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## St. John Carnival Village Opens, Honoring Gwenda Dagou and Kicking Off 70th Festivities

Hosted by former Carnival Queen Shatik Stevens, the opening ceremony featured tributes and performances

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Host Shatik Stevens at St. John's 2024 Carnival Village opening. Seated l-r: Deputy Commissioner RoseAnne Farrington, Gov. Albert Bryan Jr., Lt. Gov. Tregenza Roach.

Hosted by Shatik Stevens, who was crowned St. John Queen during the 40th Carnival celebration in 1994, the St. John Village Opening signaled the start of the 70th year of festivities on the island.

This year, the village honors Gwenda Dagou. Introduced by her granddaughter Linique as a hard worker who has instilled that quality in all her descendants, Ms. Dagou briefly thanked the St. John Festival committee, as well as the Division of Festivals, for the recognition with “such an

extreme title.” A longtime vendor and booth proprietor for the Celebration, the evening’s honoree also thanked her many patrons over the years, and exhorted them to stay safe while eating, drinking, and enjoying the festivities.?

In his remarks, Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte disclosed that he intended to take up her recommendation for the lobster in butter sauce that evening, while Senator Angel Bolques Jr. spoke about Ms. Dagou’s long history of feeding the people of St. John. “I’ve been tasting Ms. Gwen hand since what, Sprauve school? I’ve been tasting her hand for a long time, and I’m coming for some more again.”?

Mr. Bolques sang her praises as one who has always been free with advice and guidance for young St. Johnians. “She has always been a support system in a sense of being strong,” he said, praising her “tough love” approach to mentorship.

Following the official Village opening, attendees were treated to a scintillating concert beginning with Trinidadian soca star Nadia Batson, and featuring performances by Blind Earz, Klimaxx, and Star Martin, before Adam O brought the curtains down to close the show.

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