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My Brother's Workshop Pushing Ahead with Help from Donors



MBW Executive Director Jenny Hawkes introduces trainees at Thursday night's thank you event.

Flanked by trainees, staff and members of the board, My Brother's Workshop officials thanked their community donors Thursday night with a reception that also showcased the future of the organization as it pushes more toward self-sustainability.

Currently MBW's assets include its headquarters in Estate Tutu, a bakery and café, an educational academy in downtown St. Thomas and a board on St. Croix since 2016. The organization started out almost 10 years ago with four recruits, but last year hit nearly 200 and officials said Thursday night that the goal for 2017 is to serve 300 young adults territorywide.

The nonprofit's main mission is to offer vocational and life management training to at-risk young men and women, ages 16 to 24. Donor participation over that past decade has helped the organization grow leaps and bounds, but founder Scott Bradley and Executive Director Jenny Hawkes said Thursday that becoming more sustainable – the bakery, for example,

runs mostly off of its own revenues – is the model MBW continues to work toward.

Social enterprise, as Bradley and Hawkes called it, will ultimately bring in more revenues to support the program’s free services, which also include a virtual classroom program at the downtown academy that requires trainees coming in without a high school diploma to earn one. Hawkes said 13 trainees are currently learning online, while another set of scholarships have been donated by International Capital and Management Co.

My Brother’s Workshop is also working on its own online radio station, a robotics program, a computer program and an office technology program that would give participants training in areas such as reception and clerical work.

“And as we move forward, we need everyone in our community to continue to be involved,” Hawkes said. “That support is invaluable and we couldn’t it without everyone’s support.”