

Island Green Living elects Ridge to Reef Farm director Nate Olive to board

By **SARA KIRKPATRICK**
Daily News Staff

Island Green Living Association has announced the election of new board member Nate Olive, farmer and director of Ridge to Reef Farm on St. Croix.

Olive runs the only certified organic farm in the territory, and is also president and co-founder of the Virgin Islands Farmers Alliance, which helps farmers coordinate resources, advance research and education, and pursue grants to improve production, logistics, and market opportunities.

He brings a wealth of knowledge regarding food security and environmental issues and his selection underscores Island Green's dedication to improving sustainable food sovereignty in the territory, the nonprofit said.

"Nate has been at the forefront when it comes to advancing the tenets of organic farming and pushing



Nate Olive

to reverse food import dependency in the territory, which stands currently at 97%," Harith Wickrema,

Island Green Living president, said in a press release. "He also shares a commitment to expanding sustain-

ability overall in the U.S. Virgin Islands. As a fellow member of the Virgin Islands Food & Farm Council, his commitment and expertise are unparalleled."

Olive, who holds a doctorate in forestry and natural resources from the University of Georgia, is a staunch supporter of organic, ecologically regenerative, and culturally appropriate agricultural practices and is determined to see the territory's farmers eliminate harmful chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, according to the nonprofit.

To that end, he is the USDA's "Transition to Organic Partnership" program coordinator for the region. One of the projects closest to his heart is the territory's Farm to School program, expanding the provision of fresh food from local farms for public school lunch.

To date, Ridge to Reef Farm and 30 other local small farms participate in the school lunch program,

and Ridge to Reef's Farm Share program delivers local produce to over 80 people territorywide on a weekly basis, the nonprofit said.

Olive is a principal investigator for Producer Grant Programs for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. He also serves as board member and treasurer for the Virgin Islands Conservation District. He is an honorary board member on the Local Food and Farm Council, which is charged with implementing the territory's Agricultural Plan, and served as farmer representative on the Agricultural Plan Task Force, the nonprofit added.

Other Island Green board members include Wickrema, Vice President Dawn Henry, Treasurer Curtis Penn, Secretary Akhil Deshwal, Executive Committee Trey Goldsmith, Donald Schnell, Rob Crane, Jim Dobrowolski, Greg Guannel, and David Hall.

See **GREEN**, page 13