

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas Gym Raises \$20,000 For Cancer Support VI During 'Pinktober'

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Kyle Murphy **November 08, 2021**



Rock Life Crossfit owner Cory Watkins, center left, and Cancer Support VI Director Barb Michaud, center right during a check presentation event on Sat. Nov. 7, 2021. By. KYLE MURPHY, VI CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — Rock Life Crossfit, a local gym located in St. Thomas presented a check of \$20,000 to Cancer Support VI on Saturday after raising funds through various events during Cancer Awareness Month, called "Pinktober", which runs from Oct. 1-31.

The \$20,000 raised by the gym will be matched by a donor.

Barb Michaud, director of Cancer Support VI, told the Consortium she was extremely grateful for the efforts of Rock Life Crossfit and its owner, Cory Watkins. "He really set the tone for a lot of other people. There were a lot of other walks that happened... Rock Life really set the tone."

Last year Rock Life raised \$5,501.24 and their goal this year was to double that amount.

Mr. Watkins explained how Rock Life accomplished this feat. "I think it was all of the events that we had over the month... It's one thing for Barb to constantly ask people for a check, but here at least they were getting some entertainment for what was going on."

After raising the \$20,000, which blew past their goal, Mr. Watkins said he became overwhelmed. "It was very emotional for me. Cancer has taken most of the people that I ever loved. Sadly, we have all been touched by it. We either have a friend, a family member, a significant other. The thing about cancer is that it has not discriminated based on race, politics or whether you've been vaccinated or not, sexual orientation — everyone is impacted. Us being able to help CSVI and knowing that the money stays here, that's really special for us."

Mr. Watkins explained that all the money raised from the monthlong initiative will go to CSVI patients. "In many cases you have charities, they have 20, 25, 30 percent of the costs are for admin. But here, [Richard] Stephenson, who has Cancer Treatment Centers of America and ICMC [International Capital & Management Corporation] here on island, he underwrites all of the admin costs. So as a result 100 percent of the donations go to cancer patients here on the island."

Throughout the month, the gym came up with creative fundraising ideas that members of the community bought into and supported.

One of the most popular initiatives was "Burpees for Boobs", where anyone could donate to Cancer Support VI and pick one of the coaches from the gym to do the same amount of burpees as their donation. Burpees is a difficult but very effective exercise. Healthline.com said burpees "are likely the most dreaded exercise on the planet." Even so, the coaches completed the tasks with a smile on their face because it was for a good cause.

Two Saturdays during the month the gym hosted an evening workout followed by food and drinks, with the proceeds collected for Cancer Support VI. Food for the events was donated from Za Rock Pizza Kitchen and Paradise Bistro Bar & Grill.

There was also a monthlong "Smack Talk" challenge where anyone could challenge someone else to a contest at the gym. Additionally, anyone could place a wager on who they thought would win, with all the funds raised going to CSVI.

The gym made special apparel for "Pinktober", which was sold throughout the month with the proceeds also going to CSVI.

Rock Life Crossfit culminated its fundraising efforts with the annual "Pink Run". Halloween events were also held, among other initiatives such as the "Fittest in the VI" competition, a raffle drawing with prizes that were donated from businesses in the community, and trick or treating for children.

There were two free classes offered during the finale: a free dance class taught by Margot Gough from MTM Dance and an accessory workout taught by Coach Lauren Blanks from V.I.tality Nutrition.

Vendors such as the West Indies Company and Bellows International, Virgin Leaf Kombucha, Caribbean Surf Company, Locally Sown and Tradewinds Chiropractic set up booths on the final Saturday and all the proceeds went to CSVI.

Sponsors for the final day were Cool Signs, Kayla Dittrich for all promotional items, Northside Grind, Hot on the Spot, The Fruit Bowl and Passion Fruit Chefs.

Raffle Prizes were donated for the raffle from Bellows International and West Indies Company, Locally Sown, Taphus Beer House, Island Care Experts, and Tradewinds Chiropractic.

Gift certificates for the raffle were donated from Lanai/Denton's/Limetree, Phoenix Visions Hair Design, Caribbean Surf Co, Liberty Jewelers, Salt & Vinegar, Virgin Leaf Kombucha, Cafe Amici, Za Rock, Sourdough Mary and V.I.tality Nutrition.

There was a silent auction where members of the gym donated the following items: 60,000 points to Club Wyndham (7-night stay), 2-night stay at an Airbnb Villa at Sapphire Beach Resort, a Day Boat Charter from Salty Badger Charters and a 5-person flight around the island from UFLYVI.

All events during October were sponsored by Biosteel, Aquafina, Michelob Ultra, Vizzy, Beringer Bro's Wine, Prophecy and Band of Roses.