GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Early Childhood Book Parades Inspire Love for Reading Across the Territory

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The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports brought early literacy to life this month as more than one thousand young learners participated in the 2026 Early Childhood Book Parades held across the Territory as part of Education Month activities.

The colourful celebrations took place on Virgin Gorda on 10 March, Anegada on 16 March, and Tortola on 24 March, with students dressed as characters from their favourite books and stories. The events highlighted the importance of introducing children to books, storytelling and imagination at an early age.

Education Officer for Early Childhood Development Ms. Kimberly George said the annual book parades serve as a powerful reminder of the role early literacy plays in shaping future readers.

“The early childhood book parades demonstrate the importance of our youngest learners and how critical it is to begin developing literacy from as early as three and four years old,” Ms. George said. “It is not about them being able to read a book just yet, but about helping them understand the importance of books and the role they play in building the foundation for reading.”

Ms. George added that participation in this year’s events was strong across the Territory, with the Tortola parade welcoming nearly 1,000 students, bringing total participation across all three parades to more than 1,000 children.

She also expressed appreciation for the support received from communities throughout the Virgin Islands.

“The community came out in strong support this year. We saw many more persons along the streets cheering on our students, which shows the Territory’s commitment to early childhood education. We are grateful to our teachers, parents and students for making this year’s book parades such a success.”

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports Honourable Sharie B. de Castro said the initiative reflects the Ministry’s ongoing focus on strengthening literacy from the earliest stages of education.

“Reading is one of the most fundamental skills a child can develop, and that journey begins long before a child enters primary school,” Honourable de Castro said. “Activities like the Early Childhood Book Parades encourage our youngest learners to develop a love for reading and storytelling, while also allowing them to express their creativity by bringing their favourite characters to life.”

The Minister noted that several students also showcased their creativity by designing costumes based on stories they had written themselves, highlighting how the activity helps spark early interest in both reading and writing.

The Early Childhood Book Parades form part of the Territory’s annual Education Month celebrations, which highlight initiatives that strengthen learning, creativity and student development across the education system.

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