

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Chapter of St. Kitts-Nevis Association Honors Locals, Celebrates 31 Years Of Independence

VIC News / **Published On September 29, 2014 08:50 AM /**

Cynthia Graham **September 29, 2014**



Highlighting three areas of progress the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis has experienced over the last three decades—including building the nation's youth, advancements in local industry, and the resilience of its citizens—the Honorable Jacinth Henry-Martin, St. Kitts-Nevis Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative to the OAS, was on St. Croix to present the keynote address at the Annual Anniversary Banquet of the St. Kitts-Nevis United Association, St. Croix Chapter, held on Saturday night at the Reading Rainbow Great Hall in Upper Love.

The evening's theme, "A Nation on the Move: Celebrating Our Progress," was representative of the strides St. Kitts and Nevis has made in its 31-year history as an

independent nation, which was commemorated on September 19.

Before her presentation, Ambassador Henry-Martin, who describes herself as 'an artist at heart,' recited an original poem titled "Bush Medicine" that paid homage to the persons who stand as authorities on the medicinal properties of the various herbs found



learn from the elders and preserve this

Daren "Bogle" Stevens honored at

Saturday's banquet.

In her keynote, Henry-Martin made note that the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, "first breath was taken on the idyllic shores of the island of Nevis." She went on to say that through the Federation's love of education and commitment to embracing technology, "we are looking to give next to the world its next Steve Jobs." Jobs, who died in 2011, was the founder/CEO of tech giant, Apple, Inc.

Henry-Martin further highlighted the industriousness of the Federation's people, stating "as small as we are, I think we get it."

"No one is going to grant St. Kitts-Nevis any favors," she added. "In this world, if our Federation wants to attain lofty goals, we have to work for the results we want."

With that, she noted that the nation's agriculture sector has seen significant increase.

"[There has been] productivity and unprecedented out put in a variety of crops available, making full use of the soil bounty with which God has favored our islands," she said. "And the ready availability of local meat has returned to highly commendable statistical rates." She also pointed out that while many of the nation's traditional fruits and vegetables were almost completely wiped out by "the passage of successive hurricanes," items such as sour sop, guava, mango and carambola fruit are again thriving.

The Ambassador also said she believes "Kittians and Nevisians are among the most resilient people on earth." She added, "with faith in God and the determination which can overcome the challenges that confront us, we will continue to be a nation on the move."

Saturday's festivities, attended by about 150 people, also recognized three St. Croix residents, two of whom are originally from St. Kitts-Nevis, for their contributions to both the St. Croix and St. Kitts-Nevis communities.

Retired nurse, Monica Phillip, originally of Nevis, dedicated "37 years of her life caring for others," according to a biography printed in the program, at hospitals in St. Kitts, Nevis



L to

R: Mike Foster, Hon. Ambassador Jacinth Henry-Martin and Julyn Chapman

Public figure Daren "Bogle" Stevens, who also served as the night's master of ceremonies, was honored for his contributions in the fields of media and entertainment, as well as for community and youth activism throughout the Caribbean. In a brief acceptance speech, Stevens passionately put forth his vision of having a stronger youth presence within the Association.

"What I want to see in the organization, and I'm not going to give up until it happens, is youth involved in the St. Kitts and Nevis Association, St. Croix Chapter," he said. "We cannot continue as business as usual. Life is not promised to anyone, so therefore we must bring those young people in to carry on the organization."



King Meeko performs

Longtime St. Croix resident Captain Michael “Mike” Foster, aviation vet and founder of regional carrier Coastal Air, was honored for his contributions to Nevis. Since launching Coastal Air in 1982, Foster has transported more than 100,000 passengers between St. Croix and Nevis. He first began flying to Nevis in 1975 with Bohlke as the chief pilot of Caribbean Airways. Foster also provides generous financial contributions to many developments and activities on the island, including sponsoring one contestant each year for the annual Nevis queen competition. Mr. Foster also sponsored two round-trip tickets to St. Kitts-Nevis as part of Saturday's raffle prize package.

Each honoree received an award of recognition from the Association and a certificate of commendation from the office of Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen.

The gathering was punctuated with entertainment from legendary Nevis calypsonian King Meeko, who performed “Nevis Nice,” a tune extolling the virtues of his native land. The audience was also treated to traditional folk dances by the Nevis Masquerades.

When asked what she envisions for St. Kitts-Nevis for the next 31 years, Ambassador Henry-Martin said empowerment will come through the education of the people of the Federation.

"That is a vision so that we can be in charge of our own destiny," she said. "I think that the capacitation of the minds of the people speaks volumes to the government's efforts and the efforts of the people to ensure that leadership comes from Kittians and Nevisians. We want to be in charge of ensuring that the roles, and development of our

people and our country are spearheaded by the hands-on application of the very people who have a stake in our islands."

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