

The Virgin Islands Consortium

137 Students Graduate At Kean; More Than 190 At C.A.H.S. As Students Overcome Realities Of A Storm-Ravaged Territory In Pursuit Of Success

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ST. THOMAS -- There is no escaping the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on the lives of Virgin Islanders. The two Category 5 storms wreaked havoc on the islands in September 2017, disrupting the daily routine that islanders had gotten used to, forcing thousands to abandon their homes and relocate to the mainland, effects of which are being felt even today.

So when students at both the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School (I.E.K.H.S.), which graduated 137 students on Saturday, and those of the Charlotte Amalie High School

(C.A.H.S.), which graduated 192 on Sunday, spoke of their graduation as a triumph, which is true during any season, one must consider the difficulties they faced. For C.A.H.S., which started the school year with over 250 students only to lose 20 percent due to relocation following the 2017 storms, their dedication to crossing the finish line had to be honed in light of the split sessions they shared with Addelita Cancryn Junior High School students. For some of (I.E.K.H.S.), including Salutatorian Hezekiah George, the lack of electricity for months meant doing homework with candlelight and lanterns -- a reality that was echoed by this year's University of the Virgin Islands graduating class.

But with the will to succeed superseding hardships, the students of both high schools -- I.E.K.H.S. celebrating its 45th commencement and C.A.H.S. its 88th -- the weekend's results by the numbers were not disappointing. Of the 137 who graduated at Eudora Kean, 117 will attend college or a vocational school. Fifty-eight of them were also honor students. And even though C.A.H.S. lost 20 percent of the students it began the 2017-18 school year with, 192 graduated on Sunday, 84 with honors, and most students intend to attend a college. There were 61 students who graduated from C.A.H.S.'s Career and Technical Education programs.

On Wednesday and Thursday, the St. Croix Central High School and St. Croix Educational Complex will hold their commencement exercises respectively, where the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on education are expected to be highlighted in the speeches to be had.

Governor Kenneth Mapp, who attended both graduations and know firsthand what the territory's educational system has experienced following the storms, congratulated the students on reaching the finish line. "I congratulate you for all the hard work," he said at the I.E.K.H.S. graduation ceremony on Saturday. "I wish you the best in your future endeavors. Stay focused, work hard, concentrate on your dreams and you will do great things."