

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Chamber Of Commerce Annual Meeting Set For Tuesday

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ST. CROIX -- The St. Croix Chamber of Commerce is inviting members and the general public to its annual breakfast meeting at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday at The Palms at Pelican Cove, a release the organization issued Wednesday has made known.

According to Chairperson Kimberly McCollum, the executive board will present the Chamber's goals for 2017 and its vision for the future. "We will tell our members about last year's accomplishments, share with them how we will facilitate and support community leadership to create economic prosperity on St. Croix, and, most importantly, ask for their input on issues that affect their bottom lines," Ms. McCollum said.

This year's guest speakers will be Wayne Huddleston, senior area manager at the St. Croix for the U.S. Small Business Administration (S.B.A.), and Leon Hughes, CXO and founder of St. Croix-based software development company NEARiX LLC, according to the release.

Mr. Huddleston is responsible for collaborating with an extensive network of public and private sector partners to help small businesses start, grow and succeed throughout the territory. Prior to joining the SBA in 2013, Mr. Huddleston was director of the Small Business Development Center (S.B.D.C.) in Fort Worth, Texas, where he led a team dedicated to serving a community of over 1.8 million citizens by providing counseling, education and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and business owners throughout the area.

In December, Mr. Huddleston was instrumental in the signing of a strategic alliance between The U.S. SBA and the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce to foster the creation of small businesses and economic development on St. Croix, according to the release.

Mr. Hughes's software solutions team earned NEARiX the Chamber's prestigious Business of the Year Award 2015. Mr. Hughes is a graduate of the S.B.A.'s "Emerging Leaders" Class 2016, an executive level training initiative that assists entrepreneurs in underserved communities accelerate the growth of their small businesses. Mr. Hughes also works with the University of the Virgin Islands to mentor students through internships with NEARiX, which sponsors the annual "UVI Hackathon," a competitive event during which students are given a very specific time period to collaborate on usable software projects that will benefit Virgin Islanders.

The St. Croix Chamber of Commerce officially commenced the representation of industrial, agricultural, and commercial interests on St. Croix in 1924. Advocacy on behalf of the business community is a cornerstone of the Chamber's mission, Ms. McCollum said. The organization's priority action areas are economic development, energy, territorial budget and taxation, tourism, public safety, infrastructure, education, workforce development, environment, healthcare, employment law reform, and elections

The annual meeting is open to the public. Tickets are \$25 for members in good standing as of January 31, and \$35 for non-members. Early registration for the meeting at www.stxchamber.org is highly recommended and will guarantee a seat for the breakfast meeting. However, registration will be available at the door. For more information contact Executive Director Fred Handleman at 340.718.1435