

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Students Spend Spring Break Serving Frederiksted Through Restoration and Meal Outreach

Through “Legacy in Bloom” and “Plate It Forward,” students from UVI’s Albert A. Sheen Campus joined volunteers, businesses, and government agencies in Frederiksted to restore the historic cemetery and serve meals to community members.

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UVI Albert A. Sheen Campus SGA students clear leaves and debris from gravesites during the “Legacy in Bloom” service project at the historic Frederiksted Cemetery in St. Croix. By. UVI.

Instead of using spring break solely as time away from campus, students at the University of the Virgin Islands' Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix spent part of their break in Frederiksted carrying out service projects centered on restoration, remembrance, and direct support for the community.

The initiatives, organized by the UVI Student Government Association on St. Croix, were titled "Legacy in Bloom" and "Plate It Forward." Together, the projects brought students, community volunteers, government agencies, and local businesses into a joint effort focused on environmental stewardship, historical preservation, and community care.

"Instead of stepping away for spring break, our students chose to step forward and serve," said Franchel Rodriguez, president of the UVI Albert A. Sheen Campus Student Government Association. "These projects represent our commitment to honoring the legacy of our community while uplifting those who need support today. As student leaders, we believe service is one of the most meaningful ways we can make a difference."

Rodriguez said the projects were intentionally designed to combine environmental stewardship, historical preservation, and direct community support, giving students opportunities to contribute in ways that benefit both the physical surroundings and the people of Frederiksted.

The first initiative, Legacy in Bloom, centered on restoration and beautification work at the historic Frederiksted Cemetery. Student volunteers spent the day clearing vegetation, removing overgrowth, and helping with general cleanup and landscaping across the cemetery grounds.

After the cleanup work was completed, students placed flowers on graves as a gesture of remembrance and respect for generations of Virgin Islanders whose lives helped shape the community.

The cemetery project also included guidance and coordination from territorial government agencies and environmental partners, who assisted with logistics, historic preservation considerations, and environmental stewardship during the effort.

The second initiative, Plate It Forward, was carried out in partnership with My Brother's Table in Frederiksted. There, members of the UVI Student Government Association helped prepare and serve meals to members of the community.

Te'Anna Williams, SGA senior senator on the Sheen Campus, said the effort reflected the importance of compassion and community care.

"Plate It Forward represents the heart of what service means," Williams said. "Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is show up for our neighbors with compassion and support. Helping prepare meals and serve members of the community reminded us that leadership is not just about ideas — it's about action."

The initiative was supported by contributions from local businesses and community partners that donated food, supplies, and volunteer assistance to help serve residents in the Frederiksted community.

“Plate It Forward reminded us that leadership begins with service,” said Sanai Wilkinson, a UVI SGA Junior Senator who participated in the initiative. “Working together to prepare and serve meals showed how powerful small acts of care can be when students and community members come together. It was an opportunity to give back while reinforcing the values of compassion and responsibility that guide us as students at UVI.”

Rodriguez also thanked the government agencies, businesses, and community partners that supported the projects.

“We are incredibly grateful to the government agencies, businesses and community partners who stood alongside our students to make these service projects possible,” said Rodriguez. “Their support showed our students that when a community comes together with a shared purpose, real impact can happen. It reminded us that service is not something we do alone — it’s something we build together.”

Dr. Kenny Hendrickson, interim dean of students for the Albert A. Sheen Campus, also praised the collaboration behind the efforts.

“We are grateful to the many community partners, government agencies, businesses and volunteers who stepped forward to assist the UVI Student Government Association on St. Croix,” said Dr. Hendrickson. “Through initiatives like Legacy in Bloom and Plate It Forward, students, government agencies and community partners came together in a spirit of restoration and compassion to support the Frederiksted community.”

Michael Bell, director of Student Life and Leadership Development at UVI, said the projects reflected the kind of leadership the university seeks to cultivate.

“These service projects embody the spirit of Buccaneer pride and the values we strive to instill in our students,” said Bell. “When students take the initiative to lead meaningful service efforts like these, they strengthen our community while also developing the leadership skills and civic responsibility that will guide them throughout their lives.”

The university said the initiatives reflect the mission of the University of the Virgin Islands, described as the Caribbean’s only Historically Black College and University, as well as its tradition of leadership, service, and community engagement.