

The Virgin Islands Consortium

'Books In Barbershops Plus' Launched At More Than 60 Businesses Across Territory

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Department of Education has launched its Books in Barbershops PLUS literacy initiative at more than 60 barbershops, beauty salons, doctors' and dental offices across the territory, D.O.E. announced Monday.

The initiative's objectives are to bring books into places where children go to receive services to give them the opportunity to read while they wait, as well as to encourage parents to read to their children in these settings.

"This is another part of the Department of Education's push to promote literacy to our children as well as to promote literacy throughout the territory," said D.O.E.

Commissioner Sharon Ann McCollum, during the February 24 St. Thomas launch event held at Children's Dental Care, Inc., in the Havensight Shopping Center.

Baskets of books were delivered to participating businesses on St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John during the week of February 12-18, 2017. The books were supplied through a shipment of 36 pallets of gently used books from Indiana-based Better World Books in the spring of 2016. This is the second shipment of books D.O.E. has received from Better World Books; the first was received in 2015.

Books in Barbershops PLUS was officially launched on February 21 in St. Croix at Royalty Cuts barbershop in the La Reine Shopping Center. Assistant Commissioner Charmaine Hobson praised the effort, stating, "It is awesome that as children are cutting their hair or waiting for the doctor, they have the ability to read something for enjoyment. This has been Commissioner McCollum's dream and vision, and now the Department of Education's vision. We want everyone in the community to embrace reading."

St. Croix Insular Superintendent Colleen Mae Williams echoed Hobson's sentiments. "We have baskets filled with a whole host of books and a variety of reading levels. So, when students come to the barbershop or go to the doctor's office, just for relaxation purposes, they have a whole host of books to choose from."

Royalty Cuts owner, Joey Swanson, who promotes his business as family friendly, said, "We are happy to participate in Books in Barbershops PLUS. Royalty Cuts is a family friendly place, and we support the Department of Education and reading."

Dr. Sonia Taylor-Griffith, owner of Children's Dental Care, Inc., also offered her support of the initiative. "Literacy is something I promote in my practice and have always provided books for my patients to read while they wait," she said. "We are happy to receive these books and I can assure you they will be put to good use."

Ms. McCollum encourages children to take books home with them when they visit the participating businesses, as books will be replenished regularly.

Businesses or organizations interested in participating in Books in Barbershops PLUS may contact the Department of Education on St. Thomas at (340) 774-0100 x7096 and on St. Croix at (340) 773-1095 x7091.

Books in Barbershops PLUS – St. Croix District

BARBERSHOPS Casual Cuts Sunny Isles Barbershop Salvador Barber Shop Bklyn V. I. Professional Cuts Royalty Cuts V.I. Super Cuts Karibbean Kuts

HEALTHCARE Frederiksted Health Care Dr. Rafael Garcia JFL Hospital Clinical Laboratories, Inc. James Dental Center VI Dental Center Vision Center Pediatrics Care Center Department of Human Services Department of Health V.I. Partners for Healthy Communities Graham Urology – Dr. Emmanuel Graham

Books in Barbershops PLUS – St. Thomas/St. John District BARBERSHOPS/SALONS Cardi's Barbershop Donovan's Tanza Barbershop Gomez Barbershop Love City Barbershop Shani's Beauty Salon Smit T's Barbershop Tanya's Touch Hair Salon Supreme Cuts Priscilla's Unisex Beauty Salon Fantastic Beauty Center & Spa Lifestyle

Barbershop

HEALTHCARE Family Dental Services – Commandant Gade –Dr. Gigi Caines Children's Dental Care, Inc. –Dr. Sonia Griffith Prestige Orthodontics – Kistama Naidu, DMD, MS STT Ambulatory Care Clinic – Dr. Elizabeth Flower VI Oral Surgery, Inc., - Dr. Horace Griffith CARI Care – Dr. Reva Richardson Comprehensive Primary Care Specialists, LLC - Dr. Luis Amaro STT Red Hook Family Practice Partner 4 Kids - Dr. Cecilia Penn Yacht Haven Family Practice STT Dept. of Health Family Planning Schneider Regional Medical Center / Pediatric dept. Graham Urology – Dr. Emmanuel Graham Dr. Anthony Francis – Pediatrics Integrative Family Medicine – Hillary Woodson, MD

Feature Image: Royalty Cuts owner, Joey Swanson and son, Joey Jr., give remarks at launch event, Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017.

Correction: February 28, 2017

A previous version of this story, which was issued by the Department of Education, stated that Indiana-based Better World Books was a nonprofit organization. However, the company emailed The Consortium today to correct that error, making known that it's a for-profit social enterprise. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.