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Taking Center Stage: Female-Owned Businesses Honored, Bi-Annually Magazine Focused on Women Entrepreneurs Launched

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Collage of EMPOW(HER) Magazine launch and female entrepreneur gala attendees. The event took place on March 26, 2022 at The Palms at Pelican Cove. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

Something special occurred Saturday night at The Palms at Pelican Cove: for the first time in the U.S. Virgin Islands, a bi-annual magazine which focuses on businesswomen was launched, and female entrepreneurs throughout the territory were recognized for their indelible contributions to the economy.

It was a well executed, stately affair with a host of different speakers honing in on the importance of female-owned businesses. From boutiques, cosmetics, entertainment along with women in leading roles in the community, the event represented what Founder of Women in Business VI & Caribbean (WIBVIC), Ruth King Chaseau, saw as the beginning of greater success and recognition for women-owned operations across the USVI.

"Networking and honoring women in business helps them build a community and be a part of something that matters. Women are the backbone of the economy," said Mrs. Chaseau, pointing out that women not only command a large percentage of purchasing power but also the production of goods.

"The organization creates opportunity for them to network, expose their businesses, to get more support from the community and to get eyes on their businesses," she added, highlighting the EMPOW(HER) Magazine as essentially to that end.

At one point during the gala, where women wore some of their best outfits to mark the occasion, the female business owners walked to the front as their names and businesses were called out to loud applause from the audience.

Khnuma Simmonds, owner of [My Girlfriend's Closet](#) located in Downtown Christiansted, hailed the gala and the launch of the EMPOW(HER) Magazine as a positive step in bringing to the fore the ineffaceable role of women in society. "This event means several things, including defying the myth that women cannot come together and cannot work together, and are always petty. That's not true. We see that we are defying that myth here because we're all a collective working together and supporting each other as we grow in our businesses."

She added, "I also think it represents the reality not only locally but nationally, that women of color are really taking the lead when it comes to entrepreneurship. So this is like the new normal; it's not 9 to 5 anymore. It's entrepreneurship, and that means we have people who have purpose and passion, and that's a beautiful thing to see."

Judith Figueroa Ferdinand, owner of JuiceJuice Apparels in Frederiksted, said the strength of women entrepreneurs can no longer be ignored. "Women-owned businesses in the territory are growing larger. We are showing that we have power no matter what," she said.

Interspersed during the gala and magazine launch were performances such as dance and song selections. Buffet-style dinner was served as well.

The event was organized by Women in Business VI & Caribbean, which was founded by Mrs. Chaseau in 2020 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when many brick and mortar businesses were left with no other choice but to close their doors and accelerate their online offerings.

Mrs. Chaseau said the EMPOW(HER) Magazine will be offered in digital/online and print formats, and will be distributed throughout the territory at local stores, hotels, airports and cruise ports.

She said WIBVIC does not receive funding from private or government entities, though the organization seeks such partnerships. "Our mission and vision remains intact: we are here to inspire, empower, and elevate women to be all that they were created to be," Mrs. Chaseau concluded.

