



Dynamic Dancers membership includes Shay Powell, Darianny Santana, Janica Rogers, K'nia Lindo, Kimiyah Cornelius, J'nay Liburd, J'aime Smith and Kimora Penn.

St. John dance group gears up for stateside performance

By **ANDREA MILAM**
Special to The Daily News

ST. JOHN — A group of 25 St. John girls are making final preparations for their trip to New Hampshire later this month where they will perform in a recital at Lakes Region Dance studio in Meredith, N.H.

The girls are part of Dynamic Dancers, a group founded in 2013 by Loraine Richards, and it will be the second trip to the states for the dancers, who performed at a recital in New York last year.

The idea for the upcoming trip came about in the wake of Hurricane

Irma, when Lakes Region Dance tumbling teacher Sue Nicholas was matched with one of the Dynamic Dancers in a program that aimed to connect statesiders with children on St. John.

“The group St. John Kids set people up with kids on-island who needed items after the hurricane, with the idea that the matches would stay in touch and send boxes for the children’s birthdays or Christmas, and maybe even meet them during trips to the island,” said Nicholas. “A friend of mine matched with Loraine’s daughter and got the idea to invite the Dynamic Dancers up here

to perform.”

Richards immediately jumped at the chance, recognizing the opportunity for the girls to show off the results of their hard work in front of a large audience. It also will be the first time for many of the girls to get off the island since Irma devastated St. John on Sept. 6.

“This will be a big stress relief for the kids,” said Richards. “Most of these kids have never left. They went through the storm and they’ve been here through the whole recovery process.”

Richards originally planned to take 18 girls to the New Hampshire recital,

but there was so much interest in the trip that she is now traveling with 25.

The Dynamic Dancers range in age from 3 to 13. The girls expressed a mixture of excitement and nerves at a recent practice, where they rehearsed dances to the 2018 soca hit “Hello” and Beyoncé’s “Run the World,” and they worked on the details of their grand entrance to the stage.

Some of the girls, such as second-grader Princess Paul, who’s new to the Dynamic Dancers this year, said she was “a little bit scared” about the idea of performing in front of a large stateside audience. But she hasn’t left the island since Irma hit, and she said

she is excited to “get away for a bit.”

Sixth-grader De’neicia Baxter, who’s been in the Dynamic Dancers since the group’s inception and now choreographs many of their routines, said she was looking forward to the trip and isn’t nervous about performing. She traveled with the dancers last year to New York, where her favorite experience was an excursion the girls took to Niagara Falls.

Seventh-grader Jada Jn-Phillip has been in the Dynamic Dancers for four years and also made the trip to New York last year.

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Dynamic Dancers, front row, Negesti Dennis, De'neicia Baxter, Nadjah Jn-Phillip, Kaviah Clarke, Kahleya Alford and Mariela Reynoso. Back row are Kasia Cornelius, Nitta George, Nicol Pepen, Jada Jn-Phillip, Janickka Ramos and D'Naijah Chinnery.



Dynamic Dancers Kacce Alford, Aniya Richardson, Norah Chouiniere, Indigo Ferrell, Noelle Boynes, A'Jehnjah Bramble, Ivory Ferrell and Caylee Daigneault.



DANCERS

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"I'm not nervous," Jada said of the upcoming New Hampshire performance. "It's just like dancing here but there are more people. I need a week off from St. John, because it's stressful since Irma. I haven't left island since the storm."

Above and beyond the recital experience and the chance to get a break from storm recovery, Richards is excited to show the girls a state that they might not otherwise get the chance to visit.

"New Hampshire is not somewhere that kids from the Virgin Islands would just get up and go," said Richards. "When I got the invite for us to perform there, I took it, because most kids from here might go to Florida or Atlanta, but not New Hampshire."

Richards has led several fundraisers to help cover the estimated \$30,000 cost of the trip, and the Lakes Region Dance studio has done fundraising for the Dynamic Dancers as well.

About \$8,000 still is needed to help cover the cost of airfare, accommodations, transportation and food for the 25 young dancers. To donate toward the Dynamic Dancers' trip to New Hampshire, contact Richards at **340-626-4804** or llovelyloraine@



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