Virgin Islands Celebrates 50 Years Of Carnival

(NAPSA)—This year marks the 50th anniversary of the St. Thomas Carnival. To commemorate this important cultural tradition, St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John are celebrating in grand style with extravagant displays of pageantry, spirited music festivals, mouthwatering food fairs, parades and more.

Appropriately named "A Cultural Roogoodoo for Carnival 2002," this year's festival will feature colorful costumes, dancing, steel pan music, calypso and local delicacies. The first Carnival was held on St. Thomas on Valentine's Day, 1912, and continued for two years. Due to the beginning of World War I, the celebrations respectfully ended and did not recommence until 1952, wherein it became the cultural mainstay that it is today. St. Thomas' Carnival has evolved during the past 50 years as one of the most lively celebrations in the world—enjoyed by residents and visitors of all ages. Celebrations for the 50th anniversary began last year and will continue through December 2002.

Food, entertainment and music are the cornerstones of Carnival fun. The food festivals on all three islands are some of the most enticing events during the Carnival celebrations. The St. Thomas Carnival food fair (April 24) undoubtedly will offer delicious indulgences from Johnny cakes and Kallaloo to Vienna cakes and fresh tropical fruits.

Few images of Carnival stand out like the mocko jumbies who parade down the streets of Charlotte Amalie on stilts during the

Over the past 50 years, Carnival has become a key cultural tradition in the Virgin Islands.

annual Children's and Adults' Parades (April 26 and 27). The dancing figures remind audiences of the islands' rich African heritage.

The pulsating sounds of Carnival —calypso, steel pan and quelbe— will keep revelers dancing in the streets. Calypso competitions such as the "King and Queen of the Band" (April 17) and J'Ouvert (April 25), are events that will keep participants and spectators carousing into the morning hours.

Many hotels and resorts on St. Thomas are offering special rates for this event. For a complete calendar of events and information about Carnival 2001-2002, visit www.vicarnival.com or call (340) 776-3112. For additional information about the United States Virgin Islands, call 800-372-USVI or visit www.usvitourism.vi.