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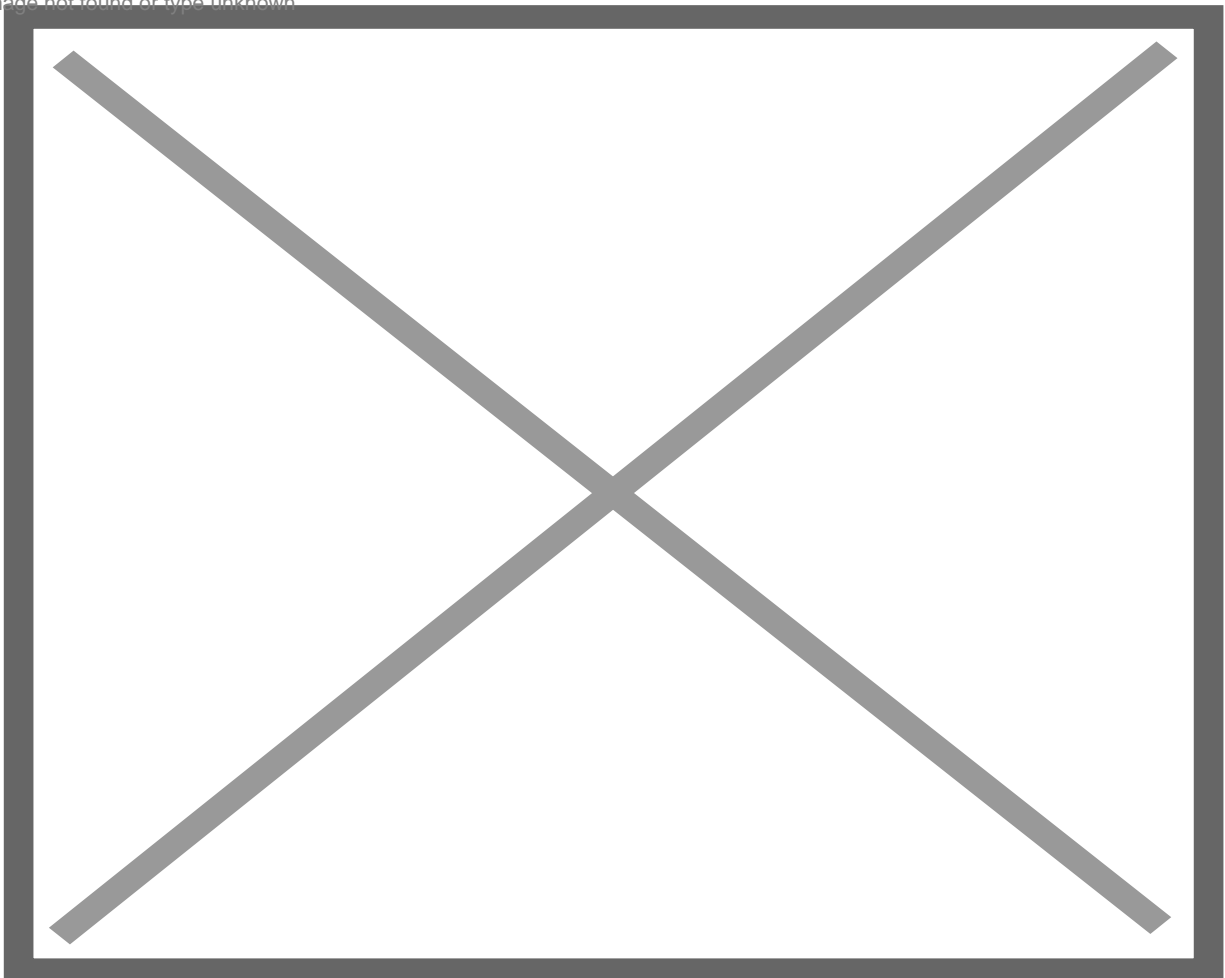
## Claudine Scatliffe-Daniels Honored at 2025 Village Opening; Speeches Urge Peace, Remembrance, and Cultural Pride

Officials praised Claudine Scatliffe-Daniels as a community pillar and tied her honor to the festival's theme of living history; speeches invoked Rams Head, self-emancipation, and the need to honor freedom through togetherness and action.

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Public officials and pageant royalty take part in the ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the official opening of the St. John Festival Village on June 29, 2025. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. JOHN — The 2025 St. John Festival Village officially opened Sunday evening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a heartfelt tribute to Claudine Scatliffe-Daniels, a longtime fixture of the celebration whose Booth 8 has become a staple of the annual festivities. This year, the village has been named “Claudine's Culinary Craft Shop” in her honor.

Director of Festivals Ian Turnbull of the Department of Tourism said the naming was especially fitting given the 2025 festival theme: History and Culture Comes Alive for St. John’s Celebration. Turnbull shared that Ms. Daniels typically contacts his office as early as January to inquire about plans for the summer festival. “Honoring the stalwart of Booth 8 was only fitting,” he said, urging attendees to “heavily patronize Ms. Daniels through the season.”

Before receiving her plaque, Daniels paused the celebration to ask the crowd for a moment of silence in remembrance of the recent violent incidents that have disturbed the island’s normally peaceful environment. She then wished everyone a safe Carnival season before accepting the honor.

Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett reminded those gathered of the deeper significance of the St. John Celebration, which coincides with both Emancipation Day and the Fourth of July. Quoting the phrase “freedom isn’t free,” she noted the unique history of the Virgin Islands as one of only two places in the Western Hemisphere where enslaved Africans emancipated themselves.

“As we celebrate the freedom of our ancestors... and also being a part of the United States... let us ensure that we are acting in a way that respects the freedoms that we have,” said Plaskett. She invoked the memory of those who chose death at Rams Head over a return to enslavement, declaring, “We have to honor Rams Head by doing the things that our ancestors would expect... that is living to our potential, that's loving each other, that's acting with unity.”

Senate President Milton Potter echoed her sentiments, calling on residents to “use this time to deepen our bonds as a community, to share our stories, and to celebrate all that makes Love City so special, a beacon of culture and joy.”

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. also addressed the crowd, reflecting on the uncertainty and challenges of the present moment both locally and globally. He expressed gratitude that Virgin Islanders had created “three opportunities to engage in joyful activities” across the year. Though the week was focused on celebration, he encouraged the community to view the moment as one to reconnect and reaffirm their cultural identity. “This is a chance for us to appreciate the culture that surrounds us... a time to reconnect with our families and friends... and understand that no matter what happens, the sun is going to come up tomorrow,” Bryan said.

As for Claudine Scatliffe-Daniels, Governor Bryan called her “the ideal person to honor this year,” noting that she “truly exemplifies what it is to be a beautiful person inside and out.”

With speeches complete, officials joined Ms. Daniels to cut the ribbon, officially marking the opening of the 2025 St. John Festival Village.