

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Cancryn Students To Represent Territory With Handcrafted Ornaments For Holiday Display In Washington, D.C.

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ST. THOMAS -- Seventh and 8th Grade art students at Addelita Cancryn Jr. High School have been selected by the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts (VICA) to represent the U.S. Virgin Islands with hand-crafted Christmas tree ornaments for the 2015 America Celebrates: Ornaments from Across the USA display at President's Park at the White House in Washington, D.C., a press release the Department of Education issued Friday has made known.

The ornament display honors the holiday season and celebrates the National Christmas Tree Lighting, an annual event presented by the National Park Foundation and the National Park Service. The 93rd annual National Christmas Tree Lighting will be held on Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 5 p.m.

According to a press release issued by the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America's national parks, Addelita Cancryn students under the tutelage of K. Leba Ola-Niyi will join artists from each U.S. state, territory, and the District of Columbia in designing ornaments inspired by America's national parks and their programs. The project pays tribute to the upcoming National Park Service Centennial in 2016.

"It is an honor to be selected because twelve students will have the opportunity to display their creativity, culture and works at President's Park in Washington, D.C.," said Cancryn School Art Teacher, K. Leba Ola-Niyi. "We are excited to be a part of the America Celebrates display because we are representing the people of the Virgin Islands on the national level and we are paying tribute to the upcoming National Park Service Centennial."

Praising the Cancryn students, the National Park Foundation's press release states: "As residents of the Caribbean, they experience and celebrate Christmas in a unique way; warm tropical breezes, palm trees, soft sand and the beautiful sounds of Christmas carols played to a calypso beat or on steel pans. Inspiration to design their Christmas tree ornaments came from their African culture and tropical environment. With support from VICA students sketched, drew, colored, and/or painted on matt boards or on the ornament themselves. The materials used included pencils, colored pencils, markers, acrylic paints, matt boards and plastic ball ornaments. Ornament designs depicted their heritage, their islands, local symbols, local flora and fauna both on land and under the sea."

"Art can be an incredible way for people to connect with national parks and we're thrilled to carry on the time-honored tradition of debuting ornaments from all over the country," said Will Shafroth, president and CEO of the National Park Foundation. "We're honored to have Addelita Cancryn Junior High School students represent the U. S. Virgin Islands in this year's America Celebrates display."

As one of America's oldest holiday traditions, the National Christmas Tree Lighting began on Christmas Eve in 1923, when President Calvin Coolidge lit a Christmas tree in front of 3,000 spectators on the Ellipse in President's Park. Since 1923, each succeeding president has carried on the tradition. In addition to the America Celebrates display, President's Park hosts a variety of family-oriented holiday attractions, including nightly holiday performances and model train displays.

Feature Image: (Standing Left to right) Lilian Alexander, Sabrina Veras, Seline Gracchus, Amy Lawrence, Genesis Portes, Yaneiri Sanchez, Lesha Dupigny.

Image Credit: The Virgin Islands Department of Education.