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As Fake News About Alleged Federal Raid on his Home Spreads, Davidson Charlemagne is Focused on Transforming Maintenance at the Dept. of Education

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Davidson Charlemagne, territorial director of plant operations at the V.I. Dept. of Education, works a bobcat during a project at John H. Woodson late 2021 to fix a major pipe leak. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The rumors were everywhere over the weekend, from phone calls to endless social media forwards and shares: the home of Davidson Charlemagne — former president of the Crucian Christmas Festival Committee and current territorial director of plant operations at the V.I. Dept. of Education — was raided by federal agents.

The fact is, this is completely fake news.

So what led to the rumors that have caused Mr. Charlemagne to ignore his cellphone's incessant alerts? Ironically, his good deeds were used to spread the damaging, untrue claim.

Back when he was president of the Festival Committee, Mr. Charlemagne oftentimes needed manpower for construction and similar laborious work in preparing for the annual festivities. To that end, he formed a partnership with the V.I. Bureau of Corrections that saw inmates receiving minimal payment to perform the work needed by the committee. This included the building of wooden platforms that house dignitaries on the festival parade route, along with work in the festival village. In turn, the inmates would not only earn some funds, the activity also served to prepare them for their eventual return to society. According to Mr. Charlemagne, program inmates were mostly those who were eligible for parole.

The program eventually extended to other government facilities, including Gov't House as well as private entities. The inmates also painted all the Fire Stations on St. Croix.

"I had about ten of the inmates under my wing steadily from all sorts of criminal activity," he told the Consortium Sunday during an interview. "And every single one of them except one that's left in there, I got them out." Mr. Charlemagne, a former fire fighter, said he would monitor the inmates over the years and then present a case to the Parole Board on their behalf when he believed they were ready to head back into the wider community. The efforts have worked, he said, as all those who were part of the program with the exception of one have been reintegrated into the community and have stayed out of trouble.

Among the requirements for parole as part of program with B.O.C. is lodging and employment for release candidates. One of the candidates who is not from the USVI and did not have a place to live was taken in by Mr. Charlemagne. This individual resides on the family property and works for the family business to this day.

Law enforcement perform unannounced checks on individuals on parole to ascertain that they are abiding by the release conditions. According to Mr. Charlemagne, on Monday, May 16, federal authorities visited the individual who lives at the Charlemagne family property. The visit was routine, but someone in the neighborhood started spreading a rumor that the feds had raided Mr. Charlemagne's home, and the fake news spread widely across the territory, including on WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.

"These rumors that have been spreading, I can't give our people no wrongs. Sometimes, when they hear something they run with it," Mr. Charlemagne said. "When you have an individual on parole, you have ever so often a team that comes around, the FBI, local police, and territorial marshals. They will come and pay them a visit ever so often to make sure that they are doing what they are supposed to do."

"The community needs to know that there definitely was no wrongdoing; it was just the government doing their job. Maybe they need to tweak it and do it a little differently because it does scare people out there, but that's it," Mr. Charlemagne said before adding that the feds will be back again for the same purpose, unannounced.

While the rumors were spreading, Mr. Charlemagne, now territorial director of plant operations at the V.I. Dept. of Education, a division responsible for the maintenance of schools, has been busy performing important work across the territory. The immediate workload has increased with graduation season, and the director was recently praised publicly by an Ivanna Eudora Kean High School official for going above and beyond to ascertain that a gymnasium had AC for the graduation ceremony on Thursday.

“One of my first projects in [St.Thomas] was the Commissioner’s Office. They had a serious infestation of rats and moisture within the building," Mr. Charlemagne said, explaining that the situation was rectified and now the office is a clean environment.

He also spoke about efforts at a number of public schools on St. Croix. Among them was the Juanita Gardine K-8 School, whose auditorium he said never had air conditioning. Mr. Charlemagne's division partnered with the V.I. Port Authority and contractors for a difficult undertaking that included the use of cranes to get supplies off a dock to be used at the school. “We want to meet our deadline before the 25th of May. They will have AC for the first time at Juanita Guardine for their graduation," he said.

The John H. Woodson Junior High School auditorium's AC was down since Hurricane Maria. Mr. Charlemagne said that while it was a battle to get the system working, his team installed a brand new unit that was set to be ready for today. “Woodson is one of those schools that will have about three different school graduations there," he said.

The maintenance team also refurbished four condemned rooms at the Pearl B. Larsen K-8 School. “The classrooms in Pearl B. Larsen were refurbished and opened back temporarily to give them some more space," he said.

A major project that's set to begin in the next few weeks in St. John will result in the island having an official government-sanctioned hurricane shelter. According to Mr. Charlemagne, an abandoned building at the Guy Benjamin Elementary School will be retrofitted into a shelter. "Not only that, but also we're going to redo the whole area and turn it into a park so that when there isn't a hurricane or other emergency, the children could go in and play," he said.

Mr. Charlemagne, who thanked the Bryan administration for the opportunity to serve the community, began his tenure as territorial director of plant operations at the V.I. Dept. of Education just over a month ago. His prior position was director of plant operations and maintenance for the St. Croix District.