

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Over 300 Participate In 35th Annual Women Race

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ST. CROIX – The annual Women Race hosted by the Women's Coalition of St. Croix (W.C.S.C.) and organized by V.I. Pace Runners, was held in Frederiksted on Sunday. Over 300 participants -- comprised of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and supporters alike -- took to the streets in a show of solidarity.

The two-mile run in the streets of Frederiksted was a festive affair which began with lively warm up sessions by two of St. Croix's "Zumba Queens", Diana Asad and Roxanne Serrano. The Guardians of Culture Moko Jumbies and the Lew Muckle Elementary School Steel Pan Orchestra also performed. DJ Myron provided music throughout the event.

Only women and girls may enter the race, but supporters of all genders are welcome. There were many men on the sidelines, along with other supporters, cheering the runners on.



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Nellie

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Know Why?

Know Why?

Know Why?

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The race serves as a continual reminder that domestic violence still affects the Virgin Islands. Annual participants include survivors, who exhibit remarkable strength and show that there is hope after trauma. The survivors proudly demonstrate growth and healing from the trauma of abusive relationships, sexual assault and other crimes, according to W.C.S.C. Anyone suffering from domestic violence or other abusive relationships can reach out to W.C.S.C. for help, encouragement, and support.

The overall winners of this year's race were Michelle Smith, who came in first place with a time of 11:17, Bridget Klein in second place with a time of 11:31, and Mikaela Smith in third place with a time of 11:54. Coach Keith Smith of the St. Croix Track Club, who trains his daughters, Michelle and Mikaela, expressed that the St. Croix Track Club has been supporting W.C.S.C. for over ten years, and that the event is an opportunity to empower his female runners and give them a chance to run for something that is worthwhile. His wife, Mirielle Smith, also participated in the run.



Mother and daughter team, Delriese Marshall and Victoria Hamilton, were in attendance. Delriese is a survivor and shared that it was an inspiration to participate. She has been supporting the race for eight years. Victoria said that the event is for a good cause, and spoke highly of her mom. "She's my hero, even though she does not know it," Victoria said. Another mother and daughter team participating for the first time this year was Nakia and London Francis.

Clema Lewis, executive director W.C.S.C. expressed gratitude to the St. Croix community for supporting the organization's efforts for the last 34 years to bring awareness to the cause. "This event means a lot to victims and survivors in our community. Year after year, we've created a safe space for women and girls to participate in healthy activity with encouragement from the community," Ms. Lewis said in a recently issued release. "It's also important that survivors have this opportunity to see and know that the community supports them in healing."

Lisa Harris-Moorehead, a W.C.S.C. board member and supporter for more than 20 years, worked with domestic violence organizations in the states before coming to St. Croix. She explained that as an attorney, she has seen a lot of domestic violence, and expressed that the Women's Coalition is needed in the community. "When W.C.S.C. first started, there was a lot of animosity because it was known as an organization that hated men, and now we have many men that work with us and recognize that there is a need for it," she said.



Senator Javon James, who was present with his family, is a prime example. Ms. Lewis shared that Mr. James has been a W.C.S.C. supporter long before becoming a member of the 33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands. Mr. James explained that he has been supporting W.C.S.C. since 2017. “I love doing community outreach and when I worked in the 31st and 32nd Legislatures, whenever I got the opportunity to go out and volunteer, I did just that. I try to remain consistent in everything that I do,” he said.

The first lady of the Virgin Islands, Yolanda Bryan, was in great spirits as she participated in the run with Kisha Christian and the Neighborhood Pharmacy team. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, who was on island for an event involving Bill and Hilary Clinton, took the time to make her way to Frederiksted to lend her support.

According to statistics [provided by the Women's Coalition](#), the nonprofit assisted 332 survivors of domestic violence from January to June of 2018, and 426 sexual assault survivors in 2017. They house many victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other abusive situations.



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Abelle Bakr, president of the New Horizon Women's Democratic Club, presented a check to W.C.S.C. New Horizon has been supporting W.C.S.C. since 2003. Many of their members, including the first lady, participated in the run.

All proceeds benefit W.C.S.C. advocacy programs and services for people impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. For more information, contact the Women's Coalition at (340) 773-9272.

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