

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

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## UVI's 'Backpacks for Success' Project to Benefit Children at Queen Louise Home

ST. CROIX — Students at the Queen Louise Home for Children will start the new school year with the tools they need to succeed, due in part, to the University of the Virgin Islands "Backpacks for Success" outreach project. University students, faculty and staff donated school supplies to the 18 students at the home.

The backpacks were made to order, based on the child's age, grade, favorite color, needed school supplies and most loved character. UVI volunteers purchased the backpacks and filled them with notebooks, folders, pens, pencils, rulers, children's books, new shoes and clothing. School supplies were also donated to teachers and the UVI Research and Technology Park donated \$500. Additionally, UVI alumnus, Sen. Kurt Vialet and his daughter donated backpacks filled with school supplies for the children.

"We want the students from Queen Louise to go back to school this year feeling like they have everything they need to be successful," said UVI President David Hall. "We need to start working with students at an early age and to say to them, that you can have a backpack for success, but you can also have a life of success, if you take education seriously."

President Hall continued, "The way children come to school, the way they engage in the education process, makes a difference in regard to their success. If they come feeling that they are lacking, both internally and externally, it has an impact."

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“I am so excited that these guys will be able to walk into school with confidence this year,” said Dana Holtz, Queen Louise Home for Children director. “I can’t even express to you how much appreciation I have for what all you did,” she said of the UVI donation. “You are greatly impacting the lives of 18 children, without a doubt.”

The UVI “Backpacks for Success” project is one of four of the University’s Community Services outreach projects, which are a part of UVI’s newest commitment to the community.

Over 80 University volunteers swapped their computers and iPads, for shovels and paint brushes last month, for an opportunity to transform the Alexander Henderson Elementary School, the Family Resource Center (FRC) and the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School.

**Link: Dr. David Hall Speaks at Queen Louise Home**

<https://www.facebook.com/viconsortium/videos/813850852062488/>

“We wanted to say to our employees, we want you to use some of your time and some of your resources, while you are working with us, to contribute to improving the quality of lives for individuals,” said President Hall. “I was so touched and impressed by the numerous students, staff and faculty who willingly and joyously gave so much of their time to spread hope and healing to four very important organizations in our community.”

**Alexander Henderson Elementary School**

Over 25 students and close to 10 staff members, spent a half day painting the entry way and outside walls to the Alexander Henderson Elementary School in Frederiksted, St. Croix on Wednesday, July 29. A brand new refrigerator, donated by the Home Depot, was placed in the teachers’ lounge and hand sanitizers, donated from B.C. Supplies, Inc., were installed in all of the bathrooms.

“The students and teachers will return to school and embrace a more pleasant and inviting entrance to their school, and find a caring spirit to greet them,” said President Hall.

**Family Resource Center Inc.**

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UVI volunteers worked to create a tranquil space at the Family Resource Center on Thursday, July 30. The therapeutic Serenity Garden at the Family Resource Center was transformed into a place that will provide healing to many individuals who are facing challenging times, Dr. Hall said. “Women who have been abused or neglected, in some way, can now have a place to come and be inspired,” he said.

The garden received new plants and flowers donated by ABC Nursery, furniture, a pergola, paint job and stairs were erected to connect the center to the garden.

“The Serenity Garden is fulfilling its purpose and I am well pleased,” said Vivian St. Juste, FRC executive director. “The victims of crime who seek the services of the Family Resource Center, now have a choice to sit in a room with closed doors with full privacy or to engage in their sessions in the Family Resource Center Serenity Garden. The vision and support of the Office of President Hall of the University of the Virgin Islands and willing staff, are to be highly commended for making this and several more projects, a reality for our agency.”

### **Addelita Junior High School**

In partnership with My Brother’s Workshop, UVI students, staff and faculty painted benches and flower boxes at Cancryn School. Students will now have new benches where they can study, talk and learn, said Dr. Hall.

“It is always a good day when the community comes together to support the youth of the Virgin Islands,” said Scott Bradley, My Brother’s Workshop program director.

“It was inspiring to see so many individuals from UVI enjoying the act of service and sincere generosity,” said President Hall of the UVI community. “We worked together and made a bit of darkness disappear because of the light that came from our hearts and souls.”

Several companies donated supplies and labor to this effort, including ABC Nursery Landscaping and Maintenance, Plaza Extra West, B.C. Supplies, Inc., Sea Chest, MSI Building Supplies, Heavy Materials LLC, Home Depot on St. Thomas and St. Croix, Boschulte Landscaping, Stafford Peter, My Brother’s

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Workshop and Springline Architects, LLC. UVI also partnered with deSigns on the donation of three new building signs and Chico's Distributing for a water cooler to be installed at the Family Resource Center. Plaza Extra St. Thomas donated gift certificates to help defray the FRC's costs for the meals provided at their 24-hour emergency shelter.

"The assistance of all these community partners were integral to the success of our outreach efforts, and on behalf of the entire University community, we salute them for their generosity and for partnering with UVI," said President Hall.

All of these activities are in fulfillment of an aspiration in our strategic plan, and a Board of Trustees approved presidential goal, that requires UVI to use its resources to assist and improve a community based organization.

"I am a very proud President, because I was reminded again of the large hearts that exist at UVI," he said. "With these hearts we can find room for the world."