

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Rotary Leaders Talk Initiatives, Progress During District Governor's Visit to St. Croix

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From left: Nadia Bougouneau, Sandra Gerard Leung, Harborside, Jennell Bryan, Deborah Howell, Anika K. Morris, and Deborah Johnson. By. ROTARY ST. CROIX

Rotary District 7020 Governor Deborah Howell visited the St. Croix Rotary Clubs last week and met with the Boards of Directors, visiting project sites and culminating the visit with a District Governor's Dinner with St. Croix Rotarians, according to a release issued Sunday.

Howell was born on St. Thomas and raised on St. Croix. She is a graduate of the University of the Virgin Islands with a bachelors of arts in business management. She

also graduated from Central Michigan University with a master's degree in administration, and from the United States Army War College with a master's of social service in strategic studies. Howell is a retired brigadier general in the Virgin Islands National Guard having served for 36 years and retired after serving as the adjutant general.

As district governor, she is required to visit all the clubs in District 7020 which consists of ten countries including sixteen islands spanning the northern Caribbean: Jamaica, Cayman, Turks and Caicos, Bahamas except for Grand Bahama, Haiti, US Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Netherlands Antilles (St. Maarten only,) and the French West Indies (St. Martin and St. Barthelemy.)

Howell is expected to complete her visits to the 88 Rotary Clubs and 56 Rotaract Clubs in the District by December 31st .

"This week I began my official District Governor's visit to my home island of St. Croix," she said. "The purpose of the District Governor's visit is to provide resources and motivation to the clubs, District Governors provide preliminary assessments on how they are performing and functioning as a club and review/analyze the impact of Rotary in the community."

To that end DG Howell met with the Boards of Directors of each club.

The Rotary Club of St. Croix "will conduct service projects in all of Rotary's seven areas of focus, but we're especially passionate about environmental initiatives, education and youth mentorship," said President Anika K. Morris. "In recent years, our club sponsored an EarlyAct Program at the Juanita Gardine Elementary School that met weekly with 5th & 6th graders to lead them through guided learning activities. We also constructed a greenhouse on the school premises to promote farming, agriculture and food sustainability.

"So far, this Rotary year, we've completed a Beach Clean Up and volunteered at the annual Mango Melee event as well as provided assistance at the first ever VIDCOE Health Fair. Upcoming events and initiatives include a Back-to-School Backpack Giveaway, Business After Hours Networking Events, Feeding the Less Fortunate, Vocational Service Awards, Relay for Life and so much more."

Vice President Deborah Johnson represented the Rotary Club of St. Croix West for President Warrington Chapman who was off island. Johnson discussed the club's fundraising and service projects plans.

"The Fundraising Committee has planned several activities to raise money to help finance the various projects that will assist the club in achieving its mission. These activities include, a Crucian Breakfast, Old Time Tea Party and Fashion Show, Sip & Paint, Raffle and Service Above Self event," she said.

"The Service Above Self is the Signature Project, at this event we will recognize individuals in the community for their unselfish service by volunteering of their time to organizations in the community, said Johnson. "Other goals and activities the Club would like to highlight is the Environmental and International Service Committee's plans.

"The Environmental plans are to decrease trash pollution through education, by promoting the benefits of replacing disposable cups with reusable hot/cold cups. The International Service Committee has two events planned, to invite a guest speaker to speak on Peace and Conflict Resolution and promote peace and understanding through an International Service Dinner," she continued.

President Nadia Bougouneau of the Rotary Club of St. Croix Mid-Isle discussed a number of projects and fundraisers. "Our members have been feeding the less fortunate three Saturday mornings every month at the Lighthouse Mission," she said. "We have been doing this for over 20 years. We maintain Peace Garden - at Golden Rock intersection – in memory of Past President Ralph Collins. We will be promoting St. Croix student involvement in the Butterfly Storybook writing competition which is sponsored by the eClub of the Caribbean and open to all children 7 to 11 years old."

Bougouneau added, "Our Vocational Service Committee has four projects that they have been doing for many years: 1) Math Counts - provide judges, lunch, trophies & proctors, 2) Entrepreneurship Seminar - partnering with UVI & FBLA students meet with dynamic entrepreneurs who share wisdom & advice, 3) Vocational Apprenticeship Seminar - partnering with a local hotel or other vocational employer, Rotary transports students who have indicated an interest in vocational careers to a location where brief ten-minute presentations are made by a dozen or more tradespersons from around the island and 4) Medical Careers Seminar: Rotary Mid-Isle transports students who have expressed an interest in a medical career to the Juan Luis Hospital where morning speakers range from culinary, chemistry, nursing, bookkeeping, general practitioner, surgery, mechanical, and administrative professionals.

"Rotary provides lunch, after which students go on a tour to visit the speakers at their work station. Other projects include books for Central High School's new library, MLK Day donation to Beulah AME Zion Church Food Pantry and more. Our fundraisers include the \$10,000 Raffle, Iron Bartender Competition, and a golf tournament," explained President Bougouneau.

According to the release, recently the club held its first Empower Girls Panel Discussion with a group from To Lead with Love, a nonprofit organization from Miami, FL. Empower Girls is a Rotary International project that believes empowered girls become empowered women.

Rotary Club of St. Croix Harborside President Sandra Gerard Leung and her Board discussed their projects for the year which include: providing breakfast at Lighthouse Mission on the first Saturday of every month, mentoring and informational sessions to the youth housed at the Youth Rehabilitation Center, Thanksgiving baskets to 25 families in conjunction with corporate sponsor The Market, oratory and written word competition for high school students, health initiative with the less fortunate at Lighthouse Mission providing Covid and flu vaccines.

The club received a District Grant to assist and expand the initiative Agriculture Program at John H. Woodson School," said Leung. "We provided equipment and an Irrigation System which has assisted the Agriculture Program with planting fruits and vegetables. Our members spend one afternoon weekly weeding, planting and mentoring the Youth in the Program. And this year we will be providing a group of young women the opportunity

to attend a workshop on Empowering Young Women."

District Governor Howell, during the DG Dinner with members from all the clubs, expressed her desire to see the four clubs do more joint projects to increase Rotary's impact on St. Croix. She informed the membership that all four clubs are in good standing with Rotary International and are considered vibrant clubs, Rotary St. Croix said.

According to the release, the first joint project for the clubs this year will be the World Polio Day celebration. So far, the clubs are planning on lighting Government House in red, showing Dare to Dream - How Rotary Became the Heart & Soul of Polio Eradication and other educational activities. Polio eradication is Rotary International's primary external focus. While beginning national immunization days in the Philippines in 1976, in 1985, Rotary launched its PolioPlus program, the first initiative to tackle global polio eradication through the mass vaccination of children.

Rotary has contributed more than \$2 billion and countless volunteer hours to immunize more than 3 billion children in 122 countries. In addition, Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in donor governments' decisions to contribute more than \$10 billion to the effort. Within the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), Rotary's focus is on advocacy, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and awareness building.

Rotary International is a worldwide organization with 1.4 million members in clubs in over 46,000 clubs in 194 countries. This year Rotary has its first female president in its 117 history, Jennifer Jones. She is a member of the Rotary Club of Windsor-Roseland, Ontario, Canada.