

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fathers Are Role Models (F.A.R.M) Launches At Muller Elementary

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Department of Education's St. Thomas-St. John Office of the Insular Superintendent, Division of School and Community Affairs, has partnered with the Virgin Islands Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation to improve the involvement of fathers in the district's public schools through the Fathers Are Role Models (F.A.R.M.) initiative.

Now in its infancy stages, F.A.R.M.—a school-involvement club exclusively for fathers and father-figures of school-aged children whose mission is to improve student attendance, and to tackle challenges some men face in participating in their children's personal and educational development—held its inaugural chapter meeting at the Ulla F.

Muller Elementary School on Saturday, January 16 with 20 men attending the session. Participants discussed matters they wished to undertake, such as involvement in campus beautification projects, and greater participation in school activities, including sporting events and fundraisers. Many say they were motivated to attend Saturday's meeting because of personalized, handcrafted invitations they received from their children.

Founded by Derek Heyliger, F.A.R.M. is headed by Heyliger and Vince Roberts, both of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation, along with Jerae Forde, Education Department Director of School and Community Affairs in the St. Thomas-St. John District. When asked to comment on her outlook for the program, Forde said she expects positive outcomes.

"It's going to be successful because it's coming from a place of men leading other men to success. They are coming up with their own ideas on how to be more active in their children's lives," she said. Additionally, Forde pointed out that the implementation of F.A.R.M. indicates the Department of Education's welcomed participation from parents and the community in providing students with the support they need to be successful.

As the first school to implement F.A.R.M., Muller Principal Symra Dee Brown encourages more Muller School fathers to attend the group's second meeting scheduled for Saturday, January 23 at 9:00 a.m. in the school's cafeteria. Complimentary refreshments and childcare services will be provided.

F.A.R.M. is expected to roll out in each of the district's public elementary schools by December 2016, followed by middle and high schools. Each chapter will operate autonomously and will be led by member-elected officers.

For more information on Fathers Are Role Models, please contact Jerae Forde at (340) 775-2250 ext. 8569.