



# Love City Livin'

## Clarence Stephenson: The busiest man on St. John

By **ANDREA MILAM**  
St. John Correspondent

Ferry boat captain. Fire Service sergeant. Basketball coach for several different teams.

Each sounds like a full-time job in its own right, but believe it or not, this is a list of the careers and responsibilities of one St. John man: Clarence Stephenson.

Born in New York and raised on St. John, Stephenson knew from the time he was young that he wanted to be a ferry boat captain.

"My uncle Winston Wells, who the ball field is named after, was a captain," said Stephenson. "It's in my blood."

Stephenson graduated from Ivanna Eudora Kean High School in 1993, went on to earn his captain license in 1994, and immediately went to work for Varlack Ventures. The job kept him busy enough, but in 2006 he decided to add to his resume by joining the Virgin Islands Fire Service.

"I just love serving my community," Stephenson said. "It was my calling."

Between eight-hour shifts with Varlack Ventures and 24-hour shifts at the fire station, Stephenson tries to keep his weekends free — for basketball. It's a sport he's loved since his childhood in Adrian, where he and his peers formed a team they called Out Deh Bush, as many a ball was lost to the bush surrounding the basketball court.

Stephenson has coached basketball at the former Guy Benjamin School, Julius E. Sprauve School, and Giff Hill School, where he's the basketball coach. He also runs his own leagues for St. John players, taking them to tournaments on St. Croix and Puerto Rico.

"We competed at UVI recently and we didn't win any games but they got



Capt. Clarence Stephenson takes the helm of the Varlack Ventures ferry, one of the many hats he wears as an active member of the St. John community.

better with every game," Stephenson said. "I just love coaching. I love seeing the look on their faces."

Stephenson has plans in the works for an under 8 team, which he hopes to start up this month. He noted that kids on St. Croix and St. Thomas start playing on teams at a younger age than kids on St. John, and he wants to give Love City youth a similar leg up on the game. All the time he puts in with his basketball leagues is on a

volunteer basis.

As if captaining, firefighting, and coaching don't keep him busy enough, Stephenson is also a part of the St. John Youth Organization, a group stemming from the St. John Long Term Recovery Team, which arose after Hurricane Irma. The organization is working to launch an after-school program, a junior firefighter program, and a remote control boat-building program for island youngsters.

Stephenson's efforts have not gone unnoticed.

"Clarence has a kind of genuine positivity that comes only in those who believe the world is a good place," said Chelsea Baranowski, who works with Stephenson on the St. John Youth Organization. "Between his multiple jobs and many community involvements, there isn't much time left over, but he still manages to be a family man and keep that smile on his face, always. For

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— Chelsea Baranowski,  
St. John Youth Organization

years to come he will be running from island to island, tournament to tournament, to ensure our children are seen and heard."

Stephenson is also a member of the St. John Cancer Fund, he's a member of St. John Rescue, he teaches CPR, and he's a community emergency response trainer for the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency. Despite the countless ways Stephenson is working to make St. John a better place, he remains humble. When asked about his most memorable moment working as a firefighter, instead of telling a tale of heroics, he speaks about the way the community came together after Hurricane Irma.

"I love my community," Stephenson said. "I love St. John. There's just something about St. John."

One of the St. John Youth Organization's goals is to fix up the Pine Peace basketball court with new backboards and a shade structure over the bleachers, which were lost during Hurricane Irma, and the organization is hoping to get the entire court covered so games don't have to stop due to rain. To support this project, visit <http://thestjohnfoundation.org/donate-long-term-recovery> and earmark the donation for the Youth Organization.

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Photo by ALANNA SMITH  
Kai Frett and Henry Hinkel pull a boat sail out of the water at Princess Bay.



Photo by KAREN JARVIS  
Chela Thomas, Alanna Smith, and Celia Rogers work to clean up the Drunk Bay shoreline.



Photo by ALANNA SMITH  
Virgin Islands Expedition Company owner Mike Spivey kayaks Princess Bay during Saturday's cleanup.



Photo by ALANNA SMITH  
Friends of VINP president Joe Kessler, on vessel, assists volunteers Erin Lieb, Larissa Aumand, and Pete Mattiuz.



Photo by KAREN JARVIS  
Genia Kobryn works with Rick Gupman to log garbage collected at Drunk Bay on Friday.

### Cleaning up, St. John style

Volunteers took to St. John shorelines during the weekend for two events in conjunction with the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup.

On Friday, the Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park tackled Drunk Bay on the island's windward coast, where ocean trash from across the Atlantic collects. The next day, 12 volunteers joined park officials to clear Princess Bay, where wrecked boats were removed in August.

Items found in Princess Bay waters included boat sails, a toilet, boat batteries, cushions, and other boat parts.

"We had to cut ourselves off from picking up the trash," said Alanna Smith of the park. "There was so much, even more than we anticipated."

Hurricane boat debris remains in Princess Creek, as well as Otter and Water creeks, and the park service hopes to host more water-based cleanups in the future.

### Love City Happenings

#### St. John Recovery Choir rehearsals kick off today

The St. John Recovery Choir will hold its first rehearsal of the season today at 5:30 p.m. at the St. John School of the Arts. Everyone ages 15 and up are welcome, or ages 9 to 14 are welcome to join with an adult. Membership is free, but those who are able are asked to donate \$30 toward the cost of materials. For more information, contact the choir's director, Kristen Carmichael-Bowers, at [kristen.carmichael.bowers@gmail.com](mailto:kristen.carmichael.bowers@gmail.com) or **802-380-0761**.

#### Carolina Corral fun day set for Oct. 13

The Carolina Corral will host a free back-to-school fun day on Oct. 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with a variety of games including balloon toss, egg and spoon, chicken races, and a donkey obstacle course.

There will be crafting activities and a contest to see who can take the best selfie with a Carolina Corral resident, along with food, drinks, and pony or donkey rides. Free transportation will

be provided between Cruz Bay and Coral Bay.

### Rotary seeks volunteers for Thanksgiving dinner

The Rotary Club of St. John is seeking volunteers for its annual Thanksgiving dinner on Nov. 22 in the Frank Powell Park. Last year, they partnered with the St. John Community Foundation to feed more than 700 people. To volunteer at this year's event, contact Teri Mandemaker [tmandemaker@hotmail.com](mailto:tmandemaker@hotmail.com).