

The Virgin Islands Consortium

62 Women-Owned Businesses Showcase Offerings at Inaugural 'Women In Business VI and Caribbean' Event on St. Croix

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Collage of women in business at the WIBVIC event on Wed. March 31, 2021 at the Agricultural Fair Grounds on St. Croix. By. WIBVIC

ST. CROIX — The Agricultural Fair Grounds in Estate Lower Love on Wednesday was transformed into a platform where some sixty-two women-owned businesses in the territory showcased their diverse offerings. From jewelry, to clothing, food and more, the choices were vast and brought to the fore women's entrepreneurial tenacity in the USVI.

The business fair was organized by Women In Business VI & Caribbean (WIBVIC), a private Facebook group that supports and promotes female entrepreneurs in the Virgin Islands and Caribbean. The group was founded in April 2020 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, said Founder Ruth King-Chaseau, when most storefront business owners had no choice but to temporarily close their operations and transition to online.

Mrs. King-Chaseau said WIBVIC has seen tremendous growth with over 2,000 women-owned businesses joining the Facebook group since its founding. These entrepreneurs are based in the U.S. Virgin Islands (around 500-strong so far), the wider Caribbean and the U.S. mainland. She said the key benchmarks of the group arose out of the need to survive the pandemic, and include the following:

- Pivoting a business from brick/mortar to digital
- Promote, marketing, and support online and offline
- Forum for discussion on current-day issues, such as health, business development, faith, and family
- Expertise training in subjects such as Funnel Builders, Sales pages, Reconstructing or creating your website, Digital Designer Training

The event on Wednesday was dubbed a mini fair by some, and included a fashion show, a dance performance by Music in Motion, and remarks from Dept. of Agriculture Commissioner Positive Nelson, who said women are "super humans." Guest Speaker Sen. Genevieve Whitaker gave a woman-empowering speech. Covid-19 protocols, including mask-wearing, were in place as well.

Vendors at the event the Consortium spoke with expressed satisfaction and said they were looking forward to the next business showcase from WIBVIC, which Mrs. King-Chaseau said has a tentative date of July.

Judith Lewis Figueroa, a business owner who showcased her offerings Wednesday, praised the effort, extolled the founder and said she looked forward to future events.

"If you own a startup, or you're someone who has been in business for decades — whether you provide a service online or offline or you're someone who likes to shop, WIBVIC is here for you," said Mrs. King-Chaseau.

The group provides two types of membership, a free tier and premium tier, which costs \$9.99 a month and includes many benefits, as seen on the group's [website](#).