

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Project Promise And Community Volunteers Install Memorial Garden At Juan Luis Hospital

VIC News / **Published On March 14, 2017 10:25 PM /**

Staff **March 14, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- The executive management and staff of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (JFL) on Tuesday expressed gratitude to Project Promise's staff, its Caterpillar Project program students, student volunteers from Howard University, JFL's maintenance crew and community partners who on Monday worked together to put together the hospital's Perinatal Loss Center of Hope's Infant and Children's Memorial Garden.

"We appreciate that you chose to support JFL, this means so much to us to have a sacred place for the parents who experience loss, to reflect, and grieve in a peaceful space," said JFL Acting CEO Richard Evangelista.

According to JFL, local carpenter Michael Augustin built a pergola and bench for the garden, and the volunteer group stained the pergola and bench, installed stepping stones and a water fountain, and planted flowers to complete the tranquil space. The memory garden was announced in October 2015 during JFL's annual Remembering Our Babies ceremony for National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and was the vision of Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Nurse Manager Faye John-Baptiste.

"The garden is absolutely gorgeous and I am almost at a loss for words with the outpouring of love we have experienced today," said Mrs. John-Baptiste. "I can't thank Ms. Resa O'Reilly, Project Promise and the other groups enough who came together to make this project possible."

Project Promise's Caterpillar Project students complete community service activities monthly, and the program's president and founder Resa O'Reilly contacted JFL to see how she could assist the hospital since the program's theme this month is Mental Health. Ms. O'Reilly heard about the garden that hadn't been developed as yet, and came up with the concept and garden design revealed Monday.

Ms. O'Reilly was able to get supplies and resources donated from St. Croix Trading, Gallows Bay Hardware, Caravelle Casino, and O'Reilly Plumbing and Construction. Caravelle Casino also sent its employees to volunteer for the project.

JFL said the memorial garden is being dedicated by Project Promise in honor of 18-year-old Crucian native Asa O'Neal, who was a freshman at Howard University when he passed away suddenly last November. Some of Mr. O'Neal's classmates who are visiting the island on Spring Break this week also made up the volunteer pool. They came to St. Croix at the suggestion of Mr. O'Neal's mother, Denise O'Neal who offered them the opportunity to see St. Croix and give to the community.

"We thought it was a great idea because as his friends, we can give back to this community, and at the same time honor Asa's memory," said Howard University student Jordan Lake and fellow Crucian.

"We are extremely grateful to the local businesses and community partners who donated their time, and provided the resources to help make this memorial garden a reality," Mr. Evangelista concluded.