



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Public Relations

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VIDE, Viya Partner for V.I. History Month Contests Highlighting Emancipation and Built Heritage

ST. CROIX, USVI – The Virgin Islands Department of Education, Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education, has partnered with Viya to reward students and teachers with electronic devices and free internet service prize packages worth \$18,000 for contests being held in celebration of Virgin Islands History Month in March.

Virgin Islands students are invited to participate in the Built Heritage Challenge, where they must visit a series of historical sites across the territory and take a photo of themselves at the locations. Three winners will be announced in each school district, and they will each win a brand-new Samsung phone or iPhone and one year of free mobile coverage from Viya. Submission deadline is March 31.

Virgin Islands teachers are invited to participate in the Door/Corridor Challenge, where they are asked to design Emancipation-related décor at their schools and submit photos of the artwork. Three teachers in each district will win a MiFi and a year of free service from Viya. Submission deadline is March 24.

“We thank Viya for its generous partnership in this unique effort to engage students and teachers in our rich Virgin Islands history and culture,” said Education Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington. “We know our students and teachers will benefit from the information learned from the contests and from Viya’s commitment to ensuring connectivity in education.”

Viya's Vice President of Public Relations and Governmental Affairs Jennifer Matarangas-King stated, "Viya is proud to commemorate Virgin Islands History Month by partnering with the Virgin Islands Department of Education to provide connectivity prizes for VI youth and teachers. Reliable connectivity is a critical tool for education that is used to explore Virgin Islands history and culture. We thought it would be fitting to provide devices that will facilitate students and teachers staying connected to our culture."

This year, the Department's V.I. History Month celebration is placing emphasis on topics surrounding emancipation and post-emancipation with use of the theme, "Emancipation Now, Understanding History, Living the Legacy, and Creating a Just Future for All Ah We," as 2023 marks the 175th anniversary of the 1848 Emancipation Revolt in the Virgin Islands. Included in the lineup of events are conversations about the Virgin Islands' legacy after emancipation. Teachers and students will learn more about current issues and historical events related to the 1848 Acts of Equity and how they have affected the lives of Virgin Islanders today.

Additionally, classroom presentations will be given at schools by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Libraries, Archives, and Museums Division, as well as its Coral Reef Program. University of the Virgin Islands Professor Olsee Davis has delivered a virtual presentation to educators on "The Struggles of the Maroons in the Danish West Indies," and on March 17, he will lead a hike for educators to Annaly Estate and Bodkin Sugar Mill on St. Croix. Ayana O. Flewellen, co-founder and president of the Society of Black Archeologists, is continuing her work in the Virgin Islands, which began with the Smithsonian's Slave Wreck Project and her organization's Little Princess Archeology Project, with a workshop planned for March 29.

The Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education has previously engaged teachers in professional development opportunities during February's Black History Month in collaboration with DPNR's State Historian George Tyson and State Historic Preservation Office Director Kevin Krigger on the built heritage of the Virgin Islands.

For more information on the V.I. History Month contests, visit www.vide.vi.

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