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St. Croix Christian Academy Celebrates 40 Years With Banquet as it Reflects on Challenges and Triumphs Over the Decades

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The St. Croix Christian Academy By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

After 40 years in existence, faith and perseverance is what have kept the St. Croix Christian Academy open to serve its community even through the most unprecedented circumstances.

The elementary, nonprofit school marked 40 years of service in September 2022 and is currently home to 74 students on St Croix.

Principal Rosemond Lawrence-Creighton said that at some point, enrollment was up to 300 but attendance has dwindled overtime with the Limetree Bay Refinery closing down compounded by

the drop in economic activity. The school has seen some gains during the Covid-19 pandemic as parents who wanted an in-person solution for their students turned to the St. Croix Christian Academy. Those gains, however, have declined as the territory has fully reopened.

“Enrollment had increased because a lot of parents wanted the students to be in-person and we were in-person and so we did have over 100 last year in enrollment,” she said.

Meanwhile, Reverend Seaton Wilson said thousands of people were directly affected by the closure of the refinery which also impacted enrollment. “At the time when Hovensa closed we had over 220 students and then it began to decrease; and gradually as people lost their jobs and migration took place it decreased gradually. And also, the demands of the government for increased space for students ... so the more they demand more space for students, the less we could hold,” he explained.

In addition, one of the school’s buildings was rendered inoperable after its roof was destroyed during the record-breaking 2017 hurricane season.

Mr. Wilson said many students have been turned away over the past three years because the school has been unable to use that building.

“And then came the Covid pandemic. So, it has been three massive experiences ... all those have had adverse effects upon the school,” he said.

There is still the added difficulty of teachers migrating away from the U.S Virgin Islands in droves, leaving schools including St. Croix Christian Academy with less educators than needed.

According to Mr. Wilson, the school has been struggling to find teachers for some subject areas. “We find it difficult to have substitute teachers ...it’s a thing that’s affecting the entire island, the region,” he noted.

Still, the institution has come a long way from the vision of late Pastor Randolph Lockhart who opened the school with one building, six students, one teacher and one assistant in 1982.

Despite the significant drop in numbers today, with the assistance of private donors and financial donations from the public, St. Croix Christian Academy has managed to stay afloat.

Mrs. Creighton, who has taught at the school for the past six years had to face these challenges head on and described her staff as “resilient” in the face of all these events.

“Without the staff we couldn’t have made it,” she said. “We have an excellent staff of teachers and our workers here, all the office staff, the custodian worker, the cafeteria — everyone worked together to make it happen.”

“I’m so proud that we have such a great team at school. It’s like a family and we work together to get things done,” she added.

The school is founded on Christian beliefs which is engrained throughout its curriculum.

“It’s a curriculum that integrates the word of God. It’s a Christian school so a strong basis here is to teach our children holistically, so it’s the word of God and along with academics we are taking care of the whole man.”

“We are proud that our students are into the word of God and they’re learning about Jesus who came to die for them as their savior and that one day they will accept him as lord and live a life victorious for him,” said Mrs. Creighton.

Mr. Wilson noted how amazed he was with the students who he believes display a high devotion to prayer life and are also well read academically.

To continue on its holistic journey, the school is soliciting assistance from alumni, the community and corporate partners and is asking people to donate to its 40th anniversary campaign led by the slogan ‘40 for 40’.

The slogan encouraged donors to contribute at least \$40 to the school to mark its 40th anniversary during a radiothon hosted by the school in April 2022.

To raise more funds, a banquet to honor staff and business associates is planned for December 18, 2022 at the cost of \$40, in keeping with the anniversary’s slogan.

“We would also like people to come on board with a regular gift beyond the celebrations because we have to keep on going and we want to keep the school going for as long as life lasts,” said Mr. Wilson.

Donations can be sent to the schools P.O Box 716 Christiansted, VI 00821. Donations can also be made directly to the school or via PayPal: [faogv1.org](https://www.paypal.com/US/m0/faq/v1).