

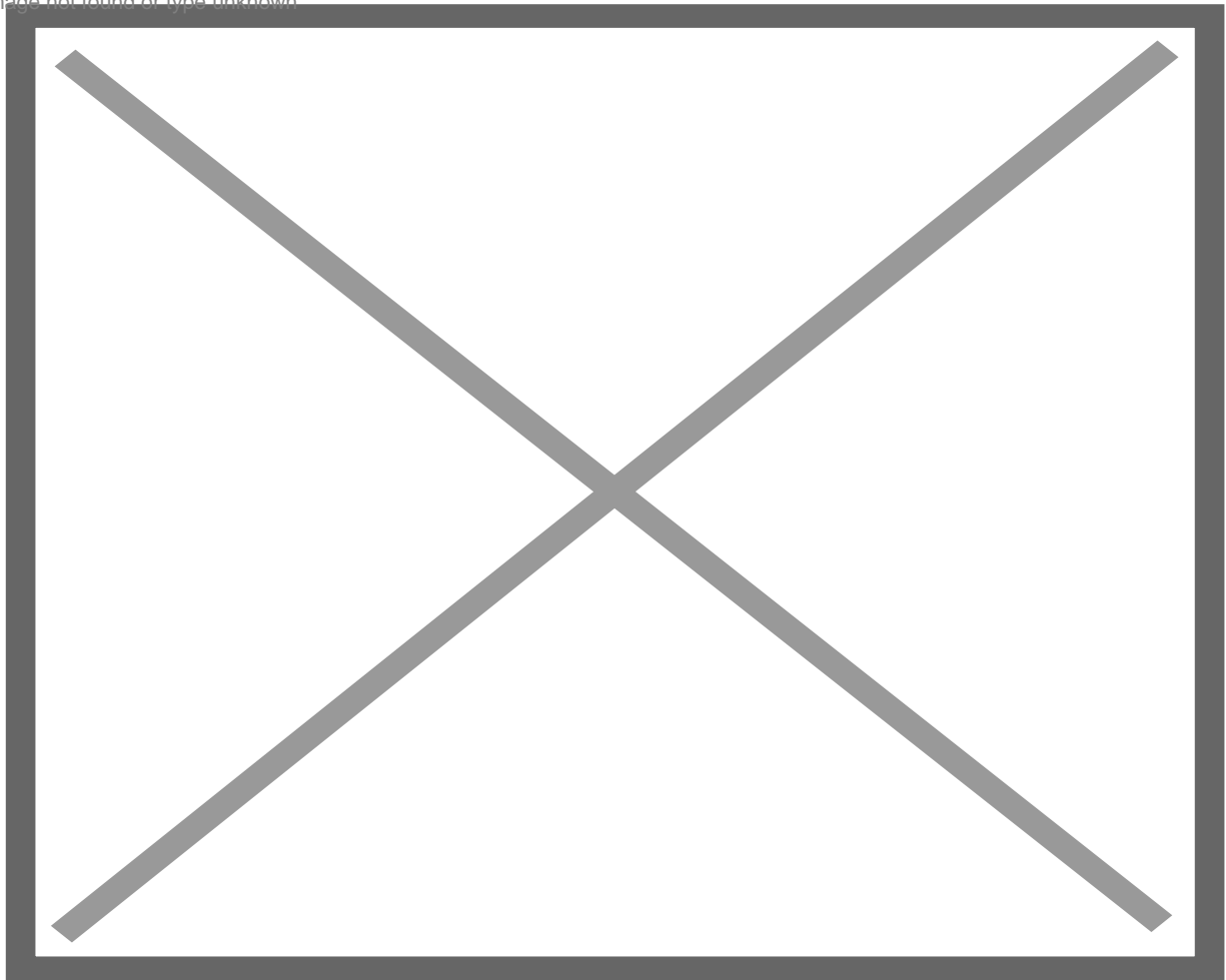
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# FirstBank VI Celebrates 74th Anniversary by Providing Meals to the Homeless in Partnership With Collective Collaboration

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**Firstbank VI employees and officials help serve meals to the homeless on St. Croix in partnership with the Collective Collaboration on Sat. Oct. 1, 2022, as part of the bank's 74th anniversary celebration. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM**

Over thirty FirstBank employees alight from a bus Saturday morning at the Collective Collaboration building in downtown Christiansted carrying containers loaded with goods. They had one purpose: to provide hot meals to members of the St. Croix community most in need, and not by only making available the funding to do so, but actually participating in the benevolent work themselves.

From employee volunteers to company officials, the Collective Collaboration facility came alive as FirstBank joined the preparatory effort before heading out to several locations around St. Croix to deliver the meals. While at the facility, employees and officials from both USVI districts served meals to homeless individuals who have made the Collective Collaboration center their home.

The event coincided with FirstBank's 74th anniversary, whose celebration includes, among other things, a "Day of Service" with a vision of supporting organizations focused on helping the community.

Karen Dickerson, founder of Collective Collaboration, said that in the nonprofit's two-year existence, it has served over 70,000 meals to the homeless and mentally ill. "What I do here is not for me, it's for my community. It is to provide improvement and empowerment to the people in our community that everybody has neglected and forgotten for a long, long time," Ms. Dickerson said Saturday as she took a short moment from helping with preparations to talk about her vision.

Collective Collaboration provides meals to over 100 individuals weekly at various locations on St. Croix, and at its main center, located at the entrance of the Christiansted Public Cemetery. "We have provided housing for more than 30 individuals. They have moved from sheltering to independent housing, and we have [transported] more than 60 people to the mainland who have been here," among them individuals who were homeless and received support from the nonprofit to reconnect with family members, Ms. Dickerson stated.

Paula Edwards, vice president of operations/collections manager at Firstbank, lauded Ms. Dickenson for her support to the community. "I can feel your passion, I can see it, and I want to also thank the ladies and whoever else that are part of your team," she said.

Carol Jackson-Simmonds, vice president, human resources manager at Firstbank, stated, "You're truly a blessing to the community. You help us fill gaps that others can't fill, and on behalf of the bank, the entire organization... we would like to thank you for partnering with us."

The Collective Collaboration and FirstBank made several stops during the "Day of Service", including in a community in Estate Glynn near Marvelous Auto, and at the bin site in the vicinity of the John H. Woodson Junior High School.