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Business Monday

Made in the USVI initiative pops up on the internet

By LORI ABBOTTS
Daily News Staff

The Made in the USVI pop-up shop has been so popular, it's popping up everywhere — most recently on the internet. With a new online store, the Made in the USVI shop represents several V.I. artisans offering top quality merchandise made in the Virgin Islands to customers year-round and around the globe.

Enterprise Zone Commission Managing Director Nadine T. Marchena Kean and Tasida Kelch, executive director for the V.I. Council on the Arts, have been leading efforts to showcase local artists at the annual pop-up shops on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The EZC, an entity of the Economic Development Authority, has been introducing products made in the U.S. Virgin Islands around the world for some time. They've been shown in Brazil, Denmark Italy, Canada, the Caribbean chain and all of the major trade shows in the U.S. as part of a grant working with the Small Business Administration to assist clients to export their products.

What they didn't have was someplace in the Virgin Islands where shoppers could find these products all in one place and where they were able to get their clients' products shown in a more consistent manner. Three years ago, they decided to offer a temporary pop-up shop on Main Street in what was once the old Benneton store.

The Made in the USVI pop-up



Daily News file photo

Nadine T. Marchena Kean, Enterprise Zone Commission managing director, left, and Tasida Kelch, executive director for the V.I. Council on the Arts, have been leading efforts to spotlight local artists at the Made in the USVI pop-up shop.

The Made in the USVI pop-up shop — a project spearheaded by Enterprise Zone Commission Managing Director Nadine T. Marchena Kean and Tasida Kelch, executive director for the V.I. Council on the Arts — represents several V.I. artisans offering top quality merchandise made in the Virgin Islands to customers year-round and around the globe.

shop was a huge success. They originally planned on opening for one month for the holidays, but high demand allowed them to remain open for five months. By the Monday after

Carnival, they had sold out of most of their products.

The shop includes a wide variety of items, from jewelry to clothing, food products, art, books, ornaments, cards,



Photo by ECONOMIC ZONE COMMISSION

Books from Pamela Richards-Samuels' Bookstore 340 featuring island culture, history and cooking can be found in the Made in the USVI pop-up shop.

candles, soaps, lotions, spices, bush tea, bags and more.

Made in the USVI expanded to include St. Croix. They are now held in the Dorsch Center in Frederiksted on St. Croix and in the Francois Building across from Fort Christian on St. Thomas, the sites of the V.I. Council on the Arts offices on both islands. A fourth pop-up will open April 21 through April 30. They plan to hold one on St. John in July.

To be a part of the shop, business must meet a certain set of criteria. "In order to get into the store, we



Photo by ECONOMIC ZONE COMMISSION

Mugs with V.I. scenes by Christa's Art Gallery are available at the Made in the USVI pop-up shop.

pre-screen the client," said Marchena Kean. "We are looking for the best of the Virgin Islands. You are representing the Virgin Islands every time you step forth with your product. We want to make sure each product says 'this is the best we have to offer,' so you have to go through a screening. We look at your food, clothing, jewelry, spa products, the packaging, how you are trying to market your product, the type of claims you are making about your product, the pricing and you have to be licensed."

Those who are interested in participating in the April pop-up shop but are new to the program, should email ezc@usvieda.org by Friday to set up a pre-screening appointment.

The pop-up shop is part of a broader initiative by the EZC. They offer an incubator program to assist

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