

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## WNBA Champ Hosts Basketball Camp At Queen Louise Home

Entertainment / **Published On March 08, 2015 04:32 PM /**

Cynthia Graham **March 08, 2015**



It was nothing but hoops and happiness for the young residents of the Queen Louise Home for Children on St. Croix, when Monica Wright, two-time WNBA champ with the Minnesota Lynx professional women's basketball team, hosted a mid-morning basketball camp at the Home on Saturday.

Donning specially printed T-shirts provided by Wright for the occasion bearing the inscription, "Monica Wright 2015 Basketball Academy," the children were first introduced to a series of warm-up exercises with kid-friendly names, such as donkey kicks, high heels, karaoke and slides.

Then, Wright, whose connection to St. Croix stems from her maternal family that hails from the island, taught the youngsters how to dribble. She instructed them to go from one end of the court to the next, bouncing the ball as they moved across the floor.

The excitement was palpable -- both among the children and the staff.



With the budding ballers, *VI Consortium* caught up with the LSSVI, the Virgin Islands (LSSVI),

L to R: Minnesota Lynx guard, Monica Wright and

LSSVI CEO, Junia John-Straker

"I think that the kids are having a wonderful time. I think it's a really great camp; and they're taking it seriously," she said. "They're looking good and they're really putting what she is teaching them into practice. I'm absolutely proud of the kids and the way they are taking in what Monica is teaching them."

Back on the court, Wright, who seemed to have a natural knack for working with children, was in full instruction mode and the children were taking it all in. This time, she was teaching them the chest pass, a technique of moving the ball from one player to the next by thrusting it from the chest area with a single step forward, but remaining stationary.

John-Straker said LSSVI, which operates Queen Louise Home, regularly hosts outside groups at the facility.

"Lutheran Social Services has a number of programs and we have people coming in, donating time as well as donation items and funds to the home, and to the other programs," she said. "I'm always happy to see this because I think those are experiences the kids will take with them and would never forget."

Wright could then be seen teaching the campers techniques of the bounce pass, the overhead pass, and something she called the catch game, where she threw the ball to each player, instructing them to catch it and throw it back to her. The technique was one that sought to improve the youngsters' focus, as their natural instinct was to pass the ball to another player and not back to Wright.

Then, there was the free-throw exercise, where one pre-teen resident seemed to excel, as he made basket after basket with at least four consecutive shots.

Following the exercise, *VI Consortium* spoke with Wright, who offered details on how the idea to conduct a camp at the children's home originated.

"I have so many relatives here on the island that I haven't seen in forever," she began. "I came back and my cousin had given me an idea to do a camp here because basketball doesn't really have a presence here and Tim Duncan is maybe really the only player that they're familiar with. And especially for women, there's not really a big presence of a female athlete here, so he said it would be great if you came back."



Monica

Wright teaches Queen Louise Home youngster at basketball camp

"For the most part, I wanted them to get a feel for basketball -- maybe if they never played it before -- and to have fun," she said.

Wright went on to praise the Queen Louise staff for their efforts in helping her organize the event, calling the process "easy."

"When I first called and got in touch with Queen Louise, it was such an easy process and they were so welcoming, and it literally took me less than a month to pull it together," she

said. "It was very convenient, and I had a lot of help and support with my family here, as well. So, it was easy; I would love doing this again."

One of two female residents who participated in Saturday's camp said she mostly enjoyed the instruction on dribbling "so when we grow up, we could become a professional basketball player."

However, she said while she had never played the sport before, thinking it was "for boys only because basketball is too wild," she was happy she participated because "she could learn from it."

A male resident, who admitted basketball is his favorite sport, said he enjoyed everything about camp, especially that "I got to make some shots."

The boy went on to say that although he had not met Wright before, he liked that she taught them how to dribble.

"I could dribble, but I have to practice my dribbling skills more so I could be a good dribbler, if I want to join an NBA team," he said.



relations and development

Queen Louise Home

campers received gifts during the Monica Wright Basketball Academy on March 7

"They're loving this. Some of our older kids, you can tell, they're really taking note of the skills that Monica's sharing and the tactics you can do to make that shot," she said. "It just brings new excitement into the weekend."

Graci said campers ranged in age from two to 15, and there were 10 participants. However, she pointed out that Queen Louise Home's Cottages A&B and its Sister Emma Cottage that houses severely disabled children, currently cares for a total of 19 children, the youngest of which is a two-month old infant.

"The number fluctuates daily. We are a residential, foster care program and we're here to accept children with open arms whenever the need is there," Graci said. "The ultimate

goal is to be able to reunite the children with their family, or with another family member, or with a foster care family. We just want to make sure they are safe and comfortable here, but the goal is definitely have them reunited with family members."

In addition to T-shirts, campers received a sporty, drawstring bag filled with a host of items, such as water bottles, posters, and other promotional materials from the Minnesota Lynx basketball team. Not to mention, they received lots of love from the basketball star herself.

"This is my first time and from what I've experienced, I would definitely do this again," Wright said.

Wright plays guard for the Minnesota Lynx, which has won WNBA titles in 2011 and 2013. She was selected by the team as the second overall pick in the 2010 WNBA Draft. Wright was named to the WNBA's All-Rookie Team in 2010.

For more information about LSSVI programs and services, visit the organization's [website](#) or [facebook page](#).