

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Rakeem Christmas Sets Out To Repair All Ailing Basketball Courts In Territory; Starts Effort With Charity Game Featuring NBA Stars And Rock City

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ST. CROIX -- Approximately one year ago, Virgin Islander and Indiana Pacers NBA player, Rakeem Christmas, [spoke to members of the Frederiksted Boys & Girls Club](#) about his path to success, and encouraged them to pursue their own dreams. He had just come from playing basketball with the children, giving back to his community even before playing a single game in the N.B.A.

One year later, Mr. Christmas is back at it again, this time with an outsize vision: repairing every dilapidated basketball court in the territory over the next several years,

tackling one court at a time and enlisting the aid of the community -- and his influential friends on and off the court -- to help him achieve this vision.

On Saturday, Mr. Christmas and his former Syracuse teammates who are now in the NBA themselves, will play a friendly game of basketball at the Central High School Gymnasium, with superstar duo [R. City](#) out of St. Thomas performing at halftime.

"The proceeds we get from the events go towards building and repairing all the courts here and in St. Thomas," Mr. Rakeem told The Consortium today. "I'm going to try to do one each year. We're going to try our best and see what happens from there."

The Fort Frederick basketball court will be the first to undergo repairs, he said.

Mr. Christmas will host a basketball clinic at the Central High School with the Boys & Girls Club on Wednesday, with the same event being replicated in St. Thomas on Thursday. He said part of his efforts in the territory is to help steer the youth away from gun violence, which has remained stubborn for years.

"You just have to keep your head straight and have an open mind. You have to go out there and do what you love and everything will fall into place. I had no idea that all this would happen to me. I just kept my head on, focused on school and just tried to do my best and everything fell into place for me," he said.

Mr. Christmas said those who are being pushed to get involve in illicit activities by troublemakers, should remember the importance of school. Recounting his own years of education, Mr. Christmas stressed the importance of staying in school and actually learning.

"School is the main thing. Ain't no need for violence. You just have to keep your head on and go out there and do what you have to do," he said.

His ultimate goal, as is arguably the case with every ring-less NBA player, is to win a championship; a that goal stays on the forefront of Mr. Christmas' mind.

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