



**Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative
Turning Dreams Into Careers
Marsha Reeves-Jews & Hulas King • March 2008**

Virgin Gorda youth were inspired by guest speaker Ms. Marsha Reeves-Jews, an entrepreneur from Baltimore who shared stories about black professionals who turned their dreams into careers. Among those include: Dr. Mark Dean came from a poor family in Mississippi and is now a Design Scientist and Inventor at IBM. 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 the Chief Information Officer for WalMart and Lt. General Joe Ballard serves as 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 professionals from the BVI, especially Virgin Gorda who reached their professional goals both here and abroad. "Take pride in who you are," she said "and responsibility for helping the younger children strive to reach their goals."

A leading advocate for STEM education in schools (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), Ms. Reeves-Jews is currently writing a book to encourage black students to aspire to careers and 21st century jobs that contribute to the environment and the economy. The daylong workshop was organized by the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative (VGYLI).

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 projects within their organizations, churches and community. They will also have travel opportunities to nurture their professional career goals.

Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, Ms. Reeves-Jews was the President/Publisher for Career Communications Group, Inc. (CCG) a ten million dollar multimedia company where she managed the day-to-day operations for all aspects of *Black and Hispanic Engineer and Information Technology Magazines*, and co-produced and designed the conference workshops, panel discussions, awards ceremonies and plenary sessions for *The Black Engineer of the Year Awards Ceremony and Conference*. Ms. Reeves-Jews was the primary driving force behind vision, creation and development of the internationally renowned Women of Color Technology Awards Conference and Career Fair, which grew from 110 participants to over 7,000 attendees in its 12th year as well as the annual

national *Black Family Technology Awareness Week*, currently in over 400 worldwide. Ms. Reeves-Jews is committed to the empowerment and motivation of women and children through economic development, employment training, personal and career development and mentorship. At the workshop, Ms. Reeves-Jews gave Virgin Gorda youth magazines from Career Communications featuring black engineers and women of color in technology.

Ms. Reeves-Jews shared stories about young people she mentored including Kathryn Smoke who graduated from the Baltimore School of the Arts and is pursuing her dream of becoming an actress in Los Angeles. “Lay the foundation for your dreams,” she told the youth, “always have a back up plan and maximum flexibility.”

“When opportunity knocks, how do you see yourself when the door opens?” During the interactive workshop young people were challenged to think about how they will respond. By way of example, she shared the story of about another mentee, Abdul whose dream was to be a computer engineer. He was rather shy when she invited him to attend the Black Engineers Conference. With some high-level networking with Ms. Reeves-Jews, he was able to change schools, receive a full scholarship to the prestigious Cal Tech and receive an all expenses paid internship at Boeing International.

“The first impression is a lasting impression,” she explained. “It usually takes about 30 seconds for people to make a judgment about you on a very subconscious level – and it is usually based on what they see, hear and what they sense about you.”

Ms. Reeves-Jews has appeared in and/or been quoted by *The Washington Post*, *the Daily News*, *Pittsburgh, Baltimore Sun*, *Business Week*, *Forbes ASAP*, *SAVOY Magazine*, *the Afro-American Newspaper*, *Metropolitan Business News*, *The Baltimore Times* and *Baltimore Magazine* and has appeared on numerous radio and television shows in the New York & Baltimore Washington/Atlanta markets addressing issues surrounding diversity, women, technology, empowerment and the arts. Ms. Jews and her former husband were voted *Baltimore Magazine’s* 2000 Power Couple and appeared on the cover of the June 2000 Magazine.

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 that provides technical assistance and training to VGYLI. During the week, Ms. Reeves-Jews and the Institute’s director, Ms. Marianne Larned met with several leaders from BVI government, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College and Virgin Gorda businesses to explore potential partnerships for VGYLI’s 2008 program.

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. Their goal is to ensure sustainable development for future generations. VGYLI thanks its March sponsors: Minister of Education & Culture, Mineshaft Café, A Dream Come True Villa, Bitter End Yacht Club, Mahogany Car Rentals, Hertz Car Rental, JetBlue and the Stone Soup Leadership Institute.



The Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative is a project of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute.

www.vgyli.org
www.soup4worldinstitute.com