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The Power of Music: Kevré "Maestro" Hendricks Links Band Programs to Academic Growth

Hendricks emphasizes the connection between music education and improved student performance, urging the community to continue supporting the arts

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Kevré 'Maestro' Hendricks delivers checks to seven St. Croix schools to support their band programs, fulfilling his community-driven initiative during the Crucian Christmas Festival.

ST. CROIX — On Wednesday, Kevré “Maestro” Hendricks was all smiles as he delivered a series of checks to schools across St. Croix.

Mr. Hendricks, the 2024-2025 St. Croix Festival Village honoree, had issued a [challenge to the community](#) during his short acceptance speech on the Village's official opening night.

“Every night of the Village is going to be dedicated to a school in St. Croix's music program,” Mr. Hendricks declared, urging patrons to donate funds to support music in local schools. “All I need from everybody is \$1. The dollar that you could find under the seat in your car, that's the one I want,” he quipped.

By the time the curtains came down on the Crucian Christmas Festival, Mr. Hendricks had raised well over \$10,000 through the initiative. This week, he personally made a check presentation to each of the seven schools that benefited from the effort. “I just want to thank the community for buying into the initiative,” Mr. Hendricks told the Consortium in an interview on Thursday.

He explained how the idea came about. “When it became clear to me that they were going to name the village after me, I started having dialogs and conversations with my mom,” Mr. Hendricks said. While his mother was a font of ideas during the brainstorming sessions, she kept “coming up with so many different ways to try and highlight me.” However, “Maestro” felt that it would be better to use his spotlight to help others. He floated the idea of using his platform to direct community support to the schools, and his mother – an educator – wholeheartedly agreed. With his wife also on board, the plan was set.

The money, according to the wishes of Mr. Hendricks, can only be spent on each school's band program. “They cannot use that money for any other subject area,” he said. While the thousand-odd dollars each school received may not be able to purchase instruments en masse, it can be spent on the incidentals and accessories every budding musician needs. “Reeds, mouthpieces, music for the students to play, strings for the bass guitars, oils for the instruments...just little stuff that people won't generally understand are needed,” Mr. Hendricks explained. “As a [band] director it's really helpful for you to have a lot of those things in stock.”

Finding ways to help support music in schools is a matter close to the heart of the long-time music educator. “The reality is that the general public doesn't really see a lot of the fine arts as a viable solution for employment,” Mr. Hendricks declared. “In the people's mind, either you're a musician and you're rich, or you're a musician and you're broke.” However, over the two or so decades of his career in music education, Mr. Hendricks has seen the positive impact music in schools can have on young Virgin Islanders.

As an example, he noted that his band program has strict entry requirements. “Students need to maintain a GPA between 70 and 75% to even be able to participate in my program,” Mr. Hendricks said. Because his marching band is so popular, students would go to great lengths to ensure they met the academic standard. “They would do study groups together. They would do all kinds of different tutorials together internally to make sure that they were successful, so that the program could thrive and continue to grow.”

The link between musical knowledge and ability and academic understanding and performance has also been demonstrated from the other side of the coin, Mr. Hendricks said. “I've also seen it from the standpoint of being in the classroom and seeing students make the connection between the different subjects,” he explained. “How the length of the instrument affects the pitch. With math, how understanding fractions helps the students to understand the different size and the length of the notes. I've seen it from multiple facets,” Mr. Hendricks continued.

With over \$10,000 now in the hands of schools to be spent on bolstering their band programs, Mr. Hendricks is pleased with how the community rallied behind his initiative. “You hear people say

that the village isn't raising the children anymore, but the reality is, the community just showed that we still are," he noted. "The community needs to be commended for how much they contributed, because they showed that they have a vested interest in our students."

He called on Crucians and Virgin Islanders in general to continue demonstrating the power of positive community action, especially when it comes to the territory's children. "I feel like if we utilize this as a positive vision moving forward, I think that we could break the narrative that the village is no longer present. We just showed them different during the season."

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