



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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September 18, 2018

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **VI STUDENTS SHINE A LIGHT ON LITERACY AT THIRD ANNUAL ‘BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT AT THE LIBRARY’**

ST. THOMAS, USVI – Sixty-one families gathered to celebrate literacy at the Third Annual Back to School Night at the Library held September 15, 2018 at the Charles W. Turnbull Regional Library. Students in grades K-6 and their family members engaged in a variety of interactive workshops and activities geared toward elevating children’s literacy skills and equipping parents with an arsenal of tools to support their children.

The fun-filled night began with an immersive storytelling session where students were whisked away into the worlds of titles including, *The Vienna Cake Mystery*—one of this year’s Governor’s Summer Reading Challenge (GSRC) feature titles—and *Dave Goes to School*. Volunteers from the Friends of the St. Thomas Public Libraries engaged students in the mysterious world of Tilda Turtle as they began the hunt for the Vienna cake thief.

Following the storytelling extravaganza, students were separated into groups by grade level and parents departed to begin their respective workshops.

Younger participants in the K-3 grade group enjoyed a hands-on gardening activity that focused on comprehension with Vincent Henley, Physical Education teacher and advisor to the gardening and aquaponics program at the former Gladys Abraham Elementary School. He introduced students to successful gardening techniques and honed in on exercising comprehension skills with worksheets based on plant life cycles.

Older participants in the 4-6 grade group brought *The Legend of Hurukan*, an Arawak folktale, alive in a group storytelling activity led by Bring Shakespeare Alive Coordinator, Pamela New.

Students were bursting with excitement as they practiced various acting techniques to bring their scripts to life.

Parents were engaged in a workshop focused on how to reinforce positive behavior in their children by PBIS coaches Darian Torrice and Shanah Rieara. Parents then took lessons from Jerae Forde, Director of School Community Relations on their parental rights and ways in which they could be a voice for their children.

Students were then treated to another exciting and interactive storytelling activity led by master storyteller Yohance Henley. Henley, a 2018 GSRC title author told an original folktale of Anansi the spider. Following storytelling, students gathered to play an exciting game of Taboo where they were challenged to explore their vocabulary to find new and creative ways of describing places, people, and objects.

After the grade level workshops had drawn to a close, parents and students were treated to free books and giveaways to encourage and promote literacy within their households. Backpacks of school supplies were also distributed compliments of non-profit organization Positive Growth.

Back to School Night at the Library is held in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums. It was established in 2016 to support the annual Governor's Summer Reading Challenge, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year. The Challenge encourages students in grades K-6 to read five or more books during the summer months and will conclude on September 21 this year.

For more information on the Governor's Summer Reading Challenge, visit [www.readfive.org](http://www.readfive.org)

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