

The Virgin Islands Consortium

At Alphonso Gerard Complex, Children Enjoy Summer Lunch Program, K-9 Unit Demonstration

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ST. CROIX -- The Department of Education has been sponsoring summer lunch programs territory-wide throughout the summer months, in an effort to encourage children to eat healthier.

But for the children at the Alphonso Gerard Complex, located in Christiansted, Friday's program came with a special side dish: a demonstration by the Virgin Islands Police Department's K9-Unit.

Four officers spoke to the children, gathered underneath a tree located on the complex's grounds, giving background on the dogs before [performing the demonstrations](#).

Elwyn Browne, property manager for the housing community, said the decision was made to do something special as the summer lunch program comes to an end. He also spoke on the benefits of engaging these communities.

"I found that empowering the residents and letting them feel that sense of ownership, like this community belongs to me, gets them all excited about keeping it clean, keeping the units well maintained, reporting any issues, and any outsiders coming in to perform any illegal activities. They're always willing to call me and let me know what's going on," Browne, who also manages the D. Hamilton Jackson Housing Community, said.

The manager of these properties for 18 months, Browne said activities throughout the summer included a reading program, a hand-writing skills workshop, and other games and activities, "just to keep them engaged."

Video: VIPD K-9 Demonstration

Browne said the program was initially created to provide the children with lunch at 11:30 a.m., they'd then leave and return at 3:00 p.m. to be served a snack, "but we've kept the kids all day, and we've engaged them in various activities throughout the day," he said.

And Browne sees an opportunity to aid in the children's development if certain tools were made available. "If we can get additional sponsorship in terms of getting some computers for the kids, [that would enable us to do] "a computer literacy program, and just get them more involved in technology because that's the wave of the future," he said. "If we could get some iPads to do some programs and increase their math, science and reading skills, definitely, that would help us."