



## **Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative**



**Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative**

[www.vgyli.org](http://www.vgyli.org)

**Stone Soup Leadership Institute**

[www.soup4worldinstitute.com](http://www.soup4worldinstitute.com)







## Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative

**VGyli's mission** is to inspire and assist young people to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for Virgin Gorda. VGyli was formed in 2006 by local citizens, business, churches, education, government and youth concerned for the island's youth. They issued a report: ***VGyli Summary of Observations and Recommendations from Virgin Gorda Community Leaders*** (November, 2006). *For Virgin Gorda and the BVI to effectively address the emerging challenges of the 21st century, there is an urgent need to invest in the island's next generation of leaders. Young people must be identified, trained, rewarded and given incentives to return to the islands to contribute to the social, environmental economic well being of the Island.*

The Institute organized a **Vieques-Tortola Economic-Cultural Development Delegation** with VYLI youth leaders, Vieques Mayor and his team. BVI officials were impressed with VYLI youth leaders and asked the Institute to develop a similar program in the BVI. As a first step, youth leaders from the BVI attended VYLI's 3<sup>rd</sup> Summer Institute.

VGyli is a fellowship program where young people receive mentors, internships, apprenticeships and/or job training. They practice their leadership skills by working with younger students and assisting them in clarifying their dreams and developing projects with churches, schools and organizations. Our leadership program provides educational and training opportunities; collaborates with other VG/BVI organizations; catalyzes community projects; organizes field trips and travel opportunities to expose youth to the world and represent BVI at educational conferences; develops public-private partnerships to prepare Virgin Gorda youth to become leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**VGyli has dedicated this year to sustainable tourism.** Given the Caribbean islands are on the front line of climate change and global warming, there is an urgent need for informed, educated and empowered citizens who serve as environmental stewards and engage people on their islands to address critical issues and develop strategic plans for sustainable development. Who better than youth to be the champions? A VGyli youth delegation participated in the **Caribbean Media Exchange Conference on Sustainable Tourism** in St. Lucia and San Juan, PR where they learned from Caribbean and U.S. leaders in the tourist industry, government and media about managing the delicate balance of increasing tourism while preserving the unique Caribbean culture and environment.

### Benefits for Virgin Gorda Youth

- Youth clarify their dreams and goals for their lives & create personalized action plans to achieve them;
- Youth experience a greater sense of responsibility for their lives, their future and for their island;
- Youth develop a better understanding for the challenges on their island and how they can help;
- VGyli youth are trained and prepared to represent VG in BVI/Caribbean educational events;
- Increases youth pride and self-esteem; encourages self-sufficiency and social responsibility;
- Youth trained with transferable skills to enhance youth employability with island companies;
- Motivates youth to develop work ethic, team work, critical thinking, problem-solving skills;
- Develop life-long skills in communicating and making presentations (written and verbal);
- Youth connect with opportunities and responsibilities in Virgin Gorda/BVI community;
- Work side-by-side youth leaders who created successful program on their own Caribbean island;
- Multiplier effect/replicable model: trains VGyli youth to recruit and train other VG youth.

**The Stone Soup Leadership Institute** provides technical assistance and training to VGyli. The community shares their time, talents and resources. **VGyli Sponsors:** Ministry of Education & Culture, Office of the Governor of the British Virgin Islands, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College Virgin Gorda campus, Counterpart International, A Dream Come True Villa, Bitter End Yacht Club and jetBlue.

## Environmental Stewardship



VGyli is dedicated to sustainable tourism. During the year, VGyli youth watched the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, participated in ocean field trips and tree-planting activities; learned to swim and snorkel to develop a greater appreciation for the island's delicate coral reef systems and one attended the Ocean Conservancy Youth Summit. VGyli youth delegation participated in the **Caribbean Media Exchange Conference on Sustainable Tourism** in St. Lucia and San Juan, PR.

VGyli organized an ocean field trip with Patouche Charters. For some, it was their first time snorkeling. They were nervous, some afraid of what lies in the seas. They were delighted to see beautiful schools of fish, stingrays, barracuda and turtles living in the coral reefs. "God's creation is amazing!" exclaimed Jadine Matthias after her first look. "We really need to take a look at our own backyard. It's gorgeous!" For some, it was their first time out in the open ocean. "When I finally went into the water, I realized I was born in a really beautiful place that lots of people travel to experience," said Nakisha Warner.



"Nature has blessed us with world attractions of The Baths and the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest reef in the world," said Venner Williams. "When I saw the bottom of the ocean for the first time, I experienced one of the greatest feelings in my life – which is real happiness." Maggie said, "I've seen these fish on television, but never in real life. I felt like I was on television." Take a tip from Maggie, "For those of you who think that you should try it, especially if you are stressed out and need to relax, go snorkeling and see how this trip can change your life." "These respectful youth are on their way to becoming environmental stewards. We look forward to working with them to create a future for the BVI that will be brighter because of them," said Patouche owner, Joe Standish.



**Virgin Gorda youth Feliza Fenty** is an aspiring TV journalist. She is eager to find ways to use the power of the media to promote sustainable tourism. She surveyed 80 people in the BVI on their perceptions of their environment. She was concerned that while students in the United Kingdom must watch the environmental documentary, *The Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore, many BVI students had never heard of it. "While the truth is inconvenient, we must each do our part," she said. "Before you throw that soda can in the road, think twice. We can be a shining example." Feliza presented her report to delegates at the **Caribbean Media Exchange Conference on Sustainable Tourism** in San Juan.



### **Making Dreams Come True Training Marsha Reeves-Jews**

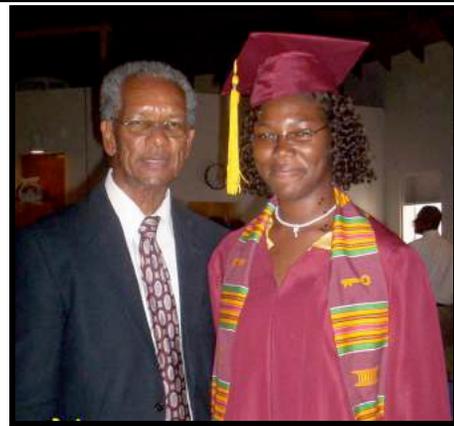
The Institute hosted guest speaker **Ms. Marsha Reeves-Jews**, an entrepreneur from Baltimore who shared stories about black professionals who achieved greatest in their careers and communities.

**Dr. Mark Dean** came from a poor family in Tennessee and is now IBM's Design Scientist and Inventor. **Ms. Joanne Barry** oversees 24 U.S. states as Boeing International's Small Business Purchasing Officer. **Ben Carson** is a world-class pediatric neurosurgeon at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. As President of Lockheed Martin's Global Strategies, **Art Johnson** manages 2,000 people. **Nancy Stewart** is WalMart's Chief Information Officer and **Lt. General Joe Ballard** is the Chief of the U.S. Army Corps Engineers. "It's important that our black youth have opportunities to learn about successful people who look like them – so they can do, and be what they want to be," said Ms. Reeves-Jews. "We can be whoever we want to be if we are committed to our dreams. We need to vision tomorrow today."

Ms. Reeves-Jews encouraged Virgin Gorda youth to research prominent BVI professionals, especially Virgin Gorda who reached their professional goals both here and abroad. "Take pride in who you are," she said "and responsibility for helping younger children strive to reach their goals."

During the workshop, Ms. Reeves-Jews provided individualized career counseling so youth could develop their own personal action plans. "I was impressed with the focus, determination and hard work of these young people," said Ms. Jews. "I can see the progress they've made with VGYLI and sincerely believe that if they stay on track, they will realize their career goals."

Ms. Reeves-Jews is a board member of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute. Her bio: [Our Team](#).



VGYLI is a fellowship program where young people receive mentors, internships and/or job training and practice their leadership skills by working with younger students and developing community projects

**Connillia Williams** is a founding member of the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative. She wants to become a pediatrician. On her island, there are no local doctors. Her dream is to improve health care for her people, especially children. Connillia's family is from the island of Dominica. They traveled to the BVI in search of a better education for their children. At her graduation from high school, Connillia had a picture with **Dr. Orlando Smith**, the first physician in the British Virgin Islands and **Dr. Stacy Rhymer**, the first woman doctor in Virgin Gorda.



For the last year, Connillia has been working towards getting her BVI and UK passport so that she can travel to the U.S. to visit hospitals and medical schools. In August Connillia will travel to Boston for a site visit at **Harvard University's Medical School**. While there she will attend presentations from high school and college youth who have interned at Boston hospitals. She will meet with Dr. Joan Reede, Director of Harvard's Minority Fellowship Program. During her stay, she will be with her host family, **Dr. Robert and Germaine Fritz** and visit **Beverly Hospital** where he is an eye-ear-nose specialist.



**Feliza Fenty: 2008- 2017**

***British Virgin Islands is first to launch financing framework for climate change issues: 2015***

The Virgin Islands became the first Caribbean Territory and a leader amongst small island states globally in establishing the policy and financing framework needed to address the causes and impacts of climate change. This milestone was achieved with the passage of the Climate Change Trust Fund Act 2015 in the House of Assembly Tuesday March 24.

<http://www.preventionweb.net/news/view/43488>

**Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour, George deBerdt Romilly - Advisor**

Commitments of international climate change financing of US\$100 billion per year from 2020 have been pledged by industrialised countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Deputy Premier and Minister for Natural Resources and Labour Dr. the Honourable Kedrick Pickering said the Climate Change Trust Fund Act 2015 presents a unique marketing opportunity for the Virgin Islands as an eco-tourism location and a territory that values its environment.

**BVI Dept. Disaster Management  
BVI Conservation and Fisheries Dept.**

***Sargassum Seaweed Returns: Teamwork Needed: May 10, 2017***

<http://www.bviddm.com/sargassum-seaweed-returns-teamwork-needed/>

**Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour  
BVI Information Officer: 2012-**

**BVI's Ability To Cope With A Mass Casualty Event To Be Assessed**

<https://t.co/KHUaJKMQRe>

**Rotaract Club of Tortola: 2016  
Featured Young Professional  
Public Relations Officer**

“Do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by circumstances,” she charged, “when I first left high school, I never imagined that someone like me would get to go away and study something so fun, interesting and worthwhile.” She added, “I want the future youth of our territory to always put their best foot forward in whatever job or study they may have. Build a reputation of ‘responsibility’ and ‘reliability’.” “Make it so that if there is anything people can say about you it is that, you always do the very best you can.”

**Stewards of Children: Aug. 22, 2017**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPvbjim2ERs>

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**The Stone Soup Leadership Institute**

2013: 10th Leadership Summit: Martha's Vineyard

2011: 8th Leadership Summit: Martha's Vineyard

2009: Caribbean Media Exchange: San Juan

2008: Caribbean Media Exchange: St. Lucia

2008: Produced Video with VGYLI youth & Dana Hokin, BEYC owner

2008: Founded Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative; served as local Project Coordinator

2008: Youth Delegate to 5th Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development  
Bitter End Yacht Club

**Stone Soup Leadership Institute  
[www.soup4worldinstitute.com](http://www.soup4worldinstitute.com)**

## Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative

### Historical Background

**March, 2006:** the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative organized the first **Vieques-Tortola Economic-Cultural Development Delegation** with Vieques Mayor Damaso Serrano Lopez and his team with BVI Chief Minister Orlando Smith, BVI Chamber Chair Violet Gaul, BVI Tourism Board Lynette Harrigan and artisan Aragon Dick-Reed.



**VYLI youth leaders Josue Cruz and Eliasib Utreras made a presentation the Chief Minister** and invited him to send BVI youth to attend VYLI's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Summer Institute.



**H. Lavity Stoutt College President Michael O'Neal** welcomed the delegation at the College's Technology Center hosting a teleconference with Missouri. Banco Popular Vice President Ian Smith and Michael Vanterpool attended the reception.



VYLI young entrepreneurs were the first youth to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual **Caribbean Artisan Festival at Trellis Bay**. BVI officials were impressed with VYLI youth leaders and asked the Stone Soup Leadership Institute to submit a proposal to develop a similar program in the BVI.



**June, 2006:** The Ministry of Education and Culture Department of Youth Affairs & Sports sponsored two BVI representatives attended the **VYLI 3rd annual Summer Institute** – a Gerry Obert from Jost Van Dyke and mentor Emily Fletcher from The Mineshaft Cafe in Virgin Gorda.



**July, 2006:** Two chefs from the BVI Culinary Team: Brandywine Bay and Peter Island Resort participated with 10 other Caribbean restaurants in **VYLI's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Taste of the Islands.**

**August, 2006:** VYLI youth leader, Josué Cruz attended the **Caribbean Youth Exchange Conference** with 15 Caribbean islands at Lambert's Beach. The Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Executive Director, Marianne Larned made a presentation in honor of International Youth Day.

*The CYPCC Youth Exchange in Tortola changed my view of the Caribbean. I was honored to be the only non-Commonwealth youth participant in this conference on sustainable development with 100 young people from 15 Caribbean countries. The Caribbean youth were talented, intelligent and humanitarian people. The future of the Caribbean is in very good hands. Motivating youth to become great leaders of their nation is critical for our future.*

**Josue Cruz, 18 years old**

#### **November, 2006-February, 2007**

The Institute received support from a homeowner in Virgin Gorda to begin an exploratory community planning process to develop a program for the Island youth. A community planning process emerged with meetings held monthly at the Mineshaft Café. A report was prepared with a summary of observations and recommendations that was presented to the Ministry of Education and Culture. They then asked the Institute to prepare a proposal.

The Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative was formed by grassroots leaders in business, churches, education, government and youth concerned for the island's youth to address these issues identified in the report and their growing concern for the lack of leadership development opportunities for the island's youth. Our mission is to inspire and assist young people to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for all people in Virgin Gorda.

#### **Nominate Youth: Applications Available!**

Everyone in the community is invited to nominate young people (ages 15-23) who could become youth leaders. For applications and info: call 442-5576 or email: [soup4world@aol.com](mailto:soup4world@aol.com). Orientation: Friday, March 16 and May 14 & 15. Trainings: June 29 + July 8 and week-long intensive: July 23-29.



#### **January-February, 2007 in Virgin Gorda**

Meetings were held with Honorable Lloyd Black, Minister of Education & Culture, Mrs. Bernice Sprauve, Marianne Larned to develop plan for the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative and Pastor Greg George, Adrianna Soverall and community leaders to discuss how they will benefit young people and collaborate with other community projects.

#### **Support Letters from Virgin Gorda Leaders**

- Leon Andrews, L&S Car Rental
- Rev. Dr. Michael Clarke, Pastor, St. Mary's
- Germaine Fritz, VG homeowner
- Pastor Greg George, Church of God Holiness
- Martha Holder, founder, Valley Day School
- Father Larry Finnegan, Pastor, St. Ursula's
- Kaunda Leonard, Kaunda Kysy Tropix
- Dawn Shamkin, Bitter End Yacht Club
- Adrianna Soverall, youth leader
- Bernice Sprauve, community leader
- Elton Sprauve, The Mineshaft Cafe
- Tony Winchester, fireman, youth minister

*In order for Virgin Gorda to effectively address the emerging challenges of the inter-island/Caribbean economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an urgent need to invest in the island's next generation of leaders. Young people must be identified, trained, rewarded and given incentives to return to Virgin Gorda to contribute to the social and economic well-being of the Island. Given the island's hands-on economy, there is an especially strong need to provide enrichment opportunities such as school-to-work internships and apprenticeships for Virgin Gorda students to develop practical skills and apply their education to build a strong and sustainable economy.* Excerpted from Report: Summary of Observations and Recommendations from Virgin Gorda Community Leaders

**Many thanks to sponsors: Dream Come True Villas  
In-kind donors: Mineshaft Cafe  
Lodging: Martha Holder, The Kanters, Bitter End;  
Travel: Air Sunshine, L&S Car Rental, Speedy's Car**

## Virgin Gorda Launches Youth Leadership Initiative



**from left: Feliza Fenty, Shara Pollock, Latoya George, Diedre Chiverton, Connillia Williams, Adrianna Soverall, Daniella Flax, Alyssa Harrigan and Rea Vanterpool**

The Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative (VGYLI) was launched on March 16. The first young people to join are Feliza Fenty, Shara Pollock, Latoya George, Diedre Chiverton, Connillia Williams, Adrianna Soverall, Daniella Flax, Alyssa Harrigan and Rea Vanterpool. Their dreams are to become doctors, journalists, graphic designers, entrepreneurs and hospitality industry leaders so they can positively contribute to their island. VGYLI's mission is to inspire young people and give them the tools and training to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for their community. This leadership program will provide educational training opportunities for young people; catalyze community projects; and develop public-private partnerships to prepare young people in the BVI to become leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. VGYLI evolved from a series of meetings held from November, 2006-February, 2007 at The Mineshaft Café with leaders from business, churches, education, government and youth who are concerned for the island's young people. The Stone Soup Leadership Institute, a 501c3 non-profit organization, facilitated the community planning process and will provide training and technical assistance for this year-long Initiative.

*In order for Virgin Gorda and the BVI to effectively address the emerging challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an urgent need to invest in the island's next generation of leaders. Young people must be identified, trained, rewarded and given incentives to return to the islands to contribute to our social and economic well-being of the Island.* Excerpted from Report: Summary of Observations and Recommendations from Virgin Gorda Community Leaders (November, 2006).

This Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. VGYLI is a fellowship program where young people will receive mentors, internships and/or job training and practice their leadership skills by working with younger students and developing projects within their organizations, churches and communities. While this is a Virgin Gorda-led initiative, youth representatives from each of the BVI islands will be chosen to participate. Training workshops and community meetings will be held at the Virgin Gorda Campus of H.S. Lavity Stoutt Community College. Monthly workshops and weekend trainings will be held throughout the year. Ten youth will be trained at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Institute of the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative in July. VGYLI is collaborating with other BVI organizations and invites them to nominate young people (ages 16-23). An orientation will be held on Saturday April 15 from 1-3 p.m. at the Virgin Gorda campus of HLSCC. For applications and information please call 495-5251.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute was founded in 1997 by Marianne Larned, author of the Institute's educational curriculum and best-selling book, *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*, with an introduction by Walter Cronkite who chairs the Institute's International Advisory Council [www.soup4world.com](http://www.soup4world.com). The Institute has assisted other Caribbean islands and island communities of Martha's Vineyard, Hawaii and the Philippines to develop youth-community initiatives that engage people to work together to help build healthier communities and a sustainable world. Early support for the community planning process came from Germaine Fritz, A Dream Come True Villa Rentals of Virgin Gorda. In-kind contributions came from L&S Car Rentals, Speedy's Car Rentals, Martha Holder, Dr. and Mrs. Kirk Kanter, The Bitter End Yacht Club. Special thanks to Dr. Almin O'Neal for her support at HLSCC.

Everyone is invited to join us in sharing their time, talents and resources with these young people and to invest in our collective future.



**Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative  
Environmental Stewardship Boat Trip  
October 20, 2008**



### **Virgin Gorda Feliza Fenty Studies Sustainable Best Practices**

Feliza Fenty traveled this summer to another island to research best practices for sustainable development. A recent graduate of Texas Christian University, Ms. Fenty was selected as the youth delegate from the Virgin Gorda to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. Other island youth represented Hawaii, Nantucket, Vieques, Puerto Rico and Martha's Vineyard. Ms. Fenty is a founding member and project coordinator of the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative whose mission is to inspire and assist young people to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for Virgin Gorda. VGYLI is a project of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute. Feliza hosted the VGYLI video, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_xY-AfX6Pk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_xY-AfX6Pk)

This year's Youth Summit focused on the components of Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Business, Cultural Sustainability and Sustainable Islands with guest speakers like Johnny Cupcakes, Ben Kelley, Building Shelter, Sidney Morris, The Farm Institute, Noli Taylor, Island Grown Schools and the grandson of the great Latino hero, Cesar Chavez. Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership graduates made presentations on their year-round programs including Job Shadow Day, Business Internship, College Preparation and Cultural Health. Ms. Fenty and the other island youth delegates from made presentations on sustainable development initiatives from their islands. Josue Cruz presented the Vieques Youth Leadership Institute's 2020 Report on Sustainable Development. He also served as Director for this year's Youth Leadership Summit. At the Youth Leadership Summit, youth delegates spent the first two days visiting innovative green projects on Martha's Vineyard including 41 farms, school gardens, energy efficient low-income housing like Eliakim's Way and Island Co-Housing, shellfish hatchery, Island Alpaca Farm, and Eco-Tourism adventures on kayaks, sailing and fishing with Wampanoag fisherman Captain Buddy Vanderhoop. The Sustainable Vineyard Map team led by Emma HallBilsback made a presentation on their progress and plans. In November they will present it to the Town of Tisbury Selectmen, to contribute to this town's Green Communities Plan. In November, the Stone Soup Leadership Institute will present it to business and world leaders at the APEC (Asian Pacific Economic Council) in Hawaii. As a public relations and business major at TCU, Ms. Fenty helped facilitate the business group during the afternoon professional work sessions. Young people explored their career options and their college choices. In 2009 Ms. Fenty was a presenter at the Institute's 5th Annual Youth Summit on Sustainable Development which was held at the Bitter End Yacht Club in Virgin Gorda. She served on the VGYLI youth delegation to the Caribbean Media Exchange Conference on Sustainable Tourism in St. Lucia and San Juan, PR. She met leaders from the Caribbean and U.S. leaders in the tourist industry, government and media about managing the delicate balance of increasing tourism while preserving the unique Caribbean culture and environment. After watching the environmental documentary, *The Inconvenient Truth* in 2008, Feliza surveyed 80 people in the BVI on their perceptions of their environment. She conducted a research report and discovered that many BVI students and residents had never heard of the movie and were unaware of climate change. "While the truth is inconvenient, we must each do our part," she said. Feliza presented her report at the CMEx Conference on Sustainable Tourism in San Juan. "With a focus in sustainable building, sustainable economics, cultural sustainability, and sustainable agriculture, this year's Vineyard Youth Summit will continue to tackle the most difficult problems our world community faces," Senator John Kerry. My good friend and long-time colleague Ted Kennedy once said, "I have seen throughout my life how we as a people can rise to a challenge, embrace change and renew our destiny." [www.vgyli.org](http://www.vgyli.org) and [www.soup4worldinstitute.com](http://www.soup4worldinstitute.com)



**Virgin Gorda's Young Environmental Stewards**

It's amazing what happens when young people experience the beauty of their own islands! "I really saw "Nature's Little Secrets" through a whole new lens," said Lakeisha Reneta Gerald. "I overcame my fear of the deep blue and the 'unknown.'" Thanks to Joe Standish of Patouche Charters, it was much more than a boat trip – it was an environmental education. On Sunday, July 8 twenty young people from Virgin Gorda learned how The Baths got their name and how they were formed from an earthquake, not a volcano. The only other place in the world with such huge boulders is the Seychelles Islands off the coast of Africa. They traveled to Horseshoe Reef near Eustatia Island to snorkel around the Wreck of the Rhone and even dive down to see the canons used in the movie, *In the Deep*.

For some, it was their first time snorkeling. They were nervous, some afraid of what lies in the seas. They were delighted to see beautiful schools of fish, stingrays, barracuda and turtles living in the coral reefs., "God's creation is amazing!" exclaimed Jadine Matthias after her first look. "We really need to stop underestimating the island – and the everyday road that we travel on. Take a look at your own backyard. It's gorgeous!" For some, it was their first time out in the open ocean. "When I finally went into the water, I realized I was born in a really beautiful place that lots of people travel to see and experience," said Nakisha Warner. "Nature has blessed us with world attractions of The Baths and the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest reef in the world." Venner Williams said, "When I saw the bottom of the ocean for the first time, I experienced one of the greatest feelings in my life – which is real happiness." For some it was life changing. "I've seen these fish on television, but never in real life. I felt like I was on television. Take a tip from Maggie, "For those of you who think that you should try it, especially if you are stressed out and need to relax, go snorkeling and see how this trip can change your life."

When they passed Savannah Bay, Jassiem Maynard told about the two-year Sandwatch project done by ROMPS students from Robinson O'Neal Primary School. "We measured the effects of global warming and climate changes from hot sea temperatures in 2005 which bleached the coral reef in front of the Bay. We took before and after photos of the reef and when the seas rose and we lost ½ meter of our beach." The environmental field trip was organized by the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative. It was much more than just a day on a boat. It was a great way to expand young minds to the environment and how they can protect it for future generations. "I learned that many reefs are dying because of erosion and bad anchorage," said Lindon Clarke. "I learned how I can help educate others including our tourists who sail around our islands."

VGyli is collaborating with other BVI organizations, inviting them to nominate young people. Mrs. Lauralee Maynard invited a new group of young people from Save Our Youth. "As someone who works for the BVI Tourism Board, it was an opportunity to socialize with people I didn't know and help them snorkel for the first time," said Kyle Harrigan. "It created a bond between us."

Later that week at H. Laverty Stout Community College's Virgin Gorda campus, these young people talked about the lessons they learned on the trip and how they can apply them to their lives. "This trip opened my eyes and helped me a lot," says Maggie Mack. "When I jumped off the boat, I actually overcame my fears of heights and realized I can be adventurous." "I was scared and frightened, then I realized, I can do it! and then I had fun," wrote Lakeisha Reneta Gerald. "Knowledge is power." "Knowing, seeing, believing – knowing is seeing and seeing is believing!"

They practiced their writing and presentation skills and shared important life lessons. "It's normal to be scared about doing something for the first time, but it isn't a reason not to do something," wrote Venner Williams. "Once I put my mind to something, I can do anything, face my goals do and don't be afraid -- perseverance, hard work and faith." Some were poetic, some profound. "Always put your best foot forward, ask God for guidance and always believe in yourself," wrote Latoya George. Some balanced each other: "Instead of looking for the easy way out, go for the challenges," wrote Ezron Simmons; for Lindon Clarke "When the waters get too rough, don't quit just move onto calmer waters."

To give back to their island, VGyli youth researched summer activities for all young people in Virgin Gorda. They made a flier and posted it around town. "Shakespeare said there are four things that don't come back -- and an opportunity is #1. We have our dreams and they are real. My dream is to become a day care manager and teacher. With this opportunity, we can fulfill our dreams," said Jadine.

The Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative evolved from a community planning process held with people from business, churches, education, government and youth who are concerned about the island's youth. *In order for Virgin Gorda and the BVI to effectively address the emerging challenges of the 21st century, there is an urgent need to invest in the island's next generation of leaders. Young people must be identified, trained, rewarded and given incentives to return to the islands to contribute to our social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Island.* VGyli's mission is to inspire young people and give them the tools and training to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for their community. VGyli is a year-round fellowship program where young people receive mentors, internships and/or job training as well as opportunities to practice their leadership skills by working with younger students and developing projects within their organizations, churches and communities. The VGyli community planning process, training and ongoing technical assistance is provided by the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Executive Director Marianne Larned and their team. People in the community who've donated in-kind contributions are L&S Car Rentals, Speedy's Car Rentals, Dr. and Mrs. Kirk Kanter, Air Sunshine, The Mineshaft Café, The Bitter End Yacht Club with special thanks to Dr. Almein O'Neal for her support at HLSCC. Early support for VGyli came from Germaine Fritz, A Dream Come True Villa Rentals of Virgin Gorda.

"It was a pleasure to spend the afternoon with such respectful young people from Virgin Gorda who were eager to learn about how to preserve our islands," said Joe Standish who provided mementos to award them. "They are on their way to becoming environmental stewards. We look forward to working with them to create a future for the BVI that will be brighter because of them." Given that the Caribbean islands are on the front line of climate change and global warming, VGyli is dedicated to sustainable development. Who better than young people to be the champions of preserving these beautiful islands? Feliza Fenty summed up her experience as awesome, creation and enlightening. "Since I want to be a journalist, I will write about the environment so I can encourage people to care."



**left to right: Kenrick Quashie, Gail Moaney, Tania Cruz, Feliza Fenty, Kim Diaz Allen**

### **Virgin Gorda Youth Leader Speaks at Caribbean Conference**

Youth leaders from across the Caribbean had a unique experience of speaking directly with leaders of tourism industry, media, alternative energy and development. The Caribbean Media Exchange on Sustainable Tourism (CMEx) held its first youth panel called Keeping It Real at their May 15-19 conference in San Juan, PR. There were 17 youth delegates among the hundred strong participant base from the Caribbean (English, French, Spanish and Dutch), Europe, North, Central and South America. While young people have served as delegates at past conferences, this was their first chance to share their thoughts, concerns, actions and goals for their future with the prestigious leaders and conference participants.

“Caribbean public and private sector leaders were very impressed,” said Dr. Basil Springer, Chairman Counterpart Caribbean. “These youth leaders have a vision for the future of their islands. It’s imperative that the leaders of our islands invest in our young people now so together we can build a more sustainable economy.”

“In the year 2020 we will be the leaders of our island,” said Tania Cruz, “What do we want for our lives and for the future of our island?” Ms. Cruz presented the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative’s 2020 Report on Sustainable Tourism that outlines a five-point strategy and a comprehensive plan. It is the culmination of a four-year demonstration project with the Stone Soup Leadership Institute.

Virgin Gorda youth Feliza Fenty, shared about the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative (VGYLI) program. An aspiring TV journalist, Feliza is eager to find ways to use the power of the media to promote sustainable tourism. She recently surveyed eighty people in the BVI about their perceptions of their environment. She was concerned that while students in the United Kingdom must watch the environmental documentary, *The Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore, many BVI students had never heard of it. “While the truth is inconvenient, we must each do our part,” she said. “Before you throw that soda can in the road, think twice. We can be a shining example.”

St. Vincent youth delegate Kenrick Quashie expressed a sense of urgency for to get more young people involved in sustainable tourism and development. “We just can’t wait!” he explained. He invited VGYLI youth to participate in a regional conference for youth leaders to “create a Caribbean crusade for sustainable tourism.”

“Sustainable tourism is the keystone industry for the Caribbean: we need to invest in the three key elements of social, economic and environmental,” said Senator Allen Chastanet, St. Lucia's Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation and Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO). “The times are changing. It’s time to stop the debate. It’s time for action. Let’s try to make it work.” Chastanet cited tourism innovations in Mexico who embraced tourism twenty years and have created an economic miracle. The Senator recently returned from Dubai – where they are investing heavily in tourism development. It was noted Dubai is investing \$10 billion for youth development to “inspire knowledge, ideas and innovation among the builders of tomorrow’s world.”

Youth delegates from eight other Caribbean islands also learned from leaders about the complex issues facing the Caribbean tourism industry – from skyrocketing fuel prices and concerns of losing market share to global competition. They also heard about innovative solutions such as brand marketing, renewable energy projects, satellite accounting systems, creating unique Caribbean island experiences, producing indigenous arts and crafts, investing in entrepreneurship training and opportunities, and linkages with the Diaspora. “The Diaspora represents a multi-million dollar opportunity for the Caribbean, and maximizing the financial, intellectual and creative potential of this market took center stage,” said CMEx conference coordinator Bevan Springer under the theme "Embracing the Diaspora, Connecting Communities."

Ms. Fenty was most impressed by Nevis Minister Carlisle Powell’s presentation on the Island’s Geo-Thermal Energy Program. “After years of study to determine that Nevis was in fact an ideal location, we are finally moving forward with this project and will produce power by July 2009,” said the Minister. Given rising fuel costs and their implication on the Caribbean islands, it’s good to know their program will reduce energy costs from 30-50% in a few years. “The best news is that the project isn’t costing the Island anything, thanks to investors from Germany, in-kind support of economist and engineer from OECS, plus technical assistance from UNIDO.”

“What can we do to make tourism more sustainable?” asked St. Lucia youth delegate Sarah Munn, “Just giving people more information isn’t enough to make people care.” Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative delegate Kimberly Diaz Allen responded, “We must walk the talk so that we can be an example as we transfer this knowledge to the younger generation.”

“Given the challenges we are facing in the Caribbean and around the world, it’s time for action,” said Gail Moaney, Executive VP Travel and Economic Development, Ruder Finn and Board member of Counterpart International who served as moderator of the CMEx youth panel. “These youth have a vision and are taking action. They are in inspiration to us all.”

VGyli’s mission is to inspire young people and give them the tools and training to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for their community. Our goal is to develop a comprehensive leadership program that provides educational and training opportunities; collaborates with other VG/BVI organizations; catalyzes community projects; and develops public-private partnerships to prepare Virgin Gorda youth to become leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. VGyli thanks its May sponsors: Counterpart International, Ministry of Education & Culture, Office of the Governor of the British Virgin Islands, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College Virgin Gorda campus, A Dream Come True Villa, Bitter End Yacht Club, Brown Williams, jetBlue, Mineshaft Café and the Stone Soup Leadership Institute.

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**Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative  
delegation to St. Lucia  
Caribbean Sustainable Tourism**

Virgin Gorda is proud of three youth leaders who recently traveled to St. Lucia to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Media Exchange on Sustainable Tourism. Feliza Fenty, Latoya George and Kyle Harrigan represented the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative to serve as the first CMEx youth delegation from the BVI. Held from Dec. 6-10, this year's conference explored the theme of Caribbean Tourism: Another Level of Innovation. These young people learned from prominent leaders in the tourist industry, senior government officials and high-level media reporters from the Caribbean and the U.S. and Caribbean about innovative ways to manage the delicate balance of increasing tourism while maintaining the unique Caribbean culture and preserving the environment.

Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Secretary General, Caribbean Tourism Organization gave examples of innovation from islands like Hawaii's support for indigenous artisans and St. John for its recycling program. Other presenters acknowledged Antigua's Curtain Bluff Resort for investing in training local youth and African heritage tours in St. Kitts, Nevis, Barbados, Bermuda and the Bahamas. Branding was a hot topic as a way of marketing the Caribbean culture. 'Going Green' was a major strategy for dealing with climate change -- being mindful of our fragile ecosystems and how to preserve them. The

Palm Haven Hotel in Antigua was acknowledged for planting native trees to reduce bugs, chemicals and heat. CNN's Operations Manager, Clayton Sizemore gave an eye-opening talk on disaster preparedness.

Conference participants were curious to see how their island measured on the National Geographic Traveler's Destination Scorecard. Reported on by James Dion, the survey assessed 111 islands worldwide on environment, cultural-social impact, aesthetics, heritage, tourism management and general outlook. "Some islands are being loved to death," he explained. The BVI scored 61 -- in moderate trouble category: "blame the cruise ships, poor land-use planning and high density development. To learn more about the survey, visit: [www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/features/islandrated0/11/islands.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/features/islandrated0/11/islands.html)

When Susan Soltero, Univision's meteorologist described climate change, she asked Latoya George to share her experience of submarine trip in St. Thomas where she saw their dead coral reefs. "There's still hope for Virgin Gorda," she says. "We have to make it happen now. Don't wait for 5 years!"

CMEx delegates enjoyed VIP treatment -- traveling each day to one of the six hotels hosting the CMEx conference's meetings, luncheons and dinners. They also enjoyed a hands-on experience of sustainable tourism-- with a sailing excursion to the island's southern sulfur springs followed by a tour and luncheon at Jade Mountain at Anse Chastanet, a successful hotel that incorporates the beauty of nature with furniture and furnishings from local artisans. At night, they enjoyed the Kalalu Festival with aboriginal African, French-patoi singers and Soca superstar Machel Montano from Trinidad.

**VGyli**

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"You can only grow as much as you have the capacity -- the invisible human resource," said St. Lucia's Minister of Tourism Senator Allen Chastanet. A successful hotel owner, he speaks from experience. "Be careful not to marginalize local people -- empower them with training, nurture them as entrepreneurs and with access to capital so we can truly create sustainable tourism."

VGyli has dedicated this year to sustainable tourism. Given the Caribbean islands are on the front line of climate change and global warming, there is

an urgent need for informed, educated and empowered citizens who can serve as environmental stewards and engage people on their islands to address critical issues and develop strategic plans for sustainable development. Who better than youth to be the champions? During the fall, VGYLI youth watched the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, participated in ocean field trips and tree-planting activities; learned to swim and snorkel to develop a greater appreciation for the island's delicate coral reef systems and one attended the Ocean Conservancy Youth Summit.

An aspiring TV journalist, Feliza Fenty conducted interviews with Dr. Basil Springer, Chairman of Counterpart International Caribbean and others for a video she's producing. "I've known that sustainable tourism is one of the twin pillars of our economy," said Feliza. "Now the doors are opening so I see what I need to do to help preserve the environment too."

BVI youth demonstrated their leadership abilities by participating on the youth panel, Keeping it Real, a Youth Outlook. When asked to imagine how they would build a resort, they replied: "Go green!" Kyle Harrigan suggested, "Build the resort around the environment rather than removing nature's beauty of large boulders and trees." He also suggested giving employees shares in the company so they are invested in its success. "They would do whatever they can to make it succeed."

When asked for their recommendations about future CMEx conferences, Kyle joined an Anguilla youth to present their youth recommendations: top 10 trends affecting tourism; strategies for implementing sustainable tourism and successful case studies on what works; and finally creating a resolution or promise: "What are you going to do when you get back to your island?"

At CMEx, BVI youth leaders fulfilled VGYLI's mission is to inspire and assist young people to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership and entrepreneurship abilities so they can address the economic, environmental and social challenges of the 21st century. They were pleasantly surprised that when they took the risk to share their ideas and opinions all these important people were eager to hear what they had to say. Upon their return, they look forward to sharing their experience with

BVI leaders at a reception at the Governor's House in 2008.

On the final night, the CMEx Journalism Awards were presented followed by CMEx talent competition, where Kyle won 3<sup>rd</sup> prize and a weekend at Coco Palms Resort. Fortunately, contestants were able to enjoy a performance -- but not compete with -- international star Rhea!

"The BVI should be very proud of these young people who represented Virgin Gorda and the BVI," said Marianne Larned, Director of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute. This was the Institute's second CMEx conference with youth delegates, the first in San Juan with the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative.

VGYLI thanks its sponsors: Counterpart International, Office of the Governor, Minister of Education & Culture, BVI Tourist Board, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, L&S Rentals, Mahogany Car Rentals, Seven Jewels Manor, Cynthia Thomas, A Dream Come True Villas, Bitter End Yacht Club.

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# AROUND THE RESORT

## Pub A Seriously Fun Hang Out

Since we could not be in Valencia this summer for the America's Cup, we decided the next best thing would be to cheer the racers on during live airings of the racing, each morning in June, and combine the viewing with a light breakfast for our resort guests and boat visitors. Those who came were treated to coffee and espresso drinks as well as a selection of pastries baked fresh each morning by Winston Butler. The new seating arrangement at the recently expanded Pub and the seven flat screen TVs allowed viewers to catch some of the closest and most exciting America's Cup racing anyone remembers.

No matter how we cheered, we felt certain of victory: some of the pros slated to join us for this year's Pro Am were on one boat or another, and Ed Baird, a regular Bitter End-er, did indeed sail away with the title this year. [To be truthful, the America's Cup contenders could not contain all the rock stars of sailing we're welcoming this year! Check out our lineup on page one.]

With our high tech TVs and the new upgrades to the kitchen, the Pub offers great flexibility for hosting casual events. In addition to



showing great sailing videos and other sporting events we realize people want to keep abreast of all their teams while limin' in the BVI and rest assured that if it's on you can watch it at the Pub!

If watching sports is not your thing, you can create your own action and competition playing pool, foosball or darts. And don't forget: the Bitter End Pub is still the place to get the coldest beer around!

## Hokin Scholarship Fund Helps Establish BVI Youth Initiative

Launched in 2005, the Hokin Scholarship was established to give back to the region that for over 30 years has been a second home to not only the Hokin family but the countless guests who have experienced the beauty of the British Virgin Islands in their travels to Bitter End.



This year, with the support provided by the Hokin Scholarship, the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative was founded, having evolved from a community planning process that included people from area businesses, churches, the education community, the government and youth who are concerned about the island's youth.

The Initiative's mission is to inspire young people and give them the tools and training to develop their full potential, so they can positively contribute to a better future for their community. Dana Hokin, granddaughter of Bitter End's founder Myron Hokin, was able to talk with the first group of students involved in the initiative, to lend her insight to the learning process. She shared her experience of growing up in a business that grew out of the family retreat and how she eventually worked side by side with her grandfather until his death in 1997.

"I found myself at the helm of this business when I was 31 years old – so yes, it was a big challenge – and a whole lot of work. It still is but it's fun.... While I represent the third generation, My entire family– parents, sisters, brother, cousins, aunt and uncle remain fully committed to Virgin Gorda's future." The young people were inspired and delighted to learn about the history of Bitter End. (None of them had known a time in Virgin Gorda without Bitter End).

The Hokin Scholarship will continue to support the education and futures of youth in the BVI, and annually award an educational Scholarship to a deserving graduating senior to study at the H. Laverty Stoutt Community College on Tortola.

## Guest Comments

"In addition to all your activities, it is great to get away from cars and golf (and work, of course)." *JA, April 2007*

"The staff... were extremely friendly and helpful. The rooms were awesome – great breeze and view! The excursions were terrific!" *M&L M, April 2007*

"We arrived home in Atlanta last night, and have now endured our difficult first day back in the hustle/bustle of city life after 11 awesome days at the BEYC. We are all a little down in the mouth, especially Richard, who is really at a loose end after his action packed vacation with you all. I just wanted to write and say thank you to all of you who kept both Richard and my husband so well occupied for so many days, and especially for always knowing where Richard could be found during the day! He is wondering if he could sail a Hobie Cat on the retention pond in our neighborhood. He has definitely got the sailing bug now!

"...You all helped to make our vacation an amazing experience, and we look forward to visiting you again next summer." *The B family, June 2007*



**Princess Sunglasses:** One pair of a set of four | **Bathing Suit:** one of five worn during the week | **Johnny Cakes:** one of a kind at Bitter End!  
A happy kid on vacation 2,000 miles from home. Priceless!

\* Bathing suit purchased at Bitter End Outfitters.

