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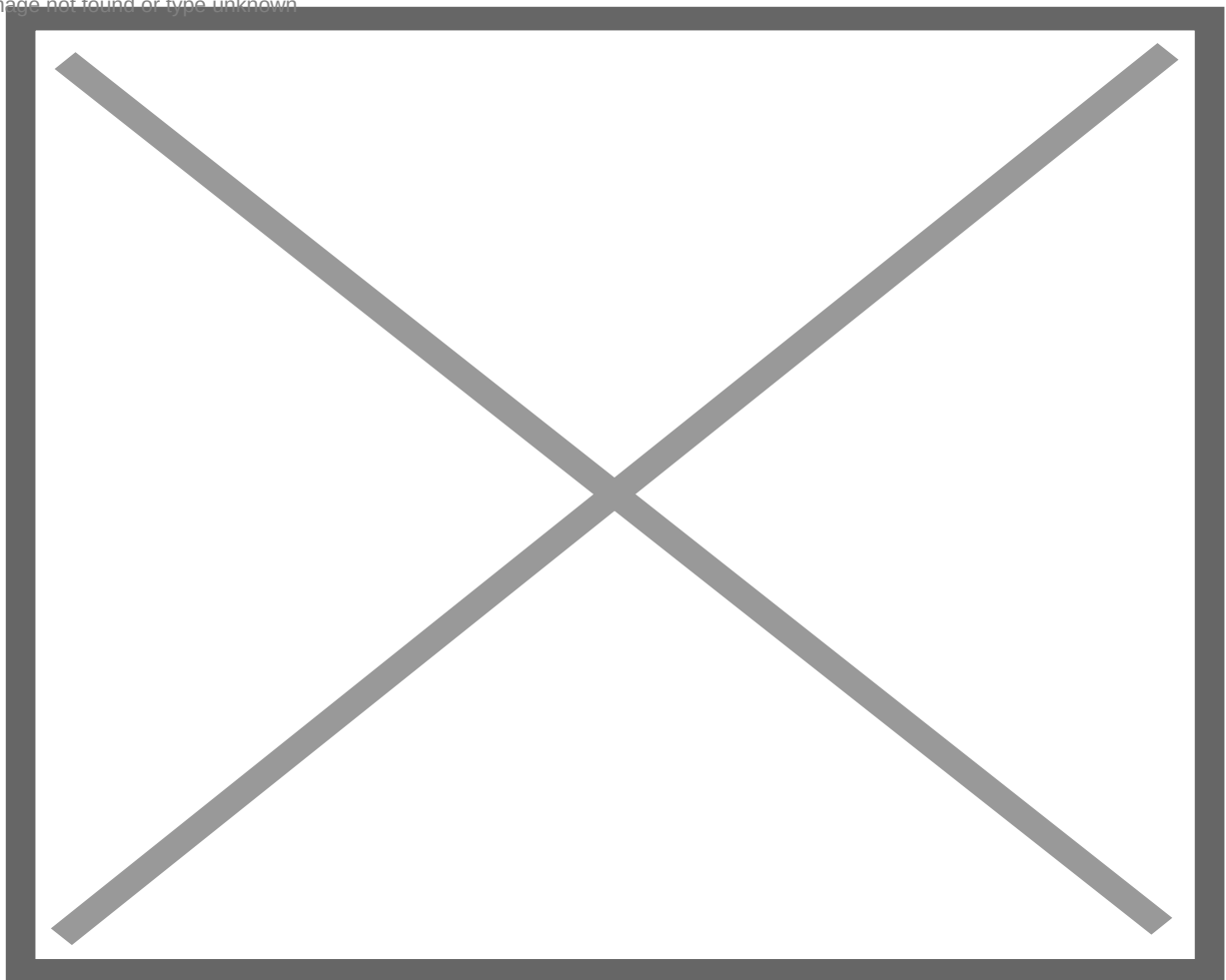
Rain Fails to Dampen the 40th Annual Women's Race in Frederiksted, with Men Joining the Run in Support

The 40th edition of the Women's Race in Frederiksted overcomes weather challenges with over 100 participants supporting the fight against domestic violence and sexual assault

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Participants lineup for the 40th annual Women Race in Frederiksted, St. Croix. By. TSEHAI ALFRED, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Despite hovering gray clouds and wet asphalt, roughly 100 women and men of all ages walked, ran or jogged the streets of Frederiksted on Sunday for the 40th Annual Women's Coalition of St. Croix Women Race.

While the annual event usually only allows women to participate in the two-mile race, men and boys are welcomed to join in every ten years. Despite the mixed cohort, this year's race was won by a woman—Briget Klein, the champion of the 2023 and 2022 race. Dominic Puglieuese, the first man to cross the finish line, captured second place overall. The top ten runners in both the male and female categories included children as young as under 10 years old, and many parents walked and ran the race while pushing their babies in strollers. Supporters of the Women's Coalition who currently live outside of the territory also participated virtually, and were honored for their placements.

For the 40th anniversary of the Women's Coalition's largest fundraiser, over 200 people registered for both the virtual and in-person options. Despite a smaller number gathered at the Frederiksted Pier on Sunday, organizers and supporters remained pleased with the relatively large turnout given the gloomy weather.

"If the rain don't stop carnival, it's not going to stop the work we do in this community. I think the people that showed up today showed up to talk about how important this work is that help victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault," said Dr. Clema S. Lewis, executive director of the Women's Coalition. Lewis said the large turnout, in light of the weather, was a "testimony" to the impact the Women's Coalition's work has on the community, as well as to the grit and determination of survivors and victims, as some participate in the race themselves.

Jennifer Matarangas-King, vice president of public relations and governmental affairs at Viya—the event's largest sponsor—echoed the sentiment, showing appreciation for the services provided by the Women's Coalition, such as the 24/7, 365 day crisis center which the event helps fund. "People came out, whether it was raining or not people were going to come out and support, and so that's the love and I think that's because they have done so much for the community and saved so many lives and saved so many families," Matarangas-King said.

In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Women's race honored long-time participants including June Taylor, who has run the race for 38 consecutive years.

Lewis recalled the original name of the race while reflecting on the continued community support of the event and the organization. "The race was titled 'For Her' so all these people are running 'for her', that's huge."