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Carnival's Rising Stars: Future Feters Shine in St. Thomas' Annual Children's Parade

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Ernice Gilbert **April 29, 2023**

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A collage of pictures from the 2023 St. Thomas Carnival Children's Parade. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The streets of St. Thomas burst into a kaleidoscope of colors, music, and dance during the annual Children's Parade on Friday in St. Thomas as part of the 2023 carnival season. Post Office Square, where the main performances come alive, saw onlookers from all walks of life providing approving reactions of cheers, screams, applause and more. The atmosphere was thrilling and smiles and energy abound despite the heat.

Though the crowd was not packed to capacity, the turnout was respectable. Participants appeared slightly anxious but, for the most part, they executed their performances well. Occasional water

breaks and ice treats were necessary to combat the heat. Dignitaries at the event mingled at the bandstand, enjoying the parade like everyone else.

Sixteen troupes participated, including royalties from the island and St. Croix. Georgia Francis, a music teacher who has played for the children in the parade for over 45 years, was honored as the Parade Marshall. Ms. Francis expressed her gratitude for the recognition, remarking on her transition from performing to being chauffeured in the parade.

The Ambassadorial Carnival Prince for 2023, Kriston Ward, praised the martial arts segment of the show and shared that he was having fun. Na'Riyah Penn, the Ambassadorial Carnival Princess for 2023, urged people worldwide to prioritize safety during the carnival season by not drinking and driving.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. expressed his delight at the Carnival's progress, comparing it to the excitement and relief of sending one's children to prom. He praised the VI Police Department and the Division of Festival for their hard work and emphasized the importance of the Children's Parade in shaping the future of carnival festivities. "The children's parade really signals what is to become of carnival in the future. These are the future feters that come in participate and learn how to do the hard work too," he told the Consortium.

The VI Montessori Troupe, absent from previous parades due to Covid, made a triumphant return. They dedicated their truck to their former director, Ms. Shournagh McWeeney, who had recently passed away. The troupe's decorations were crafted by the students themselves.

Elite Dynasty, a dance group comprising girls aged 5 to 16, made their debut in the parade. The young dancers were excited to participate and showcase their skills to the audience.

First-time visitor Myra Revillard from New Hampshire was particularly impressed by the Moko Jumbies, steel pan players, and baton twirlers. She enthusiastically stated, "I am enjoying all of it."

Dr. David Hall, president of the University of the Virgin Islands, expressed his delight in seeing the future leaders showcasing their talents and skills during the parade. Dr. Hall said, "It is a special day. I enjoy coming to the Children's Parade with my family. I always look forward to Rising Stars. They are a highlight for me, but I do look forward to seeing all of our youths. They are the UVI students of tomorrow."

The St. Thomas Children's Parade successfully demonstrated the resilience and creativity of its participants, providing a glimpse into the future of carnival culture. As the colorful event came to a close, attendees left with memories of an unforgettable day filled with energy, talent, and community spirit.