

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Thousands of Children Benefit From VI DOJ-Sponsored Backpack Giveaway

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Thousands of children are now loaded with much-needed school supplies for the upcoming school year, thanks to the generosity of the V.I. Access and Visitation Program, an arm of the Department of Justice's Paternity and Child Support Division (PCSD).

According to the V.I. D.O.J., in celebration of "Child Support and National Back-To-School Month" this month, VI Access and Visitation has organized a series of fun-filled activities for the territory's children to support families as they prepare for the new academic year, set to begin on Sept. 3.

On Saturday, scores of children and their families turned up at the Agriculture Food Fair grounds and were treated to backpack giveaways, a host of games and a number of other forms of entertainment. VI Access and Visitation handed out school backpacks filled with books, pens, pencils and highlighters to approximately 3,000 children, according to Terrence Joseph, Director of the Paternity and Child Support Division, D.O.J. said.

“We prepared for 4,000 individuals, but we gave away just over 3,000 bags,” Mr. Joseph said. “I am extremely pleased at the turnout and that every child who was there received a bag; no child was turned away. There are plans ahead for backpack giveaways in Frederiksted and Christiansted towns on or before Sept. 17, which is observed nationally as “Dads, Take Your Child To School Day.”

Attorney General Denise George greeted the children as she handed out the book bags from the DOJ with the words, “Children First,” embroidered with bold, vibrant lettering.

“We at the Department of Justice’s PCSD know that child support is about putting children first,” Ms. George said. “Despite our challenges, everything that we do at PCSD is based on the best interest of the child, which includes promoting strong families with *both* parents actively involved in the child’s lives through our Fatherhood Buzz and Access and Visitation Program available to all parents and families in our community.”

The event also featured T-shirt giveaways. The few fathers in attendance were each presented with a T-shirt emblazoned with the phrase, ‘Best Dad Ever,’ Mr. Joseph said.

Mr. Joseph acknowledged the various entities – “Making a Difference VI;” the Virgin Islands Police Department; the Department of Health’ the VI Fire Services and the Department of Agriculture – that partnered with VI Access and Visitation in this “important endeavor.” He also expressed thanks to V.I. Superior Court Judges Jomo Meade and Harold Willocks who assisted in distributing the schoolbags.

D.O.J. said a similar backpack giveaway for St. Thomas’ pupils – jointly organized by VI Access & Visitation; the “Making a Difference Foundation;” Office of the Governor; Department of Education; American Federation of Teachers; VIYA and the Tutu Park Mall – is slated for Aug. 31 at the Tutu Park Mall.

On Sept. 17, Department of Justice’s PCSD will join its stateside counterparts in commemorating “Dads, Take Your Child To School Day,” an initiative that was implemented to help fathers and father figures increase their involvement in their children’s education.