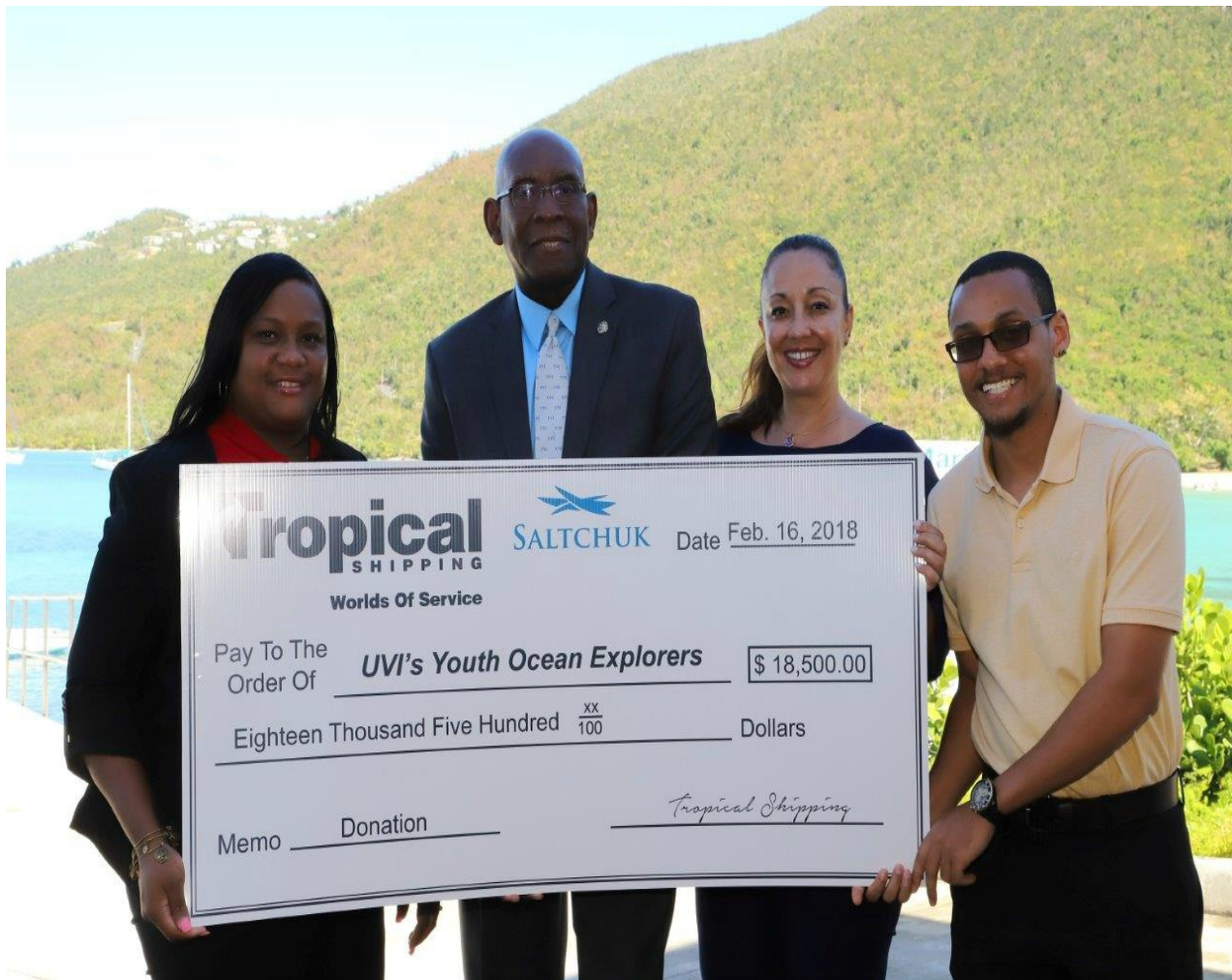


The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI's Youth Ocean Explores To Expand Program Thanks To Donation

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Each summer the Youth Ocean Explorers (YOE) Program educates middle school and high school youth about the marine ecosystems that surround the territory. Coral reefs and vital marine habitats come to life when students explore the marine environment and hear from leading experts working in eco fields. Thanks to a \$18,500 donation from Tropical Shipping and their parent company, Saltchuk, more VI youth will be able to learn about the marine environment and possible marine careers in the industry, UVI said Friday.

"The additional funds provided to us from Tropical Shipping will allow us to facilitate more technical and interactive activities and field trips," said Howard Forbes Jr., Virgin Islands

Marine Advisory Service coordinator. "We will now be able to offer a wider range of curriculum, increase the diversity of the students we can accept and provide more linkages with STEM professionals within our community."

The YOE program is an integral educational program offered by the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS). The YOE offers students in grades seven -12 an opportunity to continue their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education during the summer, but in a fun and engaging way. The program's comprehensive curriculum is centered on Mathematics, Science, Marine Science, Chemistry, and Personal Development.



Research Associate Professor of Marine and

Environmental Science Dr. Marilyn Brandt, Research Assistant Professor of Watershed Ecology, Dr. Kristin Wilson Grimes, YOE Parent Ayishih K. Bellew, YOE Student Keziah Bellew, YOE Coordinator Jarvon Stout, Tropical Shipping Customer Care Representative Marie-Louise Edwards-Penn, Tropical Shipping Island Manager Nisha F. Aubain, UVI President David Hall, YOE Program Director Howard Forbes and YOE Parent Rhonda Tonge pose for photo.

"Students learn about the importance our coral reefs and all of the invertebrate, vertebrate animals as well as plants that live among our reefs," said Forbes. "Classroom activities are brought to life when students explore the many natural habitats available on St. Thomas, whether it be in the nearshore environment or in the open ocean."

"We are especially hopeful that these initiatives will in fact 'open doors' of curiosity for these Youth Ocean Explorers and that they will learn to explore the ocean at their own pace and discover all it has to offer," said Jennifer Nugent Hill, director of Governmental and Community Affairs at Tropical Shipping.

"The University extends appreciation to the Caribbean Regional Giving Committee of Tropical Shipping and Saltchuk," said Mitchell Neaves, vice president of Institutional Advancement. "Thank you for making this investment in UVI and our Marine Science and Environmental Program. We are particularly pleased to know the YOE initiative will have additional resources to expand its impact on the aspiring youth in our community."

"The program exceeded my expectation," said Maura Monee Richardson, 2017 YOE participant. "It was a lot of learning, but I enjoyed every lesson. This program helped me to develop confidence in believing I can do anything. It helped me to realize that I can combine my two loves, the ocean and law, and have a career that I can enjoy."

"I think the program has helped me to better understand the areas of Marine Science and to learn how every person can help preserve it," said Trevett Williams, 2017 YOE participant. "I hope that all kids can have the chance to experience this camp and learn about marine life especially where we live. It is important for us to learn how we impact our environment."

For more information on the YOE visit <http://vimas.uvi.edu>.

Feature Image: Tropical Shipping Customer Care Representative Marie-Louise Edwards-Penn, Tropical Shipping Island Manager Nisha F. Aubain, UVI President David Hall, YOE Program Director Howard Forbes pose for a photo at a check presentation at the Center for Marine & Environmental Studies at UVI.