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## St. Croix Business & Professional Gala Honors Local Achievers

**Celebrating local excellence, the gala honored leaders including Kisha Christian and Mafi Hamed, with performances and a vibrant atmosphere at Grapetree Bay Hotel**

Business / **Published On May 19, 2024 07:30 AM /**

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**L2r: Kisha Christian of Neighborhood Pharmacy, Businesswoman of the Year; Stephanie Karalius, VP of Quality Food, Business of the Year; Marcy Heistan for Fly the Whale, New Business of the Year; Mafi Hamed of the Market, Businessman of the Year. By. DEAR PRODUCTIONS, V.I. CONSORTIUM**

On Saturday evening, the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce hosted its prestigious 2024 Business & Professional Gala at the Grapetree Bay Hotel, located on the scenic east end of St. Croix. The gala was a highlight of the business community's calendar, attracting a wide array of prominent figures,

along with their families and colleagues.

The event kicked off with vibrant live music and social mingling, complemented by a cash bar and a sponsor-provided specialty drink area offering free signature beverages. Attendees also enjoyed a selection of gourmet hors d'oeuvres.

During his address, Akeel St. Jean, the chairman of the board of directors for the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in fueling the economy and maintaining the U.S. Virgin Islands' low unemployment rate.

The award ceremony unfolded swiftly, recognizing excellence across six different categories. The winners included Kisha Christian of Neighborhood Pharmacy as Businesswoman of the Year; a representative from Quality Food accepting the Business of the Year award; Marcy Heistan from Fly the Whale taking home the New Business of the Year award; and Mafi Hamed of the Market earning the title of Businessman of the Year. Additionally, the Women's Coalition of St. Croix was celebrated as Nonprofit of the Year, and IB Designs clinched the Small Business of the Year award.

The evening concluded with a captivating performance by Kaiso Caribbean Entertainment, featuring fire dancing and other entertainment, ensuring the night ended on a high note. The event not only celebrated the achievements of local businesses but also reinforced the community spirit and entrepreneurial drive within St. Croix.

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