

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Project Promise Presents Nearly \$10,000 To South African School In Honor Of Mandela Day

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ST. CROIX -- Project Promise founder and president Resa O'Reilly on Thursday presented administrators from St. Paul's Primary School in South Africa with a check for almost \$10,000 to educate 30 of the school's students for one year, according to a release the nonprofit issued. Project Promise board members, staff, students, volunteers and the St. Croix community raised the funds to help the students earlier this year, after a call from O'Reilly to sponsor an entire class at the school, the release said.

In February, Ms. O'Reilly traveled to Cape Town, South Africa on a service trip to help children in need. During her trip, she worked with a class of primary age students whom she grew close to. Many of the Grade R1 students who live in poverty, travel several

hours daily to get to school. Their parents pay for transportation, and struggle to pay the annual tuition which is roughly \$345 in US dollars, for a public education. "I fell in love with the country and the children that I worked with," said O'Reilly. "I knew there was more I could do to help."

According to the release, Ms. O'Reilly's initial plan was to sponsor two children, but once she returned to St. Croix, she decided to raise money to sponsor the entire class. The support from the St. Croix community was overwhelming and Project Promise staff and volunteers collected more than \$8,000. As part of their monthly community service initiative, students from Project Promise's Caterpillar Project raised more than \$1,000 which will educate three children.

July 18 marked Nelson Mandela International Day and the centenary of the humanitarian's birth. This year's theme is Action Against Poverty, and it is in this spirit that Project Promise made the donation. The money raised will sponsor all the students in the class O'Reilly worked with, plus five additional students. While in Cape Town, Ms. O'Reilly also delivered a presentation on empowerment to a group of girls in a neighboring township.

The Grade R1 students come from the surrounding townships of Langa, Gugulethu, Khatalitsha, Makaza and Delft.