

The Virgin Islands Consortium

6-Year-Old St. Croix Native Wins USA Gymnastics Level 3 Maryland State Championship

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Malia Grigsby, a 6-year-old native of St. Croix on Sunday won the USA Gymnastics Level 3 Maryland State Championship, turning a passion into a possible career while bringing abounding pride and joy to her parents, Kenya Newton-Grigsby and Marcellous Grigsby.

Malia won after scoring a total of 37.275 out of 40.000 possible points. She placed 1st overall within her age group of 19 other girls and won the gold medal and the title of Maryland State Champion for her age bracket.

"It was surreal, I was extremely proud of her," said Mrs. Grigsby, recalling the moment her daughter won the championship. "There's no gymnastics on St. Croix, so she had to

work really, really hard when she came up here."

Malia started showing interest in gymnastics at the tender age of two. Her mother and father took notice of their daughter's talent and enrolled her in the St. Croix Caribbean Dance School from age 2 until she turned 5.

The family made an important decision in 2017 that would change the course of their lives. Mrs. Grigsby had gotten pregnant around the time the Zika virus outbreak [was greatly impacting the territory](#). The Department of Health even confirmed that [a baby was born with the virus](#) in May 2017. Fearing for the safety of their unborn child, Mrs. Grigsby, her husband and Malia moved to Maryland.

For Malia, though the environment she knew all her life had changed, her passion did not. Once in Maryland, she joined a recreational gymnastics class. The program's leaders immediately recognized her talent and asked Mrs. Grigsby and her husband whether they were interested in having Malia join the program's USA Gymnastics Level 3 competitive team. Malia tried out and made the team.

"She would practice for up to 12 hours a week, which we found to be a bit much for a then-5-year-old kindergartner, but she loved and enjoyed every minute of it," Mrs. Grigsby said. "She looked forward to practice and would come home eager to show us what she learned."

During her first competition at age 6, Malia won bronze with a score of 31.900 overall out of 40.000 possible points, but she was disappointed that she didn't win gold, Ms. Grigsby said. Determined, Malia continued to practice and her skills and scores got better with every meet that she competed in, but the youngster would not relent, or find satisfaction in any other placement but 1st.

On March 31, Malia participated in the biggest competition of her age bracket, the USA Gymnastics Level 3 Maryland State Championships, and brought home not bronze or silver, but gold, to become the Maryland State Champion, a title she was so eager to win.

"As her parents we are extremely proud of the hard work and dedication that she displays at such a young age," Mrs. Grigsby said. "With that kind of ambition and drive, we know that her future will be bright and she will succeed at anything she puts her young mind to."