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Community Rallies at Relay for Life 2025 to Honor Survivors and Raise Funds in St Croix

Hundreds gathered at the St. Croix Educational Complex Track & Field facility for a weekend of unity, remembrance, and celebration, with performances, tributes, and a \$250,000 fundraising goal that has already surpassed \$162,000.

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Relay for Life attendees participate in the Parade of Teams, kicking off a weekend of remembrance, celebration, and fundraising in support of cancer survivors. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The spirit of unity, remembrance, and hope filled the air at the St. Croix Educational Complex Track & Field facility on May 24 and 25, where participants gathered for

the 2025 Relay for Life. The two-day event, a hallmark of community-driven cancer awareness and fundraising, featured the Parade of Teams, a gathering of family and friends, the Survivor's Dinner, and the poignant Candlelight (Luminary) Ceremony.

Organizers have set an ambitious goal of raising \$250,000 by December. As of Saturday morning, the event had already raised \$162,817, up slightly from the \$162,066 reported the previous evening. Fundraising remains open throughout the year.

Leading the charge in donations are three top-earning teams: Team Sunshine in first place, followed by Hope Brigade STX 2 in second, and the Virgin Islands Legislature in third.



Team Machuchal won first place in the Best Decorated Tent Competition. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

This year's event also celebrated the creativity and spirit of participants through its tent decoration competition. The award for Best Decorated Tent went to Team Machuchal, followed by Friedenstal Moravian Church in second place and Team Marsha in third.

Aymee Santana, the 2025 lead coordinator, oversaw the large-scale effort for the first time. Santana noted that while 39 teams had initially registered, three had to withdraw due to circumstances beyond the organizers' control. Still, she remains optimistic for next year.

"Next year is our 25th anniversary. We definitely want it to be bigger and better. So we're hoping that the teams—those that couldn't this year—are actually getting ready, or start getting ready from now," she said.

This year marks 24 years of Relay for Life being observed locally, while nationally, the event celebrates its 40th year.



Relay for Life 2025, St. Croix (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

Santana also highlighted the range of entertainment that energized the weekend. Performances included local talents such as DJ Big Daddy Chucho and 411, Unlimited Sounds, and Nikki Brooks. The Sparkle Lite Twirlers participated in the opening ceremony, while the We Deh Ya Cultural Group brought cultural flair to the gathering.

The event also welcomed two special volunteers from Antigua, members of a group called “Breast Friends Women in Touch.” Both women, breast cancer survivors and members of the group established in 1998, traveled to St. Croix to support the event and learn from the experience as they prepare to launch a similar initiative in Antigua.

The event honored Urylee Burke, a founding member who has supported Relay for Life in St. Croix since its inception. Burke was announced as the main honoree of this year’s event, and moving forward, organizers plan to introduce the “Urylee Burke Award” beginning next year. Though she was present, Burke opted not to receive the award publicly after learning about the surprise ahead of time.

Santana expressed deep gratitude to the many people and organizations who made the event possible. “Of course, we want to thank the community, right? We want to thank all our sponsors, our volunteers, our committee... the committee is comprised of volunteers also. We want to thank family and friends, survivors—I mean basically everybody.”

With fundraising ongoing and momentum building, organizers are encouraging early preparations for the 25th anniversary in 2026. “We want over 50-something teams next year. Definitely,” Santana said.