

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Free Will Baptist Students And Stateside Missionaries Beautify Sion Farm Entrance

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ST. CROIX – After years of driving past a disheveled entrance shrouded by untrimmed bushes, Sion Farm residents and passers-by will soon notice prominent changes thanks to a team of staff and students from the Free Will Baptist Christian School and missionaries from North Carolina.

For years the Sion Farm entrance near the Sion Farm Service Station in Christiansted had been maintained by a group of good Samaritans from the neighborhood. But the upkeep of the area dwindled and eventually ceased as time went by, according to Free Will Baptist Church pastor Gene Wooton. Wooton said he was told by the former cleanup lead organizer that overtime no one offered to help, so he stopped maintaining the area

as the workload became overbearing.

On Monday, the latest, service-oriented team took up the maintenance challenge – mowing, cutting, digging, painting and sweating together as they sought to transform the Sion Farm entrance.

















Part of their motivation, according to Free Will National Honor Society (NHS) Adviser Janet Bernard, is that the residential entrance is also a gateway to the school. Bernard said it is also an NHS requirement for members to pick up community service hours so that made participating in such a project even more ideal.

The school plans to make maintenance of the area an ongoing, service project.

"We are adopting this area. We've already asked for permission from the Department of Public Works," Bernard said. "So we're painting over, putting a new sign up. We're planting flowers and will make sure that the grass is kept cut and everything is in order."

NHS students who participate won't get any school credit, but the community service hours they put in will open the doors to scholarships and can help them build a "college brag sheet," according to Bernard.

As for the mainland missionaries who are here temporarily, the project presents an opportunity to serve a community other than their own.

"I feel great. We're helping out the community, and it's awesome to see people go by and waving and saying thank you, it makes you feel good -- showing God's love to everybody," Jake Manning, a youth leader and head of the missionary group visiting the island said. "We loved it here. Everyone is so nice and it's just been a great time."

Leanne Cherry and Hannah Keene, also a part of the North Carolina crew, expressed similar sentiments.

While Monday's work didn't leave the Sion Farm entrance completely transformed, the team plans to see the project through to completion, said Sandy Lane, a sponsor of NHS and a History and English teacher at Free Will.