

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I. Talent On Display At U.V.I.'s World Food Day Event

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ST. CROIX -- The University of the Virgin Islands's Albert A. Sheen Campus was overflowing with local talent on Sunday, as U.V.I. celebrated World Food Day, aimed at educating students in the territory from fourth through ninth grade on the challenges of poverty and world hunger first hand. The set events, which began on Friday with a hunger banquet, was organized by U.V.I.'s Cooperative Extension Service (C.E.S.)

World Food Day is celebrated October 16 of every year in honor of the date of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945, a U.N. agency whose focus is to defeat hunger around the world.

An opening ceremony saw speeches from local officials, among them President of the 31st Legislature, Neville James, and Stephanie Williams, St. Croix administrator, all of whom spoke in some capacity on the importance of the territory pivoting to growing its own produce for self-sustenance, and the various roles being played by different institutions to bring said vision to life.

Among the institutions is the Department of Agriculture, which, among other efforts, has partnered with the Department of Education for the Farm to School program. The idea is to overtime see the territory's schools relying mostly on local produce for meals, and the effort so far is said to be working, though Carlos Robles, D.O.A. commissioner, said at the event yesterday that a lot of work was needed to change the mindset of students who he said were struggling to shift to locally grown food.

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Yesterday's event was a well-organized production, although turnout appeared to have been low. On the university's grounds were multiple vendors, some who sold eats prepared on site, and farmers, who sold produce as well as prepared products such as honey.

Inside the university, multiple competitions were ongoing simultaneously with the outside activities. There was a 4-H Chef Competition, Coconut Blast Competition, and an event dubbed "Chicken Production". C.E.S. also organized a tour of the Agriculture Experiment Station.

Outside, the Rising Stars Steel Orchestra serenaded attendees with enchanting Caribbean rhythms, including old hits like High Mas from David Rudder, as well as newer songs from Trinidad Soca legend Machel Montano and others. Also taking place on the outside was a martial arts demonstration. That event attracted many people, who cheered the children on.

"World Food Day is a time that we assess food production, distribution, and nutritional value," said Associate Director of CES Kofi Boateng recently. "We hope that you will join us as we assess the effects of climatic changes on the production and distribution of food. Come out and observe this great occasion as we try to feed the less fortunate people of the world."

U.V.I. accepted non-perishable food items for the day's food drive, all of which were to be donated to local food banks.