

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Students Raise \$1,300 to Purchase Headphones for Peers

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From l2r back: Pedro Parilla receives headphones from Makayla Walcott, Nialah Addison, Jade Browne, Vigga Tyson. L to R (seated): Norma Tyson, Jaylissa Browne and Zuma Nesbitt. Far Right: Jeselle Cruse-Peter, Dr. Everette Ryan, Paulina Croskey
By. THE V.I. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

The V.I. Dept. of Education said Tuesday that students from three St. Croix public schools recently donated 280 new headphones to their peers at the district's elementary and K-8 schools, following a two-day fundraiser last November that netted \$1,300 used to purchase the electronics.

According to the release, during a ceremony held at the Curriculum Center on March 26, the St. Croix Public School Girls' Squad, comprised of seven students in first, fifth and sixth grades attending Lew Muckle Elementary School, Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School and Ricardo Richards Elementary School, presented boxes of headphones to district leaders, amounting to a donation of 30-35 headphones for eight schools. Schools benefitting from the donations include Lew Muckle Elementary School, Ricardo Richards Elementary School, Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School, Eulalie R. Rivera K-8 School, Arthur A. Richards K-8 School, Juanita Gardine K-8 School, Claude O. Markoe Elementary School, and Alfredo Andrews Elementary School.

The group explained why they worked hard to purchase the headphones, which have become a staple for virtual learning.

"We did this because we wanted to help our fellow public-school students because they may not have headphones or they may not have funds in the household to purchase headphones," said Zuma Nesbitt, a sixth grader at Ricardo Richards and the group's spokesperson.

Nesbitt said since the start of the school year, she has gone through at least seven headphones, while fellow group member, Makayla Walcott, a fifth grader at Lew Muckle, said she has already used up five.

"Personally, this school year, I have gone through five sets of headphones," Walcott said. "I'm not proud of it," she quipped, adding, "but I know the need."

Pedro Parrilla, district director of curriculum and instruction, accepted the donation on behalf of the superintendent's office and praised the students for their selfless act.

"On behalf of the insular superintendent, I want to say thank you for what you did today," Parrilla said. "As young girls, just taking the opportunity to look out for someone else, that is huge—at your age, to already have that civic-mindedness of concern for someone else besides yourself."

Parrilla went on to say that the thoughtfulness the group displayed represents the kind of values all students should have.

"I know that these headphones are very much needed, and you thought about others and what they will need," he said. "That makes you who we want our public schools to be known for—we want everyone to know that our children don't only think about themselves, but they are thinking about their community. We want to say thank you for a job well done."

Other district officials on hand for the presentation were Jeselle Cruse-Peter, elementary programs coordinator; Paulina Croskey, ELA coordinator; and Dr. Everette Ryan, district technology coordinator.

The group explained that the plan to donate the headphones initially began as a collection drive; however, it quickly turned into a fundraiser, as residents began donating money during the two days the group held the drive in Sunny Isles and at The Market, formerly Plaza Extra West.

“It was really fun seeing that jar go from one level to the next,” Nesbitt said. “Each time it went higher, I thought, ‘Well, that’s more headphones and that’s more publicity for the public-school girls’ squad.’”

Office Max assisted the students in placing the bulk order. Although it took some time for the shipment to arrive, the girls are excited about what the new headphones will mean for their peers.

“It felt good because you knew that you were helping someone else,” said Norma Tyson, a sixth grader at Pearl B. Larsen.

The students said this is only the beginning for the St. Croix Public School Girls’ Squad and look forward to supporting their peers in other ways.

“We have some money left over and we are thinking of doing something else for a good cause,” explained Vigga Tyson, a Pearl B. Larsen sixth grader. “We are trying to figure out what cause we should do next.”

The group’s name has a special meaning behind it.

“We are called the St. Croix Public School Girls’ Squad because one day we might need help from our peers and they might be there for us,” Walcott said.

Other members of the St. Croix Public School Girls’ Squad include Jade Browne, sixth grade, Pearl B. Larsen; Jaylissa Browne, first grade, Pearl B. Larsen; and Nailah Addison, sixth grade, Lew Muckle.

The students’ parents act as advisors and chaperones for all fundraising and presentation activities of the group.