

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Lockhart Elementary Recognized Nationally For Anti-Bullying Initiative

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ST. THOMAS – An Estate Thomas elementary school was given a national anti-bullying award this month.

Lockhart Elementary School received the 2014-15 Chapter of the Year award from Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), a Raleigh, North Carolina-based national organization that teaches students alternatives to violence as well as other important life skills such as conflict management.

“We’re more active than a lot of the other high schools in the states that have been members for years,” said JoAnne Saunders, paraprofessional and leader of Lockhart’s

Performing Artists in Action Against Violence Everywhere club. “So, they were very impressed with what we do and accepted us right away.”

Lockhart is one of few elementary schools in the nation that has a SAVE chapter, which are generally found on high school campuses.

“I want to congratulate the staff and administrators at Lockhart Elementary School for gaining national recognition for their anti-bullying program,” said Education Commissioner designee Sharon McCollum. “It is more important than ever to have programs like this to stop the pandemic of bullying in our schools. We hope to develop similar initiatives in each of our schools to give our youngsters constructive ways of resolving conflict.”

Saunders said she began offering anti-bullying instruction to students soon after joining the Lockhart staff in 2011. Under her tutelage, students are organized to become “Positive Peers.” Saunders said she draws heavily on her background in the performing arts and dance to rally students around the cause.

“We make up our own jingles, chants and poems around things we see go wrong on the playground, or before and after school,” she explained. “The ultimate goal is peace and to have a fun, peaceful environment for all the schools.”

Principal Audrey Bowery highlighted the positive impact the program has had on Lockhart.

“These students consistently model the behaviors that we expect our entire student body to practice daily,” Bowery said. “As a result of their efforts, and particularly among the primary level students, we are realizing a decrease in the number of bullying incidents, students standing up and doing the right thing, and continuous strong efforts are exerted to make the school a safer place for students. Winning this award is indeed an honor, and we extend heartfelt congratulations to Mrs. Saunders for her dedication to our students.”

Lockhart Elementary’s videotaped public service announcements set to the tune of popular music, recordings of original poetry performances and songs, photographs, and handiwork submitted to SAVE’s national headquarters have kept the school on the organization’s radar over the years.

“It feels good to be appreciated and it gives the kids a boost because there are only about ten active members in the group, but when they perform, they get the whole student body in on it,” Saunders said.

Furthermore, she said it was important to have Lockhart students connect with stateside organizations that espouse similar goals as the school’s anti-bullying program. Lockhart partnered with SAVE in 2013. Through SAVE, Lockhart has also fostered relationships with two other schools in California.

Lockhart Elementary’s SAVE chapter received an acrylic star award by regular mail on April 7 inscribed with the school’s name and chapter No., 3004.