

- coldwellbankerSTT.com
- info@coldwellbankerSTT.com
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St. Thomas Real Estate *reviews*

Featuring Real Estate Market Updates and Local News of St. Thomas, USVI

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LAS VEGAS *for a Night*

Card sharks made out like bandits. Decked-out islanders at the roulette wheel had luck, and bingo aficionados took their game in earnest. But the VI Montessori School & Peter Gruber International Academy came away top winner on December 7th at the 44th annual Las Vegas Night benefit at Frenchman's Reef Hotel.

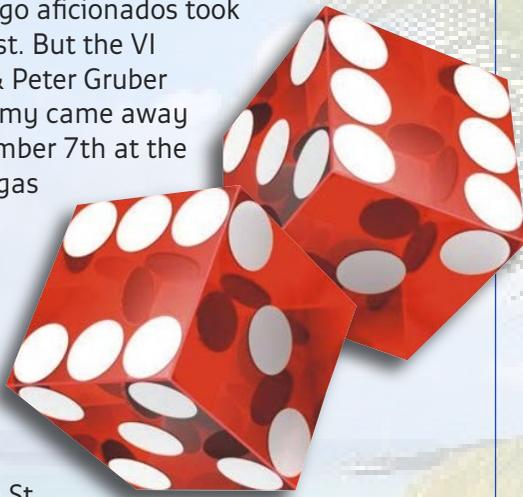
A fundraiser for the school, Las Vegas Night drew over a thousand people. "This is the event of the year on St. Thomas," said Erika Gomez, Director of Admissions and Marketing at the Montessori School. "People fly in for it; they buy tickets in advance."

Organizers brought in professional dealers and tables. Gamblers played Black Jack, Texas Hold 'em, and Craps, as well as bingo and roulette. Those lucky in cards used their winnings (chips) in the silent and live auctions. Others bid from their pocketbooks. Either way, everyone had an eye on something--airline tickets packaged with hotel stays, fine jewelry, spa packages, a gym membership, theater tickets and dinners out on the town.

Most people took a chance (or several) on the raffle. Tickets sold up until the 11th minute, 59th second, literally. At the stroke of midnight, amid pins and needles and much ado, one very lucky lady won \$10,000 in cash. "It was really exciting! We have a huge luminous machine that we spin. People waited for midnight!" said Gomez.

This year, Las Vegas Night honored the 50th anniversary of the VI Montessori School and Peter Gruber International Academy.

*This newsletter written by Anne Salafia
annesalafia@gmail.com*



Message from Jeyan...

Seasons Greetings, dear friends! Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukah! Joyous Kwanzaa!

St. Thomas is brimming with good cheer. We Virgin Islanders just love the holiday season. Old Christmas traditions come to

the fore; our heritage shines. We delight in caroling, though our songs may assume a Caribbean twist. We bake our coconut tarts, our sweet breads and our black cakes. (More likely, we order them from local ladies with the magic touch.) All the traditional Christmas drinks have surfaced: coquito, sorrel, guavaberry liquor.

Sorrel, a delicious deep red local drink, is particularly festive—with or without the addition of rum. And long ago, the Virgin Islanders latched on to the Puerto Rican Yuletide favorite, coquito. It's made with rum (of course!), coconut milk, egg yolk, condensed milk, cinnamon and nutmeg. We'll opt for coquito over eggnog any day.

Guavaberry has its own story. In the wee hours of Christmas morning, carolers once serenaded the neighborhoods. While they took great pride in their song, they were also out for another glass of guavaberry. Along with the usual carols, they worked in the Guavaberry Song.... *Good mornin, Good mornin, Everybody, ah come fo me guavaberry, how you do this mornin....* Delighted children woke for the little show, and parents poured the songsters another round. Pretty soon, they moved along to the next house. It was tradition, back in the day.

St. Thomians still love to sing and adapt a cheery competitiveness. You'll hear the different choirs on Christmas morning downtown in Emancipation Gardens. Of course, we still relish our cultural Christmas goodies and go about town in high spirits.

I wish you joy during the holidays and much happiness in the New Year.



Jeyan Stout

Jeyan

Jeyan Stout, GRI, CRS, e-Pro,
Previews Property Specialist
Coldwell Banker Stout Realty

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CHRISTMAS DOWN ON THE DOCK

On December 11th, the West Indian Company Ltd. (WICO) wrapped up its yearlong Centennial Celebration with its famous Christmas Tree Lighting and Jazz Concert. Yuletide festivities were in full swing all day and into the night at Havensight Mall and on the WICO dock.



Islanders look forward to the annual event; visitors consider it a special treat. This year, *Norwegian Epic*, *Carnival Conquest* and *Royal Princess* were berthed at the dock, and passengers called St. Thomas a highlight of their cruise. Steel pan bands played Christmas tunes. Choirs serenaded the crowds with carols. Meanwhile, local vendors offered traditional holiday fare. Folks shopped for unique Caribbean gifts from the Arts and Crafts Plaza and for values on fine merchandise in the Mall stores.

Festivities kicked into high gear when Flambo Combo, a St. Thomian youth Quelbe band known throughout the Caribbean, performed. With Santa on hand, WICO then commenced its ceremonious Christmas tree lighting and the Christmas Parade began its march. Troupes of majorettes, marching bands, and the Holy Family Cultural Dancers wended their way through the mall. Spectrum Band performed soca, calypso, zouk and reggae songs, capping off the night in grand Virgin Island style.

Born in December of 1912, the West Indian Company Ltd, still throws a great Christmas party at age 101.

Carlos Aguilar Match Race Draws Top Sailors

Match Racers from Finland, Greece and the USA came to compete alongside Virgin Islanders in the 6th Annual Carlos Aguilar Match Race, held November 22nd-24th. Skippers and their crews raced one-on-one against other teams in St. Thomas Harbor. In round-robin fashion, 10 teams rotated in and out amongst eight IC24s, testing their skills in various boats and against various teams.



Don Wilson of Chicago had never sailed an IC24. He had never sailed in Virgin Island waters and had never sailed with his crew, which included two Antilles High School students. But Wilson won and attributes the win to his team.

This year the race had a twist: each team included at least one junior sailor.

Thirteen year-old Teddy Nicolosi sized up his comfort level with the winning skipper. "Don Wilson seemed really smart, and he was also nice. He worked well with the crew members."

"Conditions were tricky", said Amanda Engeman, a 10th grader on the Antilles High School Sailing Team. "Because we were sailing inside the harbor, the winds were all over the place. One minute you were winning by a lot, the next you were losing." Engeman got to

crew with Wilson by chance--her weight was right.

Spectators sat along the sea wall. "Usually sailing is a sport where you can mess-up, and no one is watching," Engeman said. "But this time they were watching!"

Engeman began sailing at age four. She practices four days a week, teaches the sport to children, and competes in the States. Teddy Nicolosi has also become a star sailor, racing in the U.S. and in Bermuda. Last summer, he and four other VI Junior Sailors competed in the Opti World Championships in Lake Garda, Italy. "It was my first World Championship," he said.

Miracle on Main Street Boat Parade

Sailboats, power boats and dinghies, all lit up and decorated with elves, neon palm trees and plenty of St. Nicks, paraded along the downtown waterfront at sundown on December 13th. From a 15-foot miniature tug to a 83-foot pirate ship, a dozen and a half boats showed off with holiday pizzazz.

The whole island came out to watch. As is their custom, boats played to their audience; they practically flirted. With a swish of the stern here and a seeming curtsy there, the boats vied for cheers and applause, not to mention cash prizes.

Little kids loved it. Grown-up kids let themselves be dazzled, enjoying the top of the season while they were at it. Some booked hotel rooms downtown to prolong the fun. (Tickles Dockside Pub threw an after party.)

Now in its 21st year, the "Miracle on Main Street" boat parade has long been a favorite Christmas festivity on St. Thomas. School groups bring their instruments and perform ahead of time; shops in Palm Passage stay open late and ring with holiday cheer. Before the decked-out boats slipped back off into the night, winners donated their cash awards to charity.

"It's a unique and much-anticipated event that highlights and celebrates the island waters that surround us," said Erik Ackerson, parade director.



Photo by Thomas Layer



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