

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Amid Efforts To Curb Crime, V.I.P.D. Makes Time To Build Bond With Community

VIC News / **Published On March 17, 2017 10:44 AM /**

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Police Department hosted a fun day for families and children at Harborview Housing Community here on Saturday, a collaborative and ongoing initiative aimed at fostering strong ties with the communities that it protects.

The initiative included the Virgin Islands National Guard (V.I.N.G.), Positive Guidance, the [Michaels Organization](#), which owns Harborview, Canebrake, and Croixville on St. Croix, and [Sugar Estate](#) in St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands Housing Authority, DHW Business Services and Real Talk Community Group were also partners in the endeavor, dubbed "It Takes a Village".

V.I.P.D. officers showcased their K-9 demonstration and bike safety precautions, according to a release the force issued earlier this week. Officers also gave positive motivational talks on self-esteem, leadership qualities and bullying. V.I.N.G. hosted workshops on the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

Police Commissioner Delroy Richards and Chief Winsbut McFarland attended the affair, greeting children and their families. Children were awarded with medals and V.I.P.D. backpacks as well as school supplies, along with educational games as part of their full participation in activities -- which included spoon race, an obstacle course competition, musical chairs, basketball and volleyball games.

V.I.P.D. officers volunteered their time and provided lunch straight from the grill; hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken wings, veggie burgers, snacks and soft beverages were served, according to Mr. Dratte.

"[The] police department's community outreach is a great way to meet the residence in our community and have the ability to impact a change and to strengthen ties with the police," Mr. Richards said. "Tension is starting to decrease between the community and the police because they see us a lot more in non-critical situations, and that's how you start building trust in the community."

Chief McFarland stated, "We try to make ourselves visible and available — it doesn't have to be a police matter."

This initiative started in November 2016 when the V.I.P.D. went into Profit Hills (Harvey Project), performed a cleanup by removing bushes and creating visibility in dark areas, and hosted residence in a community meeting followed by a fun day on December 3, 2016.

The V.I.P.D. says it will be continuing the initiative in other housing communities throughout the territory.