KNOW? The Customer Service Care Centre



The Customer Service Care Centre has extended its operations to the Vanterpool Administration Building on Virgin Gorda. Whether you need assistance with inquiries, applications, or other essential services, a Customer Service Specialist is there to help. Visit us to experience fast, efficient, and reliable support-right in the heart of your community.





GOVERNMENT OF THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS
Ministry of Communications
and Works



PAY YOUR WATER BILL ONLINE NOW!!



Visit any Water and Sewerage Department and register or go online to the URL link **payment.gov.vg** using your physical bill info.

**It's Easy, It's Now, It's Official
From 1st February, 2025**





GOVERNMENT OF THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS



HEROES LIVE FOREVER

The H. Lavity Stoutt
CONCERT



SAVE THE DATE
Sunday, 2nd March, 2025



PUBLIC ENCOURAGED TO REGISTER TO VOTE



Public Service Customer Service

NEWSLETTER

2024 Year End Recap

SCAN HERE!



Learn about the Customer Service happenings in the Public Service and how you can help us serve you better!
(284) 468-3701 | customerservice@gov.vg



Evolution | Innovation | Transformation
Building a World-Class Public Service
Public Service Transformation





GOVERNMENT OF THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS
 Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs
 and Sports

INTER-SECONDARY SCHOOL *Debates 2025*



**The New Testament Church of God International Worship Centre
 Activity Hall, Baugher's Bay | 9:00 a.m - 1:00 p.m.**

PRELIMINARY COMPETITION

5th and 6th February

SEMI-FINAL COMPETITION

26th February





BULLETIN

Issued 29th January 2025

Virgin Islands Scholarship Application Process Portal For 2025 Reopened

The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Sports is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2025/2026 academic year in the following Priority Areas of Study:

1. Education
2. Health, Public Health, and Medical Sciences
3. Infrastructure, Architecture, and Engineering
4. Technology and Digital Transformation
5. Creative Industries and Communication
6. Marine and Environmental Sciences
7. Business, Finance, and Entrepreneurs
8. Social Sciences, Governance, and Public Policy
9. Law, Criminal Justice, and Global Affairs
10. Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food Security

The comprehensive list and online application can be accessed directly at <https://bvigov.smapply.io> or via the Government of the Virgin Islands website, www.bvi.gov.vg, by choosing "Featured Services and Information," "Education and Training," followed by "Scholarships".

All applications must be submitted online and the deadline for submission is 28th February 2025.





BULLETIN

Issued 02 January 2025

System Test Calendar For 2025 Available

Residents of the Virgin Islands are invited to download the schedule of tests of the [National Early Warning Multi-hazard Alert System for 2025](#).

Sirens and other elements of the early warning system are generally tested on the fourth Friday each month.

Although no action is required during system tests, residents are encouraged to test their home or business emergency procedures.

To test their disaster or emergency plan, persons can practise how they would respond to an emergency by having all persons in the household or team members get to their designated shelter-in-place or evacuation location; check emergency supplies; and test emergency communication systems.

For advice on creating a home or business emergency plan, or for more information about the National Early Warning Multi-hazard Alert System, please contact the Department of Disaster Management at **(284) 468-4200**.



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