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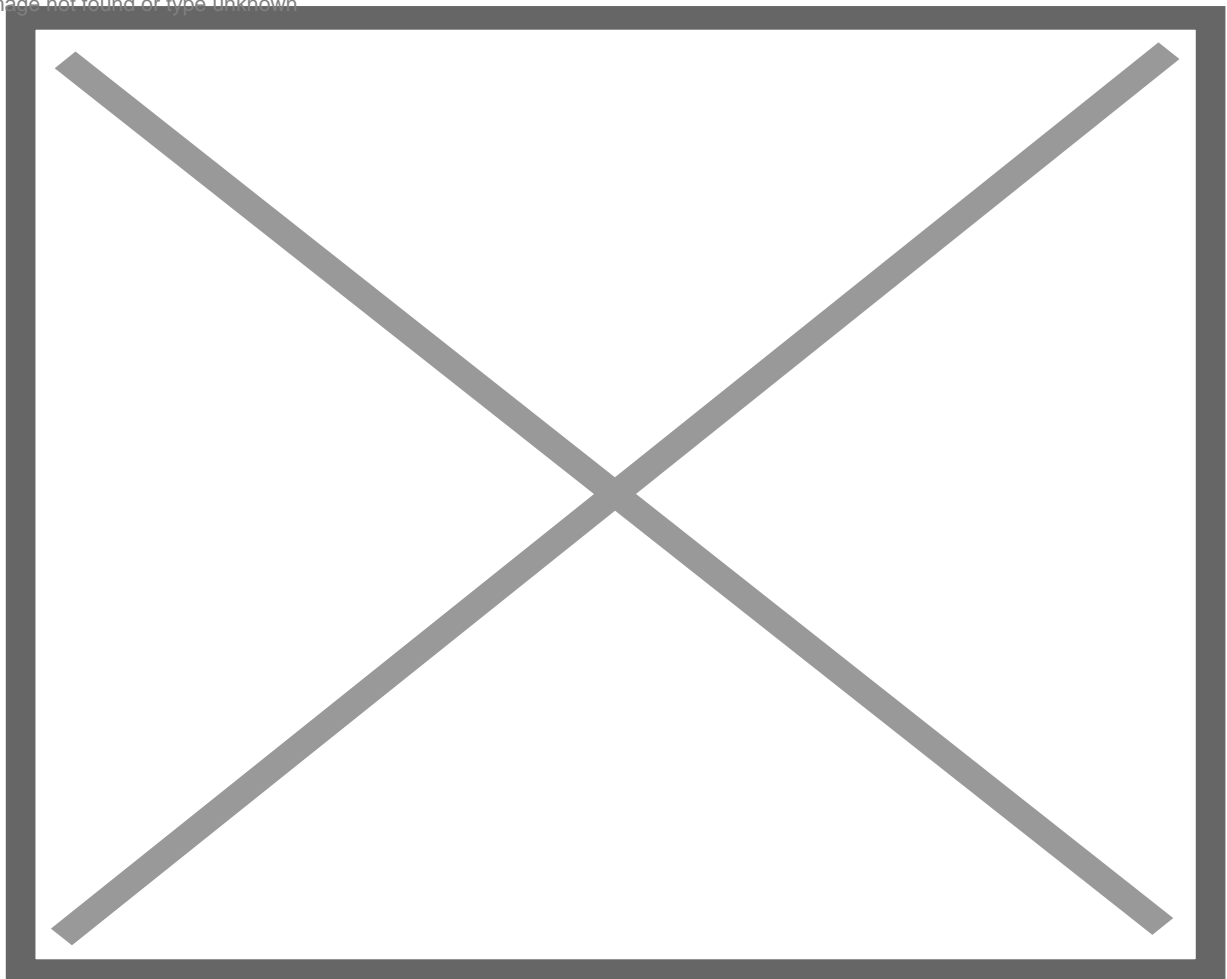
9 Students Recognized in PSA Contest Addressing Substance Abuse and Violence in Virgin Islands

Creative Efforts of Young Students Highlighted in HIDTA Public Service Announcement Competition

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In an inspiring display of creativity and awareness, nine students from the Virgin Islands have been declared winners of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Public Service Announcement Contest.

United States Attorney Delia L. Smith and HIDTA Deputy Director James N. Doby announced the winners, who hail from Alfredo Andrews Elementary School in St. Croix and Julius Sprauve School in St. John.

Running from September 11 to October 16, 2023, the contest was open to students in grades 6 through 8. Participants were tasked with creating and recording public service announcement videos. The themes revolved around substance abuse, violence, or peer pressure, drawing considerable participation from the young students. A panel of judges was responsible for selecting two winning videos from the entries.

U.S. Attorney Smith lauded the initiative, stating, "The HIDTA public service announcement competition was created to provide our students with an opportunity to express their concerns about gun violence and substance abuse in the community. The creativity of our youth continues to inspire us. They all did exceptionally well."

The Virgin Islands HIDTA Prevention Initiative, in partnership with various local and federal agencies, including the U.S. Attorney's Office, the VI Department of Education, and law enforcement agencies, underlines the importance of collaborative efforts in community development. "Collaboration among all agencies and departments, local and federal, is a must and is the only way to further these beautiful Virgin Islands in a positive direction," emphasized Drug Intelligence Officer Rodney F. Querrard. "Together, we can make a difference."

The student winners were honored in ceremonies held on November 8 and 9 [at their respective schools. These events were attended by classmates, teachers, and dignitaries. Prizes for the winning students included gift cards ranging from \$100.00 to \$500.00, certificates of achievement, gift bags from Liberty VI and VIYA, and Red Ribbon Week items.

Since its inception in 2022, the VI HIDTA Prevention Initiative has mentored over 6,000 students across the territory. Its primary focus is on prevention of issues like drugs, crime, and peer pressure, with a commitment to building a crime-free community.

For more information on the HIDTA program and its initiatives, interested parties can visit their official websites at <https://prvihidta.org/> and <https://www.dea.gov/redribbon>.