

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Kendra Vicars Named St. Thomas-St. John District Teacher Of The Year

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Department of Education, St. Thomas-St. John District, named Kendra Vicars, a Speech and AP English Language and Composition teacher at Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, as its 2017 Teacher of the Year at a selection luncheon held Sunday, October 16 at the Marriott Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Beach Resort on St. Thomas.

Ms. Vicars and four other Teacher of the Year finalists were lauded by education officials, educators, family and friends at the ceremony themed, "Teachers are a work of heart." During her acceptance speech, the newly minted 2017 Teacher of the Year tearfully expressed her gratitude and praised her fellow nominees. "I'd like to first formally

congratulate the Teacher of the Year nominees,” Ms. Vicars began, “all four of you are fine examples of incredible educators who have made a world of difference within our schools and our communities. I am happy to sit among you today and celebrate our accomplishments, for we are all the Teacher of the Year.”

She continued, “I feel honored and humbled to accept this title today, and honored to join such a remarkable and distinguished group of educators who represent the best the Virgin Islands has to offer. I am humbled because there are so many outstanding, passionate, and dedicated educators out there who challenge, inspire and support their students every day.”

While acknowledging the tireless work of teachers, Ms. Vicars also highlighted the many challenges educators face. “Effective teachers are often lonely; you often wonder, ‘Am I the only one that is working this hard or am I the only one that’s planning?’ We are often dehydrated; we are thirsty for likes and love because effective teachers aren’t loved immediately. We are often fatigued, because in addition to teaching, we also have to explain to students why we have objectives to accomplish every day,” she said.

However, Ms. Vicars encouraged teachers to take heart because, while rewards are not always instantaneous, she said, they come “at 4 a.m. when your phone rings and it’s a past student in college who has completed his or her thirty-page dissertation. There is no greater cure than hearing a soft voice saying, ‘thank you’.”

The celebratory occasion also featured pre-recorded video presentations highlighting the accomplishments of the nominees. Two Tones, a group comprised of students from Charlotte Amalie and Ivanna Eudora Kean high schools under the direction of Dionne Donadelle, territorial director of music programs, provided musical entertainment. Congratulatory remarks were given by Department of Education Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum, Ph.D., Dionne Wells-Hedrington, St. Thomas-St. John Insular Superintendent; Avery Lewis, president of AFT Local 1825; Mary Moorehead, chairperson of the Virgin Islands Board of Education, and from many well-wishers in the community and the Department of Education.

The other 2017 St. Thomas-St. John District Teacher of the Year finalists included Arlene Ryan-Smith of Joseph Sibilly Elementary School, Elaine Jacobs of Charlotte Amalie High School, Francine Emmanuel of E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary School, and Leniese Mercer of Ulla F. Muller Elementary School. Nominations for the District Teacher of the Year award are made by school principals or a school selection committee. Nominees are observed in their classrooms and are also required to submit an application packet, complete with a professional biography, community involvement, teaching philosophy, impressions on current events and the teaching profession, as well as an acceptance message, should they be selected as the awardee. An independent selection panel, comprised of retired teachers, district coordinators and community members review the applications and conduct classroom observations in order to select a winner.

Later this year, Ms. Vicars will go on to compete against the District Teacher of the Year from the St. Croix District, at which time one teacher will be selected to represent the Territory as State Teacher of the Year.