



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 12, 2024

1205-24

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USVI JAG Students Transformative Leadership Experience in Washington, D.C

The Virgin Islands Department of Education announces the successful participation of students from the St. Thomas-St. John District and St. Croix District from December 4 – 8, 2024, as part of the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program. This dynamic and multifaceted experience provided students with opportunities to connect, network, and broaden their horizons through expert-led sessions, leadership activities, and immersive experiences in democracy and history.

Participating students included Showana Bellevue (12th Grade), Nyeema Henderson (10th Grade), Tahira Richards (12th Grade), Evantisuf Ragguette (11th Grade), Angel Figueroa, Jr. (12th Grade), and Dehlani Hendrickson (12th Grade).

In attendance alongside the students were Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D., VIDE Commissioner; Kelani Luke, Strategic Planning Manager and JAG-VI CSA/State Manager; Allina Josiah, Career Specialist; Jaynilah Williams, Career Specialist; and Alexanne Carr, Career Specialist.

During the trip, students engaged with Dr. Darren Blackston, a renowned scholar, who delivered thought-provoking lessons grounded in his research on policy development, intellectual poverty, workforce development, and African American leadership. His powerful insights inspired students to think critically about pressing societal issues and empowered them to envision their roles as future leaders.

Adding to the inspiration, Miss America 2024, Madison Marsh, a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, shared her story of resilience, service, and leadership. Her dedication and compassion resonated deeply with the students, leaving them motivated to pursue their dreams with determination and purpose.

Leadership development sessions further enriched the students' experience through interactive activities that fostered skills in inspiring and leading others, effective communication, and collaborative leadership styles. These sessions equipped the students with the tools to excel as future changemakers in their communities.

The pinnacle of the trip was JAG Day on the Hill, where students had the unique opportunity to engage with the democratic process. They met with Bob Evans, Senior Legislative Assistant to Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, to discuss their concerns, gain insights into the legislative process, and highlight the life-changing impact of JAG on their lives and communities. The day concluded with a group photo at the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial in front of the Capitol Reflecting Pond, capturing a moment of pride and inspiration.

The experience continued with a solemn visit to Arlington National Cemetery, where students honored the nation's fallen heroes through a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This meaningful tribute underscored the importance of service and sacrifice for the nation.

To cap off their remarkable journey, students explored Washington, D.C.'s historic beauty during the Twilight Monument Tour. As they marveled at the illuminated landmarks against the city's twilight skyline, they created lasting memories of an unforgettable experience.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education commends these outstanding students for their exemplary representation of the Territory and applauds their commitment to growth and leadership. The Department also extends gratitude to the JAG program for providing this impactful opportunity that equips students with the tools to achieve personal and professional success.

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