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Dept. of Education's Div. of Cultural Education Brings Go-kart Racing and Other Traditional Games to Agrifest 2020

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Dir. of VI Cultural Education Valrica Bryson, PhD, takes a spin on a homemade Go Kart as she looks forward to introducing youngsters to this and other traditional games at the Cultural Pop-Up Feb. 15 at the 49th Annual Agriculture and Food Fair. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Virgin Islands Department of Education, Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education (DVICE), is inviting the community to experience a one-of-a-kind walk down memory lane on February 15 with the latest installment of its Cultural Pop-Up Series featuring traditional games, such as go-kart racing, at the 49th Annual Agriculture & Food Fair on St. Croix. The activity will be held at Auntie Janice's Rowhouse during fair hours.

For one day only, participants can enjoy games of marbles, jump rope, hopscotch, tops, jax, warri, and go-kart racing on homemade karts.

According to Valrica Bryson, PhD, DVICE director, the idea of bringing traditional games to the Agriculture Fair this year is an effort to recapture favorite local pastimes and introducing them to the younger generations.

“We are losing many aspects of our culture,” she said. “Children are more occupied with electronic games today, and that’s not necessarily a bad thing, but we have lost so much.”

“We want children to get back outside and learn to interact and play with each other,” she added.

The design and construction of the Go Karts were a collaboration between the V.I. Department of Education, the University of the Virgin Islands Reichhold Center for the Arts, and St. Thomas Frenchtown artisan and culture bearer, Jimmy Magras.

Reichhold Center’s Denise Humphrey said each kart took up to three days to build—a total of six were constructed (three for St. Croix and three for St. Thomas)—and are considered a modern take on Go Karts of yesteryear.

“We needed to modernize the design for safety purposes,” she explained.

The contemporary Go Karts, made from plywood, 2x4s, and metal:

- are steered with a rope, rather than the feet
- use a braking system that is controlled by the feet, rather than a mechanism in the seating area

A four-color guide to the weekend’s traditional games will be made available to participants. The eight-page booklet includes a glossary of terms, diagrams on how to play the games, a brief history of each game, and a detailed diagram on how to build a Go Kart.

Participation in the Cultural Pop-Up activity is free.

The next installment of DVICE’s Cultural Pop-Up Series will take place March 22 at UVI’s Afternoon on the Green on St. Thomas.