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Sports, Parks, and Recreation Rolls Out New R.B.I. Baseball/Softball Program in USVI

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Baseball at Canegata Ballpark By. V.I. DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS, PARKS AND RECREATION

The V.I. Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation announced Monday that it has joined with the Major League Baseball (MLB) youth outreach program called Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (R.B.I.) that will offer student-athletes interested in playing baseball and softball a year-round program.

The R.B.I. Program aims to motivate participants to stay in school and pursue post-secondary education, according to the release. R.B.I. has been embraced in so many communities because it teaches children that being a success in life takes more than succeeding on the ball field. It also

means succeeding in the classroom and in the community.

All Student-Athletes registered in the DSPR R.B.I. Program will be required to register with the NCAA Clearinghouse, now known as the NCAA Eligibility Center. The NCAA Eligibility Center is the arm of the NCAA responsible for determining the academic eligibility and amateurism status for all DI and DII Student-Athletes, stated the release.

DSPR said R.B.I. student-athletes will also have access to the Major League Baseball Charities, Inc. R.B.I. Scholarship Fund which provides annual scholarships of up to \$5,000 to up to twelve R.B.I. Student-Athletes who demonstrate academic achievement, leadership qualities, financial need and wish to pursue secondary education.

The program, which is territory-wide, kicked off this weekend in both districts, with its first event with what DSPR describes as micro baseball and softball leagues, according to the release. DSPR R.B.I. Program Junior Softball 16u Division has four teams, two from St. Croix and two from St. Thomas/St. John. The Junior Baseball 15u Division has five teams, three from St. Thomas/St. John and two from St. Croix and the Senior Baseball 16-23 Division has two teams from St. Croix and two teams from St. Thomas.

The micro league will be followed with a RBI Coaches' Clinic, focusing on fundamentals and mentoring. DSPR RBI will close out the year with its annual RBI tournament on the island of St. Croix. This tournament is expected to host teams from across the US in softball and baseball.

During this weekend's games, DSPR Commissioner Calvert White stated, "I want to thank the parents, coaches and staff that have put their hard work into making the R.B.I. program a reality. While we promote sports, education will always be the Department's priority."

The Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation presently has a no spectators policy in place due to Covid-19 protocols. DSPR, with the guidance of the Department of Health, will revisit the pandemic data and make an assessment in near future.