

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fundraiser For Project Promise A Smashing Success

Opinion / **Published On September 25, 2016 11:37 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **September 25, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Resa O'Reilly, founder of Project Promise -- a nonprofit whose vision is to give at-risk youth the tools and support they need to live healthier lives -- is vivacious. Her spirit brightens up any room, and The Alcove in Christiansted was no different on Saturday night, as she bounced back and forth between conversations, delighting guests who showed up in great numbers in support of Project Promise's 1930's era cocktail party affair. The event was the group's first fundraiser, and turned out to be highly successful.

But for a brief moment, while Sylvia Stanislas, a parent whose son is enrolled in the nonprofit's [Caterpillar Project](#), was giving an account of how the program had changed her son's life, Ms. O'Reilly's eyes welled up; touched by the impact of Project Promise,

and the overwhelming support of the community.

"The outpouring of support has been amazing," Ms. O'Reilly told us last night. "I mean, I literally had people offering me auction items; we did not have to approach every single person." She explained how the owners of [Adventures in Diving](#) reached out to Project Promise via Facebook looking to donate to the cause.

The Alcove was at capacity with supporters from different walks of life. Upon entering, diners, elegantly dressed, enjoyed catered service, while others had drinks at the bar. A separate room to the north hosted live music and the auction tables.

The event offered a silent auction with 30 items including artwork by Leo Carty, two-night stay at the Buccaneer Hotel, a sunset sail for two by Lyric Sails and a private chef experience with Frank Robinson, among other offerings. It also featured live jazz music with performances by Liz Combie and Shay, a complimentary drink, hors d'oeuvres, and two tickets to the Dominican Republic as a door prize.

[View the original embedded media](#)

All the funds raised goes to the Caterpillar Project. The project's initial pilot group of 12 fifth-grade students meet with staffers after school on a daily basis through high school and into college. Over time, the Caterpillar Project will become a "support system" for these youth, with close ties to adults who take a personal interest in their growth and development, according to a blurb on the organization's site.

The Consortium has followed Project Promise's efforts, and participated in a tour up the Caledonia Gut to a waterfall deep Frederiksted in March, where students learned the history of the area. See video [here](#).

The importance of the program cannot be overstated. It takes youths who are statistically less likely to transition into adulthood successfully, and gives them them a myriad of tools to beat the odds.

"The short time that Ricardo has been in the program, I have seen him change. Positive change," said Ms. Stanislas while testifying of the program's impact on her son's life. "I have seen him go through struggles with reading comprehension, motivation, his homework, and with the teachers at Project Promise and the facilitators, he's been doing great. It has helped him a great deal with his confidence to work hard and to keep trying -- pushing through, challenging himself -- to go that extra mile, an extra step in whatever his doing."

Before she spoke to the wider audience, Ms. Stanislas told The Consortium that her son, who would rarely show emotion, is beginning to do just that once the discussion is Project Promise and its many activities. She described the program as the best thing that could have happened to her and her son, and was astonished by how complete it is.

For Ms. O'Reilly, Project Promise is a realization of a dream long harbored in her mind, birthed from adversity after being laid off from the Department of Justice some years ago.

If she was not laid off , "I would have been stuck at the same job, and constantly wishing I had pursued my dreams," she told us in January at the announcement of Project

Promise while expressing that making a difference in the community, especially through a youth-support program, has been her lifelong purpose. “Everything is perspective,” she added, “it’s the choices we make after a difficult decision that will determine the outcome of our future.”

Project Promise's approach, Ms. O'Reilly says, is deliberately holistic and includes the following:

© Viconsortium 2026