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St. Croix Students’ Summer-Reading Success Celebrated at Reading Challenge Fun Day

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Juanita Gardine K-8 School Assistant Principal Anna Gordon, center, is joined by students, Education and Government House officials, to accept a trophy and school supplies, as the school was recognized for reading the most books in the 2019 Governor's Summer Reading Challenge. By. The Dept. of Education.

ST. CROIX – St. Croix students who completed the 11th Annual Governor’s Summer Reading Challenge in September were treated to a fun day at the Agriculture Fair Grounds on December 7, where Juanita Gardine K-8 School was announced as the school with the most books read—a combined total of 2,085 books among the school’s students who participated in this year’s Challenge, the Dept. of Education has announced.

With Gardine's students included, a total of 406 students in grades K-6 attending St. Croix's public, private and parochial schools (accounting for 2,939 books read) completed the 2019 Reading Challenge, which encouraged students to read five or more books during the summer months. All students received a certificate of completion and a gift bag with school items, D.O.E. said.

This is the third consecutive year Gardine K-8, formerly Juanita Gardine Elementary School, has earned the title. For the 2019 Reading Challenge, which ran from June 6 to September 20, Gardine students submitted 276 tracking sheets identifying the books they read. Assistant Principal Anna Gordon, joined by students, Government House and Education officials, accepted a trophy and a bag of classroom supplies at the fun day that featured face painting, dance performances, outdoor games, science experiments, prize giveaways, food, music and more.

A highlight of the celebration came with the appearance of Ase Moko Jumbies, under the direction of Valrica Bryson, Department of Education director of Virgin Islands Cultural Education. The eight-member student group wowed the audience with dips, turns and a variety of daring dance moves performed on stilts. The St. Croix Educational Complex High School Marching Band dancers, under the direction of Essie Gaston Edwards, did not disappoint and further excited the crowd with a series of high-spirited dance routines.

Former Senator and current St. Croix Administrator Sammuel Sanes, representing the Office of the Governor, congratulated students and parents.

"Students, we are so proud of your accomplishments, but we also want to congratulate the parents for bringing their children here today and for encouraging them to participate in the Challenge," he said.

St. Croix District Superintendent Carlos McGregor also extended congratulatory remarks to the students, stating, "The Reading Challenge is a great way for our students to remain engaged with learning during the summer, and the superintendent's office congratulations each of you for reading and completing the Challenge."

Children's author Rick Grant, a three-time Reading Challenge author whose book, "Health and Safety for You and Me" was one of six books distributed to students for the 2019 Reading Challenge, congratulated students and told them that they could become authors one day, too.

Reading Challenge coordinator, Denise Gomes, stressed the importance of literacy.

"Literacy is a foundational step to ensuring students achieve academic success," she said. "The Reading Challenge offers a fun way for students to learn and hone their literacy skills. We are proud of every student who completed the Challenge."

Local agencies have long partnered with the Office of the Governor and the Department of Education to make the annual celebration a success. This year, the Department of Agriculture, V.I. Fire Service, Department of Tourism and WTJX provided students with reading and coloring materials, potted plants, reusable bags, and electronic games.

Other dignitaries in attendance were Governor Bryan's Chief of Staff Karl Knight, Senator Javan James, Sr., and Board of Education Member Mary Moorhead. St. Croix Deputy Superintendent Dr. Carla Bastian, Curriculum & Instruction staff members, as well as student and teacher volunteers also participated in the activity.

