

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Kean Students Create Ornaments With 'Caribbean Flare' To Adorn National Christmas Tree

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ST. THOMAS -- Students from the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School are spreading holiday cheer by creating ornaments from locally sourced and repurposed materials, the Department of Education has announced. The ornaments will be on display at the National Christmas Tree Lighting on November 28 in Washington, D.C.

According to the release, the students envisioned "Christmas with a Caribbean Flare" as they highlighted local and global expressions of Virgin Islands' culture with their designs.

According to the National Park Foundation, 56 schools representing each U.S. state, territory and the District of Columbia were selected to craft unique ornaments for the

2018 National Christmas Tree experience. The handcrafted ornaments will adorn 56 smaller trees that surround the National Christmas Tree as part of the America Celebrates display.

Kean students found innovative ways to create ornaments with culture and sustainability in mind under the direction of art teacher, Claudine Daniel. Students were encouraged to reuse various household items to create the stunning decorations, D.O.E. said.

"We tried to repurpose different things, such as toilet paper rolls, CDs, or coffee stirrers," Daniel said.

"My ornament has an 'Around the World' theme, but in the middle, it has the Virgin Islands symbol, which resembles us," said ninth grader, Constance Phipps. "Around [the ornament are the colors of] blue and silver because the V.I. symbols are blue and I wanted to emphasize that."

Angela Benjamin, a senior, sought to bring more awareness to the natural beauty of the Virgin Islands with her design.

"My ornament is supposed to symbolize local culture," she said. "I made the palm tree because you usually see them on the beaches. The blue symbolizes the ocean and the shells represent the beaches. I wanted to make something local so that when people see the ornament, they'll know that it's from [our] island."

Sharing her school pride, senior Chelsea Fontanel created a miniature wreath using the school's uniform colors.

"My ornament represents Ivanna Eudora Kean [High School]," she said. "I used the school's [uniform] material to make it and it's supposed to be in the form of a bow. I used the color pink because it's in the uniform."

A highlight of the National Christmas Tree experience, the America Celebrates display, allows thousands of Americans to celebrate the holidays in an immersive and unique way. The project, funded by the National Park Foundation, aims to celebrate student artistry from across the country.