

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VI U.S. Attorney's Office And Project Safe Neighborhoods Sponsor 'Camp DEFY: VI Youth Meet Legislature'

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United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that approximately 50 V.I. youths are attending Camp DEFY (Drug Education for Youth) this week in St. Thomas with plans for Camp DEFY next week on St. Croix.

Camp DEFY is supported by the United States Attorney's Office through the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative and through Weed and Seed. Additional funding is also provided through the PR/VI High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) partnership. Camp DEFY trainers and facilitators are provided by the Virgin Islands Police

Department (VIPD) and the Virgin Islands National Guard.

Camp DEFY has two phases, In Phase 1, youths attend a one-week residential camp. Over the course of the week, the participants learn important skills such as setting goals, avoiding violent conflicts, and refusing drugs offered by a friend. Camp DEFY uses a variety of activities to develop the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. Students are taught in a classroom setting the following topics: substance abuse prevention; self-esteem; setting goals; developing healthy, positive relationships; conflict resolution; citizenship; gang awareness; de-glamorization and hygiene; nutrition, safety, and first aid. Every session of Camp DEFY is designed to foster positive values and a healthy drug-free lifestyle.

“Camp DEFY is a prime example of how federal and territorial law enforcement, community leaders, and concerned citizens are working together to provide recreational opportunities for young Virgin Islanders, delivered with a positive message of hope and empowerment. At Camp DEFY, our young people spend time with role models and caring adults, who encourage them to set goals, dream big, and resist the negative influences of gangs, drugs, and violence,” Shappert said. “Camp DEFY is a vital part of the PSN prevention initiative in the Territory. While law enforcement and prosecutors work to take violent offenders off the streets, we also collaborate with members of this community who care deeply about the well-being of our children. Today’s trip to the Legislature in St. Thomas provided our young people with an opportunity to see democracy in action and to celebrate their commitment to a drug- free, gang-free future.”

In particular, Shappert singled out Jaqueline Freeman, Director of the VIPD Crime Prevention Bureau and Chair of the USVI PSN Law Enforcement Planning Commission for her work in the organization of Camp DEFY. “Director Freeman does an amazing job for VIPD and this community,” Shappert said. “We are grateful for her leadership and for the assistance provided by all of our PSN partners and Camp DEFY supporters.”