

The Virgin Islands Consortium

2017 VI State Teacher Celebrated At Government House Ceremony

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Department of Education honored its 2017 VI State Teacher of the Year Dinah Browne, a St. Croix Central High School English teacher, at a special ceremony held Friday, January 27, 2017 at Government House on St. Croix, D.O.E. announced Monday.

The mid-morning affair was attended by Governor Kenneth E. Mapp, who praised Browne and the territory's educators for their commitment to students and the profession of teaching. Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett, who also attended the event, congratulated the honoree and lauded the tireless work of teachers, acknowledging the dedication that goes into educating and nurturing students.

Education Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum, Ph.D., offered an inspirational message to Ms. Browne, stating, in part, "Teaching is a ministry. Go forth and be a light in our students' lives." Commissioner McCollum's message was punctuated by her presentation to Ms. Browne of an enlarged, framed copy of the 2012 Time Magazine cover featuring Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, with Malala's notable quote: "No scientist has produced a more powerful weapon...a teacher is the power of a nation."

Monique Motta, the 2016 VI State Teacher of the Year, was on hand to pass the baton and congratulate her colleague. "It's your time to receive the utmost appreciation for your accomplishments," she told Ms. Browne. "I wish you a successful, eventful and exciting year."

During her remarks, Ms. Browne accepted the State Teacher role on behalf of the territory's teachers and offered heartfelt thanks.

"Although I stand before you as the teacher selected, we are here today to ultimately honor teachers because the ultimate organization for social change is the school, and the greatest instrument of change is the teacher," she said. "Schools and teachers have always been the spark for human progress because knowledge and learning have created the world in which we live." Ms. Browne further highlighted the lasting impact that teachers have on the community.

"Teachers will touch the lives of multiple generations. Long after my students have left my classroom, I know that I will continue to impact the lives of their brothers and sisters, and of their children and grandchildren," she said. "Note well that when one elects to become a teacher, one also elects to become a nurturer and a molder and shaper of our present and our future."

Following her remarks, Ms. Browne was showered with gifts and words of appreciation from guests. As part of her year-long appointment as VI State Teacher, Ms. Browne is expected to attend an induction ceremony for the nation's state teachers in Dallas, Texas in February, as well as a week-long celebration in Washington, DC during Teacher Week in May. She will also participate in various local activities to represent the territory's teachers.

Other dignitaries in attendance included Assistant Commissioner Chermaine Hobson; Terrance Joseph of the Virgin Islands Board of Education; St. Croix District Superintendent Colleen Mae Williams, along with Deputy Superintendents Vaughn Hewitt and Faith Dane George; St. Thomas-St. John Superintendent Dionne Wells-Hedrington, along with Deputy Superintendents Michael Harrigan and Racquel Berry-Benjamin. Teachers, Central High School administrators, and Education Department directors and coordinators were also on hand to congratulate Ms. Browne. Yvette McMahon-Arnold served as Mistress of Ceremonies. Music students from the St. Croix Central High School and the St. Croix Educational Complex High School provided musical entertainment.

A host of local businesses generously donated gifts as part of the 2017 VI State Teacher celebration package.