

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Rakeem Christmas Spends Over \$65,000 Of His Own Money To Repair First Of About 20 Basketball Courts In Territory-Wide Effort

Sports / **Published On July 18, 2017 12:58 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **July 18, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- When NBA player and Virgin Islander Rakeem Christmas said last year that he was [on a mission to repair basketball courts territory-wide](#) in a bid to give idle youth an outlet to express themselves, and as a form of giveback to the community that helped raise him, Mr. Christmas was not pussyfooting.

Approximately one year later, during a press conference held at the Hotel Caravelle in Christiansted on Monday, the NBA player, who last played with the Indiana Pacers, announced the completion of repairs on the first basketball court, located at the Boys and

Girls Club in Frederiksted. The court, overlaid with shock absorbent tiles, will see an official launch with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday morning.

Executed through the Rakeem Christmas Foundation, an all volunteer nonprofit organization, the basketball court -- which was built with over 60 yards of concrete and sits two feet above ground, according to Darren Henry of V.I. Industrial Services -- cost Mr. Christmas well over \$65,000 of his own money, according to Jameela Hamid Joseph, Mr. Christmas's aunt and manager.

The soft-spoken Christmas went through the entire press conference without mentioning the cost on his own pocket; his focus was on the youth of the territory and how he could giveback to his community in a meaningful and substantive way. "For me, starting the foundation was about giving back to the kids in the community, " he said. "I'm all about putting smiles on kids faces, and over the couple of years while I was gone, I heard that there's been a lot of violence and I'm just trying to stop all that and make a safe place for the kids to go."

The organization has been soliciting funds from multiple avenues, including the government of the Virgin Islands, but has so far not received the kind of support it was expecting. Yet, repairing every dilapidated basketball court in the territory over the next several years will take hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars. On Monday, Mrs. Joseph said the foundation will focus much of its attention on building relationships with corporate institutions outside the territory for both financial and other forms of support. And it will continue to reach out to the local government, whose youth stand to benefit greatly from the monumental vision of Mr. Christmas. Mrs. Joseph emphasized that the organization was not attempting to spotlight the government, noting the financial strain the territory is currently facing.

Mr. Christmas sat next to Mrs. Joseph, along with Mr. Henry and Boys & Girls Club Executive Director O'Neil Canton in the Hotel Caravelle lobby, where they discussed everything taking place during the weeklong second annual Christmas in July effort, the most prominent being the unveiling of the new court.

Mr. Henry said his company started work on the basketball court like any other project, but as they progressed, and he saw the excitement on the kids' faces, V.I. Industrial Services' relationship with the Rakeem Christmas Foundation changed. "We started to feel more a sense of support with Rakeem's foundation and the Boys & Girls Club, rather than just a project," Mr. Henry said. He also thanked Mrs. Joseph and Mr. Christmas for the opportunity to be part of the effort.

Mr. Canton began his remarks by expressing gratitude to Mr. Christmas for choosing the Boys & Girls Club, whose head count is about 85 children in Frederiksted. Mr. Canton said one of the club's goals is to open its doors to more teens, and the basketball court, he said, creates an opportunity to start. Mr. Canton also thanked the NBA player for keeping his promise, noting that the club has had some -- not many -- promises broken.

Along with the dedication of the basketball court on Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m. at the Boys & Girls Club in Frederiksted, Christmas in July comes with multiple events this week. On Monday following the press conference, Mr. Christmas visited the Youth Rehabilitation Center to meet with the youth confined there. Today, Mr. Christmas and

Great Adventures are hosting a basketball camp in St. Thomas; on Wednesday he will be at the Juanita Gardine Elementary School; on Thursday the foundation is hosting a V.I.P. reception at the Captain Morgan visitors center, where attendees will get to meet the NBA players who will be on island for Saturday's all-star tournament at the St. Croix Educational Complex (activities include a three-point shootout and dunk contest), as well as some celebrities, including rap star Jadakiss. On Friday, a block party will be held from 6:00 p.m. at the Hotel Caravelle.

Purchase tickets to the V.I.P. reception and all-star game [here](#).

*Image Credit: [Three Islands Media](#).*

© Viconsortium 2026