

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Hotel and Tourism Associations Distribute 3,500 Toys to USVI Children

Community Center / **Published On December 13, 2020 07:06 AM /**

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A global pandemic could not stop the St. Thomas-St. John Hotel & Tourism Association and St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Association, along with the Puerto Rico branch of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and Silver Airways/Seaborne from bringing holiday cheer to children throughout the territory.

Donning masks and taking safety precautions, association representatives, Toys for Tots partners, public sector representatives and other sponsors distributed 3,500 toys to children in ten housing communities on St. Croix Dec. 5 and six housing communities on St. Thomas Dec. 6, according to a release issued Sunday.

“The economic challenges brought on by the pandemic have greatly affected families all over the world. Partnering with the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation to ensure children in our territory have a joyful holiday is an important part of our commitment to the Virgin Islands community, and we were honored to once again be part of such a special event,” said USVIHTA President Lisa Hamilton.

“On behalf of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, we offer a heartfelt thank you for the gifts. It's indeed a pleasure to assist with the annual Toys for Tots distribution. Special thanks go out VIHA's staff that assisted: Xawntoia Franklin, Keshiaundia Quinn, Kashif Freeman and Reginald Andrew. Additionally, Mr. Antonio Messer coordinated the police escort and refreshments for the event,” said Zelda Williams, Virgin Islands Housing Authority Resident Services Manager.

The release stated that each holiday season, the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation partners with both branches of the USVI Hotel & Tourism Association to provide toys for children in the territory. In addition to training and educational opportunities, employment programs and annual scholarships, both associations partner with organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club, My Brother's Workshop, CASA of the Virgin Islands and others to support their initiatives. Community outreach and youth support are central to the missions of both the St. Thomas-St. John and St. Croix Hotel & Tourism Associations.

The organizers thanked platinum sponsors: The Buccaneer; Bolongo Bay Beach Resort for clearing and storing toys as well as providing the truck and driver for deliveries on St. Thomas; and Silver Airways/Seaborne for providing flights between Puerto Rico, St. Croix and St. Thomas. Thank you to the assisting marines, association members, partner organizations and additional sponsors that made the Toys for Tots event possible, including: the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation; Cane Bay Dive Shop; Olympic Rent-A-Car; The Reef; Plaza Extra East; Budget Rent-A-Car; Norma H; Paradise Freight; the Virgin Islands Housing Authority and staff including Zelda Williams, Xawntoia Franklin, Keshiaundia Quinn, Kashif Freeman and Reginald Andrew for assisting in organizing the event as well as delivering and distributing toys; and the Virgin Islands Police Department for providing a police escort on St. Croix.