

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Teenager Who Rescued Friend From Drowning Honored With Courageous Citizen Award By Bryan; Swimming Program To Be Named After Him

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Governor Albert Bryan on Tuesday afternoon honored Saeed Phillips -- the young man who jumped into the ocean at the Frederiksted Pier two weeks ago to rescue his drowning friend -- with the Courageous Citizen Award, a paid summer internship to work at the Department of Planning and Natural Resources' Fish and Wildlife arm, and, for good measure, will name a soon-to-be-established Virgin Islands swimming program for youngsters after Saeed.

The honor was given in the presence of students at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School during a special gathering in the school's auditorium. Present were school faculty and staff, Saeed's parents and counselors, along with AT&T, which presented Saeed with a brand new iPhone 7 and new Air Pods, as the young man had jumped into the water with his iPhone and Air Pods while saving his friend.

"Today is a day of heroes and I'm especially proud to come and celebrate a young hero," the governor said. Mr. Bryan, who once ran the Junior Achievement program in the territory, is comfortable amongst the youth. "Each of you can be heroes in our community everyday in what you say and what you do."

The governor said to the students that small things such as picking up trash and making sure they study for midterms are great acts. "You are the young leaders that we are going to depend on for tomorrow's Virgin Islands," he said.

In turning his talk to Saeed's heroic actions, the governor said, "The difference between a brave man and a foolish man is not that much, because when you're brave, people think that you don't have fear. You have fear -- that's what sets you apart from a foolish man. An afraid man contemplates his fear and still takes action despite of his fear. [Saeed] knew that the importance of saving his friend was premier and overall the number one thing."

He added, "It's hard to do the right things sometimes, but Saeed stands as a shining example of when you do the right thing that you will be recognized in some way, shape or form. It was important for [Lieutenant Governor] Tregenza and I to recognize him on behalf of the Bryan administration," the governor said.

The administration has arranged for a paid internship with D.P.N.R. for Saeed, who wants to become a marine biologist, the governor said. "Make a little pocket change for the summer," Mr. Bryan joked as the crowd laughed.

When the governor announced that the swimming program will be named the "Saeed Phillips Swimming Program", the crowd erupted with cheers and the young man's mom stood to her feet to fist-bump her son.

"Every Virgin Islander should learn how to swim because we're surrounded by water," the governor said.

He added, "In closing, I just want to say to one another, if you see your fellow classmates doing heroic things everyday, great and small, it's important just like we recognized Saeed today, that you recognize one another because peer appreciation is free."

He then turned to the overwhelmed young man and said, "As a public that is eternally grateful for your service, congratulations and thank you, sir."