Viya

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jennifer Matarangas-King
Vice President of Public Relations | Governmental Affairs
o| 340-712-5053 **m|** 340-717-5886 **e|** jking@viya.vi

Viya Supports UVI's 13D Business Launch Competition With $50K In Prize Funds

St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, USVI – June 11, 2021

The University of the Virgin Islands' 2021 13D Business Launch Competition was recently held virtually and is the culmination of a series of four independently run entrepreneurial programs at UVI. Viya, for the past nine years, has provided $50,000 in prize money for the winners.

The Competition, sponsored by 13D Research and Viya, is designed to eliminate the obstacle of financing for UVI student entrepreneurs who have developed potentially profitable businesses, but could benefit from access to start-up capital.

Although COVID-19 created a challenge for students throughout the Virgin Islands, three firms pitched the judges for the startup funds they needed to launch their businesses. Those judges were:

- Mrs. Jennifer Matarangas-King (VP of Public Relations and Governmental Affairs for Viya)
- Mr. Jonathan Gula (formerly of 13D Research)
- Mr. Leon Hughes (CEO of NEARiX)
- Dr. Tom Lombardi (University of the Virgin Islands)

After significant deliberation by the judges, the three business that pitched were all awarded startup funds consistent with their firm's needs. Those three firms are:

Bloom Altitude 365

Founder: Jessica LaPlace

Startup funds awarded: $24,000

Bloom Altitude 365 is an on-line organic hemp-based products retail shop.

Fall in Love with the Virgin Islands

Founder: Christina Lee

Startup funds awarded: $17,000

Fall in Love with the Virgin Islands is digital media marketing company utilizing digital media devices that will be installed in taxi cabs in the Virgin Islands.

Melanin Suds

Founder: Lateefah Evans

Startup funds awarded: $6,000

Melanin Suds is a handmade artisan soap company.

Jennifer Matarangas-King, Vice President of Public Relations and Governmental Affairs has served as a judge since the inception of the program. “Viya is pleased to once again provide prize money for this incredible program that provides financial support and resources for Virgin Islands entrepreneurs whose business ideas are truly innovative. This is another facet of Viya’s continuous support for the University of the Virgin Islands and Virgin Islands scholars.”

Matarangas-King concluded, “We were especially proud of these leaders who created businesses during a very challenging time in history when many small businesses were shuttered. The fact that these entrepreneurs developed a business plan, sought funding, and brought their dreams to fruition is truly commendable. On behalf of the Viya team, I wish the winners all the best in their business endeavors.”

###

About Viya: Viya is the largest telecommunications provider located in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), providing a full suite of telecommunications and entertainment services. Our family of services for both the business and residential markets include wireline and wireless voice service, fixed and mobile broadband plus cable television service offered over a hybrid fiber-coaxial wireline network and a state-of-the-art 4G LTE wireless network serving St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John.