

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix's Top Teachers Celebrated, 2015 Teacher Of The Year Announced

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Ernice Gilbert **October 27, 2015**



ST. CROIX – Seventeen St. Croix public school teachers were lauded and lavishly bestowed gifts from their peers, school administrators and the Insular Superintendent's Office for being chosen as their respective school's teacher of the year during the district's 2015 Teacher of the Year Awards Ceremony held Saturday, October 24 at Government House Ballroom in Christiansted.

But the most exciting moment of the evening came when Monique Mari Motta was named St. Croix District 2015 Teacher of the Year during the awards ceremony attended by family members, dignitaries and well-wishers, according to a Department of Education (DOE) press release issued on Monday.

Motta was selected out of six finalists following an extensive evaluation process, which included interviews and classroom observations.

Motta, a 27-year employee of DOE, is a special education teacher and the modified instruction department chairperson at John H. Woodson Jr. High School. A 1979 graduate of St. Croix Central High School, Motta received a B.A. degree in social work from Morgan State University. Her career was advanced in the Department of Education special services division when she sought specialized educational services for her daughter. Former Woodson Assistant Principal Natasha O'Halloran-Smith said Ms. Motta instructs students who are severely cognitively delayed and would often ensure that her students are included in campus social events.



Teacher of the Year winner with finalists.

Taking to the podium after being named St. Croix District 2015 Teacher of the Year, a proud Motta revealed that a colleague texted her earlier, saying, “Monique, it had been a long time coming. Prepare some notes; I don’t think anybody else will be getting this because it’s from the heart.”

Motta went on to tell the audience, “So often the students that I teach are not the ones that you are going to read about their academic accomplishments – you are not going to read about their successes in life. But for many of my students, we have to teach more than communication. We teach them life skills and independence.”

Superintendent Colleen Williams in greeting and congratulating the nominees, said, “We are here to shower you with accolades and to further encourage you to continue performing at your best. The wonderful part is the effect you have on others. People out there will be happy to know they are been taught from a teacher like you.”

Finalists in the competition for St. Croix’s top teacher were Nicole Girard, Alexander Henderson Elementary; Chaselle McConnell, St. Croix Educational Complex; Steve Bullock, Elena L. Christian Jr. High; Wendy Wynter, Lew Muckle Elementary and Maurecia Llanos of the Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School.

Other school nominees for St. Croix District 2015 Teacher of the Year were Paulette Drew, Alfredo Andrews Elementary; Clifford Powell, Alternative Education; Karen McIntosh-Bruce, Arthur A. Richards Jr. High; Anton Doos, Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC); Julice Joseph, St. Croix Central High School; Meridith Herman, Charles H. Emanuel Elementary; Dr. Phyllis Ryan, Claude O. Markoe Elementary; Daniel Francois, Eulalie Rivera Elementary; Zulma Torres, Evelyn Williams Elementary; Ashley Phillip, Juanita Gardine Elementary and Joanie Phillip of Ricardo Richards Elementary School.

Along with Superintendent Williams, Deputy Superintendents Vaughn Hewitt and Faith Dane George, who served as mistress of ceremonies, expressed congratulatory remarks to the honorees. Members of the V.I. Board of Education Terrence T. Joseph and Winona Hendricks also came out to greet the outstanding St. Croix teachers and to present tokens of appreciation.

St. Croix Education Complex Jazz Ensemble directed by Kevre Hendricks performed favorite selections for the honorees, while a sumptuous dinner was prepared and served by students of CTEC's Culinary Arts Instructor Anton Doos.

St. Croix District Professional Development Program Manager E. Xiomara Herman was the organizer of the event.