

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD And Crime Stoppers Rejoin Forces To Combat Crime

VIC News / **Published On September 21, 2015 10:54 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **September 21, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- Crime Stoppers USVI - shuttered only three months ago -- has reopened its doors and is now accepting tips again.

The nonprofit organization, in a joint press conference with the Virgin Islands Police Department, said that it decided to restart because the VIPD, through the determination of Commissioner Delroy Richards, Sr., has provided the necessary resources needed for the effectiveness of the organization.

That includes the hiring of two liaisons dedicated to receiving tips from Crime Stoppers, presenting them to the police department, ensuring that the tips are followed up on, and if

they lead to arrests, making sure that rewards are paid out in a timely fashion to tipsters.

"We are very pleased and excited to announce that Commissioner Delroy Richards took our request seriously and has identified a newly retired individual to work with us on St. Croix, and is allowing Lt. Maria Jones on St Thomas to continue being our liaison while he finds the right individual on that island," Judi Buckley, a founder of Crime Stoppers USVI and board chairwoman, said. "Lt. Jones has worked with us in some capacity since our inception, so we're confident in her ability to temporarily handle this assignment. Both of these liaisons will be working under the Commissioner's office."

The St. Croix liaison is Luis Encarnación, a former detective. Both will be paid through monies secured by the 31st Legislature, according to Buckley, a former senator herself, who said senators she spoke agree that Crime Stoppers was a critical component in the territory's crime-fighting efforts.

Commissioner Richards has on numerous occasions expressed disappointment in the nonprofit's closure, and said he was pleased that the organization would be back in operation, bringing along a Memorandum of Understanding with him that he, along with Buckley, signed as a show of solidarity between the two organizations.

"This is a good day for me," Richards began. "It's a good day for the members of the police department, and also a good day for members of this community."

He added: "I have always embraced Crime Stoppers as a valuable tool to law enforcement. They have assisted us in the past with the tips that we have received, and as a result of that we've made significant arrests, and we want to continue with that.

"I have pledged my support again to Crime Stoppers, [and] I will do all that I can to make sure that there's no unnecessary interruptions with Crime Stoppers and the police department."

Richards said the VIPD experienced a "significant drop" in tips once Crime Stoppers ceased operations, attributing the decline to the "trust" the community has placed in the organization, which goes beyond its anonymous nature. Once that option was no longer available, residents felt they had no avenue to share information.

And with the organization being shuttered several months, Buckley acknowledged the unrelenting effort that must be utilized to re-popularize Crime Stoppers, and made known that she had scheduled other media stops to promote the nonprofit's rebirth.

"While we realize six months hasn't passed, our board feels the Crime Stoppers anonymous tip line is needed more than ever and we are willing to re-start this valuable service immediately," Buckley said. "We do not have any paid staff –the board and some dedicated volunteers have given their time on a daily basis to keep this not-for-profit organization running – so we need help spreading this very good news."

She added: "Please tell your friends, post it on social media, announce it on the radio, and send emails. This truly must be a community effort if we are going to succeed. Please follow us on Facebook, too. And if you can, please consider making a donation," Buckley said.

Feature Image: L-R, Former Sen. Judy Buckkey, Commissioner Delroy Richards, Sr. and Retired Detective Luis Encarnacion.

Image Credit: VIPD.

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