

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Tourist For A Day: ICMC Summer Interns Volunteer With VI Association For Independent Living

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ST. THOMAS -- It was not strategic planning, accounting spreadsheets or curriculum design programs that kept International Capital & Management Company's (ICMC) summer interns busy this past Tuesday. It was their traditional Intern Community Service Day initiative -- this year serving the clients of the VI Association for Independent Living (VIAL) -- that kept them engaged while they learned important life lessons, as well as the importance of giving back.

That's according to a press release ICMC issued on Monday, the second piece in one day highlighting the firm's give-back efforts.

The VI Association for Independent Living is a private, non-profit organization that provides a range of services for persons with disabilities including independent living skills, information and referrals, peer counseling and advocacy.

In light of the recent 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life, the ICMC interns were able to actively support the work of VIAIL, who seeks to foster the integration of persons with disabilities into the community.

"While offering our interns the important business acumen and education that we hope to impart on them during their time with us, we at ICMC give equal importance to sharing the importance of being a good corporate citizen and giving back," explained ICMC President, Cornel Williams.

After the ICMC Community Relations team met with the organizations Director, Ms. Felecia A. Brownlow, it was decided that the students would offer the organization's clients, most of whom were challenged with hearing and vision disabilities, the opportunity to be tourists for the day, to include stops along Crown Bay, Brewers Bay, Mountain Top and Drakes Seat.

During the trip, the intern volunteers served as their new friend's eyes and ears, as well as assisting them to maneuver more easily at the various location stops.

"I've never had the opportunity to work so closely with persons with disabilities, so it was a great experience that I truly appreciate," says Dior Parsons, Louisiana State University Graduate Student. "I've gained new friends and plan to stay involved with VIAIL in the future."

Prior to the tour, the interns participated in an interactive sensitivity training session at ICMC offices where they were taught appropriate ways of interacting with persons who are deaf or blind, including usage of 'people first' language in order to prepare them for the day ahead. Presenters also provided explanations and demonstrations of braille and American Sign Language (ASL), as well as explaining their personal experiences as individuals with disabilities.

"The onsite training and overall experience was eye-opening for us all," said Karen Nelson-Hughes, ICMC Director of Community Relations. "Each of us learned something new about how to be more supportive and thoughtful when it comes to the disabled community."

The three-hour long tour concluded in the tranquil location of Secret Harbor as the group shared lunch together at the Sunset Grille Restaurant, offering the group an opportunity to share and further engage in a relaxed setting.

"Often times we categorize people based on what we think they can do versus letting them define themselves," Jimez Ashby, a George Mason University undergraduate student, said. "It was a humbling insight that truly resonated with me."