

# The St. Thomas Source

US Virgin Islands

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## My Brother's Workshop Earns National Recognition



*Scott Bradley of My Brother's Workshop.*

Scott Bradley, founder and backbone of the not-for-profit organization. My Brother's Workshop, has just been named a recipient of the 2014 Lewis Hine Award for Service to Children and Youth for his determination and dedication to helping young men of the territory.

Bradley lost no time after arriving on St. Thomas in 2009 in putting his vision to work. And it hasn't gone unnoticed.

Gov. John deJongh Jr. said Friday, "Bradley is so deserving of this national recognition for his work with disadvantaged youth on St. Thomas. He has provided a more positive future for nearly 200 young people through his program, which offers mentoring, counseling, paid job training, education and placement. My Brother's Workshop is extremely successful and the waiting list of more than a 100 is testament to his involvement and the program's appeal."

The governor, in fact, nominated Bradley for the honor a while back. He explained, "Bradley is qualified for the Lewis Hine Awards for his exceptional service and unwavering commitment to the youth of the Virgin Islands. Upon

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retirement, Mr. Bradley relocated to the Virgin Islands from Maine and immediately got to work, making a difference in our community. He has acquainted himself with the residents and has worked with some of the most challenged young men to inspire hope and a sense of belonging."

It's been a tough road, but nothing that the quiet and determined Bradley hasn't taken in stride. He has no truck with frippery, or whatever one wants to call the accolades that these days seem to come his way. He is happy to leave the drama to others.

As far as the prestigious award, Scott said Friday, "I'm not a big fan of publicity, but if it brings something for the kids that's probably all the better."

When Bradley won the Rotary Club of St. Thomas Person of the Year in 2012 for his work with the islands' youth, he was clearly surprised and clearly anxious to get out of the spotlight, after a simple "thank you." He was detained long enough to accept the Llaro Don Quixote.

Speaking of the many young men he has mentored over the last four years, Bradley stated his belief, "You don't have to be a bad kid to get into trouble."

Once the program started, it grew rapidly by word of mouth among the young men who told others of the opportunity to help themselves. With Bradley's strong, solid belief in the young men, they began to change their own attitude toward themselves and others.

Bradley had little trouble enlisting the help of local contractors, painters and others to help train the young men, with the community gradually employing the youngsters. Actually the program helps those between 16-24.

"Right now, we have a class of 12 who will be graduating soon," Bradley said. "We'll be adding more shortly. It's a moving target. When they get

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jobs, they leave us. It's an ebb and flow. So far we've found jobs for about 205."

My Brother's Workshop partners with the St. Thomas Reformed Church, where they used to hold classes in the church's tiny rooms until 2012 when the organization moved to spacious headquarters off the Plaza Extra parking lot, which contains a large, active carpentry shop.

Bradley declines citing a particularly significant experience along the way. "It's a one at a time kind of thing. It's the little ones that matter, every time somebody is successful it makes it worthwhile. It's not success all the time," he said. "Every day is a struggle."

"When you lose someone now and again, it shows you how important it is," he continued. My Brother's Workshop has a waiting list of more than 100; since it began, it has lost five young men to violence.

Bradley is a familiar presence in the community, though he isn't known for his sartorial splendor. He is perfectly content in his daily outfit – jeans, suspenders, T-shirt and baseball hat. Asked if that's what he'll wear to the awards ceremony at the Westin New York Grand Central Hotel in February, he said with a soft laugh, "Some things don't change."

The Lewis Hine Awards were established in 1985 by the National Child Labor Committee. Named for the photographer Lewis Wickes Hine, who captured abhorrent child labor practices in the early 1900s, the awards are presented annually by the National Child Labor Committee to 10 recipients, five professionals and five volunteers, for their unheralded and exceptional service to young people. Each recipient of the award receives \$1,000 and a trip to the awards ceremony in New York City with a guest.