

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI Olympic Sprinter Laverne Jones Talks To Students On Sports, Life

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ST. CROIX -- As part of her quest to give back to the community that nurtured her, four-time V.I. Olympic star sprinter Laverne Jones shared her story of overcoming the odds to become a successful Olympic athlete in presentations to students at John H. Woodson and Arthur A. Richards junior high schools on Monday, the Department of Education has announced.

Ms. Jones, a native of Frederiksted, visited the schools while in the Territory attending the V.I. Track & Field Championships on St. Thomas in preparation for her fifth Olympic appearance in Tokyo in 2020.

During the hour-long presentations at the schools, Ms. Jones, who is the most Olympiad athlete from the Virgin Islands and who holds the title as the sixth fastest woman in the history of the 60-meter dash, offered students insights on being successful on and off the field, as well as the importance of having character, integrity and discipline, D.O.E. said.

Ms. Jones attended Claude O. Markoe Elementary School and Arthur Richards Junior High School while growing up on St. Croix. William Cofeill, Department of Education director of Sports & Athletics, said her visit instilled a great deal of pride in students.

"It's fantastic when successful athletes come back and speak to our students," he said. "Especially at Arthur Richards, the students took pride in knowing someone from their school and from Frederiksted is an Olympic star."

Ms. Jones's visit to the schools was made possible through the Virgin Islands Department of Education and Leon Hunt, athlete commission president of the V.I. Olympic Committee. Mr. Hunt said Jones's inspirational messages cast her as the "unofficial keynote speaker" during the current graduation season.

"It's rare for her to come to the Virgin Islands and she wanted to give back to the community by meeting with students and sharing her story," Mr. Hunt said.

Ms. Jones has previously competed in Olympics held in Athens, Beijing, London and Rio, and is expected to retire from Track & Field following the 2020 Summer Games.