

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Horses for Healing: New Equine Therapy Program Launched at John A. Bell Correctional Facility

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An inmate at St. Croix's John A. Bell Correctional Facility participates in the Equine Therapy Program, a joint initiative between the Bureau of Corrections and the Virgin Islands Equestrian Equine Therapy Project, Inc. By. GOV'T HOUSE

A groundbreaking Equine Therapy Program has been launched at the John A. Bell Correctional Facility, marking a transformative stride in inmate rehabilitation. The novel initiative leverages the therapeutic power of horses to promote emotional healing and personal development among inmates.

This project is a collaboration between the Bureau of Corrections and the Virgin Islands Equestrian Equine Therapy Project, Inc.

Notable advancements in the facility were highlighted during a recent visit by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. on Monday. Among the key milestones was a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the inauguration of the Equine Therapy Program. Praising the program, Governor Bryan extolled the efforts of Corrections Director Wynnne Testamark and her team, who, despite limited resources, were instrumental in enhancing the facility's mental health services.

In addition to observing the launch of the therapy program, the governor's tour included engaging discussions with inmates who expressed their appreciation for the active mental health initiative. The facility has established a daytime clubhouse, providing a voluntary access point for vital services and fostering a supportive, understanding atmosphere. Other significant improvements include the recent installation of air conditioning in the cells, reflecting a more humane approach to corrections and demonstrating a commitment to inmate welfare.

Further enhancing the living conditions at the facility is the resolution of a long-disputed food service program. This reform fosters a rehabilitative and positive environment, which is integral to the administration's vision.

Governor Bryan expressed his admiration for the progress made at the John A. Bell facility. He stated, "The Equine Therapy Program and the daytime clubhouse have made a substantial difference in the lives of the inmates, offering them hope and support. I commend Director Testamark and her team for their unwavering dedication in effecting positive change in our criminal justice system."

Government House said the governor's visit stands as a testament to the government's commitment to prioritize mental health programs within correctional facilities, with the implementation of innovative resources central to fostering an environment of rehabilitation and growth.