

Carnival Village opens with Jam Band as honorees

 Suzanne Carlson / By SUZANNE CARLSON Daily News Staff

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ST. THOMAS — Three musicians who have played with Jam Band over the years said they were touched that the band was recognized as the 2016 Carnival honorees.

“It’s a pleasure, it’s an honor,” said Robert Leonard, who played keyboard with the group for many years. “We love playing for Carnival.”

21-time Road March Champions, Jam Band also provided the theme for this year’s Carnival — “Nothing is More Fabulous Than Carnival in St. Thomas!” — which is from the lyrics to their song “Showtime,” performed by the late Nick “Daddy” Friday.

Ambrose Schmidt, who played trumpet, said it is a “great, great honor.”

Calvin Jones, chairman of music at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, said he played trumpet and keyboard for Jam Band.

“It’s really rewarding to see it come back and be recognized as a great body of work that we did,” he said.

Jones said that beloved singer “Daddy” Friday’s legacy is his unique musical style and “the sheer number of songs that he produced that were hits.”

Gov. Kenneth Mapp cut the ribbon at Carnival Village on Friday along with Carnival Queen Kamarsha Potter.

Mapp said he intends to enjoy himself but won’t be able to sample food from every Carnival booth.

“I am on a dedicated plan to lose 75 pounds,” he said, noting he is looking forward to eating “lettuce, tomato, fungi, fish, conch and rice and sweets.”

Mapp issued a plea to Carnival goers to attend Friday’s Children’s Parade and fill up “a lot of empty spots” on the route last year.

“Let us enjoy that day with them,” Mapp said.

He also reassured government employees that the first raises to come from his plan to increase salaries for workers will start showing up in paychecks this week, so “you can spend a little extra money for Carnival.”

Kenneth Blake, chairman of the V.I. Carnival Committee, welcomed visitors to the official opening of Carnival Village. He urged attendees to drink responsibly, and alert authorities if they see something amiss.

Lt. Gov. Osbert Potter said he was proud to be sharing a stage with his niece, Carnival Queen Kamarsha Potter, and “I am so extremely proud of her, she doesn’t even know.”

Unlike Mapp, Potter said he plans to try food from every booth at Carnival Village.

Sen. Myron Jackson spoke on behalf of the Legislature and Senate President Neville James.

A number of senators attended the opening of Carnival, and “Carnival speaks to the soul with its vibrant colors, costumes, and music,” Jackson said.

V.I. Police Commissioner Delroy Richards Sr. commended police officers for, “continuing to do the best that they can with the challenges and the obstacles that they face on a daily basis.”

He also said that Nick “Daddy” Friday and Jam Band always complied with police instructions, and thanked them for that.

Richards said police are committed to providing visitors with safety and security during Carnival, and said additional officers from St. Croix will come to St. Thomas to help monitor J’ouvert and other activities closely.

Merwin Potter, administrator of St. Thomas, urged visitors to take in everything Carnival has to offer.

“A lot of effort has been put in to make it safe and clean and so we want you to enjoy it,” Merwin Potter said.

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Daily News Photo by NOELLE OLIVE

Emcee Symra Brown introduces this year's Carnival Village honorees, the Jam Band, including 2016 Adult Parade Grand Marshal and trumpet player Ambrose Schmidt, left, keyboardist Robert Leonard, and keyboardist and trombone player Calvin Jones, at the Village opening Friday night in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. The 2016 Carnival Village is named after their song "Showtime." This year's Carnival slogan, "Nothing is more fabulous than Carnival in St. Thomas," is a line taken from that song.