VIEDA small exporters' program to host USVI International Artistry & Business Expo

Submitted by Semele George on Sat, 09/06/2014 - 8:04am

CHARLOTTE AMALIE, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands - September 5, 2014 - To promote some of the USVI's best small manufacturers that are interested in exporting their products and services to foreign buyers, the V.I. Economic Development Authority's (VIEDA) State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) Program will be hosting the 2014 U.S. Virgin Islands International Artistry and Business Expo from September 19-21, 2014 at the Mark C. Marin Center (MCM Center) at Antilles School on St. Thomas. This expo is co-sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the federal agency that awarded more than $800,000 to the Territory in grants for the STEP Grant Program to be administered by the VIEDA in the Territory.

This expo will feature small manufacturers - who will be also exhibitors at the expo - in the industries of food, gift and arts, beauty and wellness, music, jewelry, fashion, building and industrial materials. The 2014 U.S. Virgin Islands International Artistry and Business Expo will also provide small manufacturers with the opportunity to network with international buyers from throughout the Caribbean, introduce their products to potential foreign customers, learn from industry experts, and connect with potential investors.

Potential buyers in various industries and the general public are invited to attend. This expo is free to the general public.

"Many of our local small businesses are extremely passionate about what they do, and this passion is a reflection of the ongoing entrepreneurial spirit that exists in our Territory. This event is a tremendous opportunity to promote our unique culture and our local entrepreneurs both locally and abroad," said VIEDA's Chief Executive Officer Percival E. Clouden.

The following is the expo's schedule of activities from September 19-21, 2014: ?

- **Friday, September 19, 2014 at 5:00 p.m**. - Activities: Food demonstrations and competitions
- **Saturday, September 20, 2014 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.** - Activities: music competitions, fashion shows, business classes, exhibitor presentations, and a farmers market.
- **Sunday, September 21, 2014 from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.** - Activities: jazz performances, massages, exhibitor presentations, and *Love Living Wellness*

Exhibitors will be able to sell their products and services at booth display areas and perform live demonstrations. Workshops will also be held during the expo to teach the exhibitors and expo attendees how to successfully market their products and services to foreign buyers.

In 2011, the VIEDA was designated by USVI Governor John P. deJongh, Jr., as the agency to administer the STEP program in the Territory. The VIEDA has recently applied for a third grant for this program.

The STEP program is a three-year pilot program trade initiative that is authorized by the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010. It is designed to help small businesses grow, increase their exporting activities, and raise the value of the products and services of small business exporters.

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To purchase tickets, or to learn more about this expo, contact Nadine T. Marchena Kean via email at nmarchena@usvieda.org, or at tel. no.: (340) 714-1700, ext. 256.

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