

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Farm To School Month Opens In Territory With Claude O. Markoe Melonmania

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ST. CROIX -- Students, faculty and staff along with members of the St. Croix School District Leadership Team delighted in fresh, local fruits and vegetables served as part of Claude O. Markoe Elementary School's lunch menu on Wednesday, October 5.

The offering of the foods are in line with Governor Kenneth E. Mapp's push for the inclusion of more locally sourced foods in the territory's School Lunch Program. The special luncheon, which was punctuated by Melonmania, where students received servings of regular and lemon crush watermelons grown by farmers on St. Croix, kicked off the 2016 celebration of National Farm to School Month in the territory.

The Department of Education has partnered with the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture (VIDOA) to promote Farm to School Month. Education Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum, Ph.D. and Agriculture Commissioner Carlos Robles were on hand at Claude O. Markoe to serve students and enjoy the bounty from the local farms. “We are pleased that as part of the local celebration of National Farm to School Month, students enrolled in the territory’s school lunch program are enjoying fresh watermelons, courtesy of local farmers on St. Croix,” Commissioner McCollum said. “This special treat will be extended to all public school students in both the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John districts every Wednesday as we celebrate this month.”

In addition to fresh watermelons, locally produced peppers, cucumbers, pumpkins and lettuce accompanied the stewed beef, fish fillet and brown rice served to students and guests at Claude O. Markoe on Wednesday. “The Farm to School initiative strengthens the bond the Virgin Islands’ community has with local producers of fresh and quality foods, thereby affecting positively the dynamics of cost in specific and the economy in general,” Commissioners McCollum and Robles noted in a joint statement released earlier in the week. “Farm to School will also increase students’ interest in gardening at home and at school, opening doors for careers in agriculture.”

Claude O. Markoe School Principal Anastasie Jackson, Ph.D., along with Assistant Principal Durema Moorehead was appreciative that her school presented the new, local twist in the school lunch menu. “I am overjoyed that everyone is here to highlight this important activity that will also shed some light on the positive things that are occurring at our school,” Dr. Jackson said. “Everyone will realize the hard work and dedication that our food school service workers put in to ensure that our students receive fresh and healthy meals daily, and Ms. Moorehead and I are very proud of them.”

Other guests partaking in Melonmania at Claude O. Markoe included Education Assistant Commissioner Charmaine Hobson, District Director of Curriculum and Instruction Maria Encarnacion and staff, District Director of Child Nutrition Leah Christian, V.I. Board of Education Chairperson Peggy Moorehead, and President of the 31st Legislature Neville James.

“New Breed Farm supplied cucumbers and seasoning peppers, Tropics Hydroponics Farm supplied the lettuce, and Raw Sunrise Farm provided pumpkins and watermelons,” noted Sommer Sibilly-Brown, Department of Education program manager and Farm to School liaison.

For more information on Farm to School Month, please contact Sommer Sibilly-Brown at (340) 773-1095, ext. 7056

Feature Image: Education Commissioner Dr. Sharon McCollum stresses the importance of eating vegetables, especially if they are locally grown. (Credit: V.I. Department of Education)