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Twelve Virgin Islanders Honored for Contributions Across Generations at St. Croix Ceremony

In a tribute to local heroes, Virgin Islands leaders celebrated community icons from diverse fields, unveiling road names and perma plaques to honor their lasting impact on the territory

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A dozen Virgin Islanders, all credited for diverse contributions to the territory, received formal recognition during a Perma Plaque and Road Naming Ceremony in St. Croix on Friday.

“The twelve individuals recognized today represent the diversity of our community and who we are as a people,” remarked Senate President Novelle Francis. “It is hard to encapsulate their collective contribution to the history of the Virgin Islands.”

Among the special honorees was Brigadier General Leayle Gerard Galiber, who passed away on October 28th at the age of 92. During Friday's ceremony, Senator Francis recalled Mr. Galiber's address to the Legislature when Bill 35-0116 was first introduced in his honor. Brigadier General Galiber was "instrumental in guiding the organization of the Virgin Islands National Guard and serving as the acting adjutant general," stated Sen. Francis.

The Board of Elections and Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes were also honored. Senator Angel Bolques Jr., in his introductory remarks, noted that the Board's "60 years of commitment, integrity, and service have kept our elections fair, secure, and trusted by our community." Similarly, Ms. Fawkes's work to "transparency, implement innovative voting technologies and engage in community outreach" has brought "new energy" to the Election System of the Virgin Islands.

Alecia Wells, chair of the board of directors of the Election System of the Virgin Islands agreed, describing Ms. Fawkes as someone who "doesn't take any nonsense, as you can tell by what's going on in the newspaper." Ms. Wells may have been alluding to what is currently taking place in the courts, as Ms. Fawkes [sues the Board](#) over their decision to include a candidate on the gubernatorial ballot that she had previously disqualified.

Dr. Olaf Hendricks was also celebrated for his "tireless years of remarkable and invaluable contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the field of psychiatry." Addressing the 35th Legislature on Friday, he reminisced on the "professional luck that I've had to have been able to serve in this community."

Another medical doctor, Dr. Ralph deChabert, was honored for his "outstanding contributions in the medical field to the people of the Virgin Islands", including naming the Juan F Louis Hospital's baby unit in honor of Ralph and Mildred deChabert. Dr. deChabert is credited for delivering 15,000 babies on the island of St. Croix. "Who knows how many great people have come out of that who have also contributed to the community," mused his daughter, Dr. Daniela deChabert.

Also recognized on Friday was Miguel "DJ Poppy Pops" Santos Jr, described as an "unmistakable voice and pulse of our territory in the area of entertainment, music and broadcasting" by Senator Bolques, sponsor of Bill 35-0242 which moved to commend Mr. Santos for his contributions to music. "Through your work, you've shared the essence of Saint Croix and the Virgin Islands with the world, allowing others to experience the richness of our culture," said Senator Bolques. Mr. Santos kept his remarks brief, thanking the community for "accepting me throughout my career."

The names of several of Friday's honorees will adorn various roadways in St. Croix. Derick Gabriel, Department of Public Works commissioner shared that "it's always an honor to bestow names on our facilities and roads as it means that for generations to come, we'll continue to honor their lives dedicated to serving our community."

They include Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke, whose name will be affixed to Lieutenant Melbourne Drive on Route 669, a road that was part of Mr. Clarke's daily commute.

Dr. Rafael Garcia was also honored, with a portion of Queen Mary Highway heading north to bear his name. "His passion and love for healthier territory were well grounded and the belief that everyone is entitled to quality health care," said Senator Samuel Carrion, who sponsored the original legislation.

Senator Carrion also spoke to the formal recognition of Pastor Hector Gonzales. “It is fitting for this Legislature to honor Pastor Gonzalez, whose many years of devoted service and outstanding leadership as a pastor and citizen of the community has contributed greatly to the island of St. Croix,” he beamed. Route 681 Hess Road in Christiansted, St. Croix will be named in his honor.

Also recognized was Euclyn “Pede” Prentice, Jr., posthumously, for his accomplishments in the horse racing industry. “Purse earnings exceeded \$3 million, a testament to his skill, dedication and unwavering passion for the sport,” shared Andrea Mshila, Chief of Staff for Senator Javan James, who addressed the ceremony on his behalf. The public roadway that runs through the John F. Kennedy Housing Community ending at the Breezeway Intersection will now bear Mr. Prentice’s name.

Finally, Valmy Thomas was recognized posthumously for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community and will have Soboetker Lane and West Lane named in his memory, according to the provisions of a bill introduced in the 34th Legislature.

Perma plaques for Willard John and Vaughn Benjamin are expected to be bestowed at a later date.