

The Virgin Islands Consortium

A Glimpse Of Bright Future As Elena Christian Inducts 17 Into Honor Society

VIC News / **Published On May 19, 2016 01:43 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 19, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- On the surface, Wednesday at Elena Christian Junior High School seemed par for the course. Students filed in and out of classrooms as they switched from one subject to the next, hinting that operations at the learning facility were mundane. Yet, while learning continued seamlessly, something special was ongoing: potential future leaders were being honored for academic excellence in the school's second annual National Junior Honor Society (N.J.H.S.), giving a glimpse of the future of the Virgin Islands, and standing in stark contrast to the violence among youth that constantly dominate the news cycle.

N.J.H.S. was founded by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (N.A.S.S.P.) in 1929, with its own constitution and handbook, and established a criteria that parallels the emphasis found in the National Honor Society, with an added purpose to encourage citizenship, according to information gleaned from [N.A.S.S.P.](#)

Parents sat in the school's auditorium enjoying the proud moment as their children were being honored.

"Knowing that she has come a long way and being able to be part of the program is really a blessing," said Celestine Cuffy, whose daughter, Nyana Francois, was inducted into the N.J.H.S. on Wednesday. He said his hope is that she continues to excel into high school and through college. His wife, Hilma Cuffy, described their daughter as a student who has always made the honor roll, and who expresses frustration when her grades are not up to her standard. Their daughter's determination to not only succeed but excel has prompted the parents to stay up late at nights helping with homework, and Mrs. Cuffy counted yesterday's ceremony as the beginning of more great things to come.

"We spend a lot of hours with her," Mrs. Cuffy said. "We have to thank God for the achievements because without His help it wouldn't be possible. So we are celebrating with her today and we look forward to better and great things, and in everything we do we're going to put God first."

Thomas Ledesna, who attended the event in support of his granddaughter Isabel Cancel, was filled with pride as he expressed his satisfaction with her achievements. Mr. Ledesna said Ms. Cancel has always been a student who's done exceptionally well academically, and was valedictorian of Juanita Gardine during her last year at the elementary level.

Now, he said, she is part of Elena Christian's Rocketry Club, and was set to travel today to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to compete in a robotics program.

"I feel amazing that she could help herself and do all these great things," Mr. Ledesna said.

The E.C.J.H.S. program started last year with 17 inductees, according to school Principal Carlos McGregor.

"We're very proud of the students and their accomplishments, and we look forward to next year when we hope to have more," Mr. McGregor said. Criteria to be considered as a member include a GPA of 3.5 or higher, as well as character-building aspects, including community service.

"The program includes well-rounded students that over the year do different things around the community and school, and display citizenship," Mr. McGregor added. The idea is to nurture the students from junior high through high school, building a foundation that creates future leaders.

Stacey Hewitt, a guidance counselor at E.C.J.H. and the school's N.J.H.S. advisor, said aside from good grades and community service, students must also be part of other organizations and give service to the school, including helping teachers with various tasks, among other things.

Students go through an application process that is vetted by teachers, who give Mrs. Hewitt information of student behavior and other qualifying or disqualifying aspects. Students are then gathered and handed letters that reveal whether they were accepted or would have to try again the following year. Ms. Hewitt said 22 students applied this year, out of which 17 were accepted into the program.

© Viconsortium 2026