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## Sarai Lawrence, De'Aneysha Hill, T'Jari Moses Crowned St. John Carnival Royalty at 2024 Princess, Prince & Jr. Miss Pageant

The 2024 pageant showcases local talent and cultural pride, with contestants presenting their unique talents and heritage

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**I2r: De'Aneysha Hill, T'Jari Moses, De'Aneysha Hill, and Sarai Lawrence. By. DIVISION OF FESTIVALS**

On Sunday, St. John's youngest pageant contestants took to the stage to vie for the titles of Princess, Prince and Junior Miss.

With four of the five contestants hailing from the Julius E. Sprauve school, the first of the evening to introduce himself to the audience was T’Jari Moses, the sole contestant for Prince this year. T’Jari listed mathematics as his favorite subjects, and basketball and football his preferred sports.

Meanwhile, Alaysha Pepen and Sarai Lawrence, competitors for the Princess crown, received thunderous applause during their introductions to the audience. Alaysha listed dance and the cheer squad as her hobbies, and declared herself a lover of maths as well. Meanwhile, Sarai described herself as “filled with unlimited energy and intelligence,” as she endeared herself to the audience.?

Jr. Miss contestant Jeandelis Santana embodied the character of a flight attendant welcoming audience members to the 70th St. John Celebration, while the only non-Sprauve student De’Aneysha Hill proudly represented her alma mater, the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, where she is a junior.?

After the initial presentation speeches, it was time for the sportswear segment, which began with the stage crew bringing several pieces of gymnastics equipment on stage. Princess contestant #1 Alaysha Pepen, clad in a sparkly blue and white unitard, performed an energetic routine which included one-handed somersaults, backflips, and a stint on the balance beam. Meanwhile, Sarai Lawrence showcased dance as a sport, presenting a demonstration of Flamenco and Salsa dancing, initially dressed in a voluminous red flamenco skirt with gold-trimmed ruffles, and topped with a sparkly halter top. Halfway through the routine, Sarai discarded the three-tiered skirt for a sleek tassel ice skater costume, finishing her sportswear routine in her second outfit.

The Junior Miss contestants appeared in “Caribbean Flower” costumes, with Jeandelis Santana striding onto the stage elevated on stilts. With her depiction of the Bayahibe Rose, Jeandelis paid homage to her Dominican Republic heritage. The green satin-clad elongated legs ended in a skirt of green leaves at the waist, and Jeandelis's entire top half was shrouded in the wide pink petals of the striking flower, which lowered to reveal her gold blouse as the rose’s center. The stilt-walker strode confidently across the stage, reminding the audience of the importance of ecological conservation.?

Meanwhile, De’Aneysha Hill sought to impress judges and audience alike with her depiction of a flower that’s become synonymous with island life across the Caribbean – the bougainvillea. As she began her portrayal, the stage darkened to emphasize the intricate costume’s many glowing lights. De’Aneysha's backpiece was a fiery orange representation of the bougainvillea’s colorful bracts, with the edges outline with lights. Her head and the costume’s skirt was also adorned in lights, their varying colors representing the wide variety of colors that the bougainvillea is known for. When the lights came back up, her non-illuminated dress, the color of the ornamental plant’s branches and twigs, became visible.

Next, it was time for the next Princess segment, where the contestants each picked their favorite storybook cartoon character to portray. Alaysha chose to depict her own character in a production called “Alaysha’s Corner.” She played the part of a market vendor struggling to entice people to purchase the vegetables she had to offer. The frustrated vendor decided to do a dance to promote the benefits of healthy eating, and the story ended in her getting discovered and given a golden ticket to attend a talent show in Atlanta.

Meanwhile, Sarai decided to localize a classic Dr. Seuss tale, portraying herself as the lesser-known sister of the infamous Grinch – Grinesha – who decided to target St. John’s Celebration instead of Christmas. However, things take an unexpected turn when Grinesha partakes in some of the food and associated festivities of the celebration. After an internal struggle,

Grinesha eventually succumbs to the spirit of Carnival, singing, dancing, and restoring the festivities she initially tried to ruin.?

Instead of portraying characters from a storybook, the older Junior Miss contestants instead became tourism ambassadors for their island, making presentations about the sights, sounds, and smells of St. John, along with delivering information about the island's history and culture. Contestant #1, Jeandelis Santanta, dedicated her presentation to some of whom she deemed the prominent female boat captains out of St. John - Sarah Boynes-Jackson and Diane Griffith among them.

Junior Miss Contestant #2, De' Aneysha Hill, chose to focus her ambassadorial presentation on the sights and sounds St. John has to offer - the vast national park, a vibrant festival village, and some of the best beaches in the world. Both the Princess and Junior Miss contestants then participated in the evening wear segment.

Following a sea of gorgeous gowns, it was time for one of the most nerve-wracking segments of any pageant – the question and answer. The evening's question to the Princess contestants was what one thing they learned from being in the pageant. Alaysha said that she learned how to conquer her fear, while Sarai said that she learned that she can do anything she puts her mind to.?

The Junior Miss contestants were asked their thoughts on whether it was important to pursue education after a high school diploma. According to Jeandelis, a college degree is important because it gives the holder access to better employment opportunities. De' Aneysha, however, argued that a high school diploma was sufficient to start a business or secure a well-paying job.?

At the end of the evening, Sarai Lawrence and De' Aneysha Hill were crowned St. John Princess and Junior Miss 2024 respectively, joining T'Jari Moses as this year's Carnival royalty.