

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Employer Support Of The Guard And Reserve Honors Supportive Businesses In St. Thomas

Business / **Published On August 07, 2017 12:33 PM /**

Staff **August 07, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve recognized supportive military employers during its annual Award and Recognition Dinner held July 15, according to a recently issued release.

This year the committee presented 11 awards to individuals and public and private businesses who touched the lives of guardsmen at the Marriot Frenchman's Reef on St. Thomas. Awards given included the Seven Seals, Above and Beyond, Pro Patria, and certificates for Virgin Islands nominees and semifinalists of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

The Seven Seals Award, the broadest and most inclusive award given by ESGR on the state and national level, was presented to five businesses and individuals. Four of the awardees significantly impacted the lives of members of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 786th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. The unit was known as the "Band of Brothers" while they were deployed in 2016. Dr. Jerry Smith of Therapy Works VI, Sheldon Turnbull of DaVybe Radio Station, Taiesa Lashley and Staff Sgt. Simbi Coward all earned accolades from individual guardsmen because of care packages sent, or significant medical or personal support received.

Receiving the Above and Beyond Award was the Virgin Islands National Park Service (NPS). This award recognizes employers who have gone above and beyond the legal requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. NPS is committed to honoring and serving the military men and women, and shows that support through its employment practices and employee benefits and recognition, according to the release.

Janice Williams, chief of administration for NPS on St. John thanked the employee who inspired VINPS.

"I would like to draw attention to the employee that recommended us. He was a hardworking employee. He was very positive and brought great energy to the National Park, and that encouraged us to look out for other military employees," she said.

"Mr. Cosme Harrison is no longer working with us, because he got his dream job, but nonetheless he left a positive impression on the park. Thank you for your positive impression on all of us, and I pray that every guardsman, every military member, makes a difference like you did at the National Park," Ms. Williams added.

The committee's most distinguished local award, the Pro Patria Award, was presented to the Virgin Islands Port Authority. VIPA demonstrated its commitment to support the National Guard and Reserve when it collaborated with the VI-ESGR to permanently hang a 6 feet by 3 feet sign at both Virgin Islands airports to honor all veterans and all who serve, according to the release.

Presentations to the Virgin Islands nominees for the 2017 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award culminated the event. This year eight Virgin Islands employers were nominated for the annual Freedom Award, of which three were semi-finalists. The Virgin Islands Freedom Award nominees were Virgin Islands National Guard, Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital, Home Depot Store 8622, Virgin Islands Port Authority - St. Thomas, and Virgin Islands National Park – St. John; semi-finalists were the Virgin Islands Department of Health, the Virgin Islands Public Employees Relations Board and Comprehensive Security Concepts, Inc. – St. Thomas.

Comprehensive Security Concepts, Inc.'s owner, Richard Reovan, expressed why he hires service members.

"One of the reasons for this award is because I found out that we had two soldiers, one of them was with me during the time I was in the Guard; he was living in his car. Our soldiers are having problems finding a job, so I always prefer to give it to a guardsman, whether retired from the Guard or even to those just coming in," Mr. Reovan said.

“Right now, I have two individuals that just signed up, just finished high school on their way to basic training. They haven’t even started yet, but I gave them something to do,” he added. “That’s what we need to do, give these young men a chance so that they can succeed, so they can move forward. But they need our help, so we need to continue to hire these guys so that they can continue to move forward in what they want to do in life.”

Recognizing employers is an important element of ESGR’s mission to promote a cooperative culture of employer support for National Guard and Reserve service members, according to the release. Virgin Islands Senator Dwayne DeGraff, guest speaker of the event and a former guardsman, expressed why the award and recognition dinner was important.

“Employers support of Guard and Reserve men is a great honor. To have this organization put this event together to honor the employers and outstanding supervisors, I get goosebumps from it, it’s a powerful thing having been in those positions,” Mr. DeGraff said.

“Most employers take it as just another award. This is a great honor by a great organization to support great individuals -- outstanding individuals who put their life on the line. It’s about the individuals, our guardsmen and reservists, and the employers who have chosen to support them.”

Feature Image: Virgin Islands 2017 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award nominees and semifinalists attending the Virgin Islands Committee for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve annual St. Thomas Awards and Recognition Dinner held July 15. (l. to r.) Chief Warrant Officer Andrew Schmitt, Lt. Col. Sally Petty, Everett Hansen, Richard Reovan, Sharene Gumbs, Cresida Reid, Janice Williams, Russell Robinson III, Sheldon Turnbull, Staff Sgt. Simbi Coward, Janelle Peets, and Senator Dwayne DeGraff.