

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Benny Demus, Coaches Corbett, Georgia Francis Among Six Honored at Perma Plaque Ceremony

The Legislature formally commended six Virgin Islanders for shaping the territory through music, athletics, advocacy, and service, unveiling new road names, honoring legacies posthumously, and presenting the Official Key to the Virgin Islands.

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Six exemplary Virgin Islanders were formally commended for their contributions to the territory at a Friday morning Perma Plaque Ceremony on St. Thomas.

“Through music, mentorship, enterprise, advocacy and service, you've lifted others, nurtured our youth, preserved cherished traditions, and advanced our collective story,”

Senator Milton Potter said in his opening remarks.

"You've not only enriched the lives of many, you have inspired us all to see what is possible when commitment meets compassion and when service is done with love," he noted.

First to receive his commemorative plaque was James Sasso, [honored through resolution number 1916](#). "Few roles in our society require the level of strength and compassion and emotional discipline and professional demands like the industry that Mr. James Sasso works in every single day," said Senator Angel Bolques Jr. "This is not a simple career. It is a service in its purest form," he added.

Mr. Sasso admitted that he was "very humbled to receive this award." He explained that when he began working in the funeral business, "the service that I was seeing at the time was not good enough for the people of the Virgin Islands where I call home." Mr. Sasso found it necessary to "step it up," a decision that prompted the Legislature to honor him.

Mryon Corbett's posthumous honor was next. Former senator Donna Frett-Gregory commented that Coach Corbett consistently went beyond the expected, advocating for young people and opening doors that might otherwise have remained closed through his time with us."

Mr. Corbett's brother, Arthur "Gutu" Solomon also received his own perma plaque on Friday. A well-loved basketball coach, Ms. Frett-Gregory noted that "his impact extended beyond athletics as he helped shape disciplined, confident and motivated young leaders."

"I am proud to stand here today as a sponsor of this legislation to name the Charlotte Amalie High School gymnasium after these two brothers. I can't think of any other people who deserve this [more] than those two individuals," she said.

The CAHS gymnasium is not the only physical infrastructure that will be named in honor of an exceptional Virgin Islander.

Derek Gabriel, commissioner of the Department of Public Works, reminded listeners that "it is very important to continue to honor our rich tradition and culture by naming roads, by naming buildings, by naming anything that we have here in the Virgin Islands after our Virgin Islanders."

Act 8940 renames the road from the entrance of Estate Anna's Retreat beginning at the traffic light at Four Winds Plaza, continuing to the Alvin McBean Ballpark, currently named "Flamboyant Avenue" to the "Ronald Alphonso "Slimo" Blyden Circle."

According to Ms. Frett-Gregory, Mr. Blyden's contributions to the territory were "both deep and enduring." He is being honored posthumously.

"Ronald "Slimo" Blyden was far more than a resident of Old Tutu. He was a beacon of community spirit, leadership and dedication, his constant presence, generosity and willingness to serve earned him the affectionate and well-deserved title of Mayor of Old Tutu," she said.

The next honor was for Georgia Francis. Act 8968 commends Ms. Francis for her community service and contributions to the Youth of the Virgin Islands in the area of music. It renames the portion of Rumer Drive beginning at Mandela Circle and continuing to the bottom of Dorothy “Dotsy” Lockhart-Elskoe Drive, the “Georgia Francis Drive.”

Senator Dwayne DeGraff was the sponsor of that legislation. “Impact on the young generation is what Ms. Francis is about,” he said. He spoke to the honoree directly, commending the “great things that you have done in music.”

“Her work has inspired our children to dream boldly,” added Senator Kenneth Gittens.

“I always knew I love teaching, so I knew that that was going to be my craft,” said Ms. Francis in remarks that charted her experience as a music educator. “I try to provide my students with some of the same experiences that was given to me as a student,” she explained. “I’ve taught 1000s, okay, and I’m still doing so,” she beamed.”

“I want to say thank you to the 36th legislature for bestowing this honor upon me for doing what I love to do,” she stated.

The final honoree was Bryan “Benny Demus” Boulai. He received the Official Key to the Virgin Islands. Senator Ray Fonseca outlined Mr. Boulai’s wide-ranging achievements as a DJ, entertainer, and manager, as well as his contributions to the community. “This bill honors him for all his achievements,” he said in summary.

Mr. Boulai spoke in glowing terms about the power of community and friendship, and how they have both contributed to his success. He lamented the time in his life when he turned to a “dark side,” but noted that several individuals in his life helped him to change. Mr. Boulai wants to do the same for others.

All honorees were presented with their official plaques, and signs for newly named roads were unveiled as well. “Their names will now live on in our record books, our roads, our facilities, and their legacy will be remembered for generations to come,” Kurell Sheridan, the Legislature’s executive director said.