

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix's CJM Hummingbirds Power Stars Steel Orchestra Beats 29 Teams To Win Gold In Virginia PanFest Competition

VIC News / **Published On May 14, 2019 10:35 AM /**

Staff **May 14, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- Virgin Islanders have done it again -- traveling outside the territory to bring home a championship in yet another event. That was the case with the CJM Hummingbirds Power Stars Steel Orchestra, hailing from St. Croix, which did not only win gold, but also the "Best Vibe" award, along with the coveted overall champions trophy at the annual Virginia PanFest, held on Saturday.

They won gold twice, along with the overall champions trophy and the Best Vibe award over 29 bands. The USVI group was the only band from the Caribbean region.

It was not the first time that Virgin Islanders participated in the annual steel pan festival, held in Virginia Beach. In the past, St. Croix participants have taken home silver and even gold, but last week's competition was the first time the USVI took home the overall champions trophy, even while facing some obstacles: Their performances were to include Moko Jumbies, but bad weather forced the event to be moved indoors, which eliminated the ability of the Moko Jumbies to participate, said Michael Belgrave, band director.

CJM Hummingbirds Power Stars Steel Orchestra consists of two bands: CJM Hummingbirds (the school-based group) and CJM Power Stars (the community band), according to Ena Edward-Descartes, Steel Orchestra Committee chairperson. The CJM Hummingbirds participated in the Private Studio category and won gold. The Power Stars participated in the category of community bands and also won gold.



The combined bands had such high spirits and team support, demonstrating true Virgin Islands positive vibes that they walked away with the Best Vibes award, Mrs. Edward-Descartes said. "We got a participation trophy and yes we walked away with the coveted title of overall champion trophy. This victory demonstrates that all of the trials, disappointments, hard work, tears and sweat did not go in vain," she said.

The prize money was small, only \$1,000. However, the prize was not the motivation behind the team's participation, Mrs. Edward-Descartes said. "To us it was not even so much about the money but more so the ability to prove to the world that the youth of the Virgin Islands, namely St. Croix, has positive things happening and we can make a

difference in our society through positive vibes and music," she said.

Asked about the importance of the victory, Mrs. Edward-Descartes said the win demonstrates that hard work and persistency pays off. "We worked hard, we practiced hard, we put our best foot forward, we stayed focused and we most importantly stuck together as a family through thick and thin, thus we claimed the victory," she said.

"We would like to take this time to thank all of our community partners and sponsors. Your support made this trip possible and we will forever be grateful," Mrs. Edward-Descartes added. Virgin Islanders living in Virginia also came out to support the team, and Mrs. Edward-Descartes also expressed gratitude for their presence. "They provided even more positive vibes to help us shine," she said.

While she's not sure whether the team will participate in next year's event -- it depends in great part of the availability of funds -- if the opportunity presents itself, Mrs. Edward-Descartes said, the USVI will be again represented at the panfest in 2020. Raising the funds to attend has been a yearly struggle, and Mrs. Edward-Descartes is hoping for stronger community support for next year's event.