

PEDRO CRUZ
COMMISSIONER - DSPR
TESTIMONY
September 4, 2015

GOOD MORNING, MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY YOUTH COUNCIL. IT IS INDEED A PRIVILEGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS HALL MEETING AND BE ABLE TO SHARE WITH YOU THE DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS, PARKS AND RECREATION YOUTH PROGRAMS.

I AM HERE THIS MORNING WITH THE INTENSION OF GIVING YOU THE MOST SPECIFIC INFORMATION OF THE DEPARTMENT SPORTS, PARKS AND RECREATION YOUTH PROGRAMS. TO MEET MY OBJECTIVE I HAVE WITH ME MS. CARITA STEVENS, OUR YOUTH COMMUNITY COORDINATOR AND MS. KRYSTAL HARDY-FLORES, OUR MARINE SPORTS COORDINATOR.

I MUST INFORM THAT INSPITE OF THE CRITICAL FINANCIAL SITUATION THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, PARKS AND RECREATION IS EXPERIENCING, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPAND ON THE CHILDREN/YOUTH PROGRAMS, INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND THE SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM SITES.

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT WE HAD OVER EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY (850) CHILDREN AND YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN OUR SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM, TERRITORY WIDE. FORTUNATELY, WE HAVE REACHOUT TO MORE CHILDREN AND YOUTH THAN PREVIOUS YEARS.

IN THE DISTRICT OF ST. THOMAS - WE HAD SIX SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM SITES: JOSEPH AUBAIN BALLPARK – FRENCH TOWN, EMILE GRIFFITH BALLPARK– VETERANS DRIVE, LIONEL ROBERTS STADIUM – HOSPITAL GROUND, WINSTON RAYMO RECREATION CENTER – HOSPITAL GROUND, LOCKHART ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – ESTATE THOMAS AND ALVIN MCBEAN COMPLEX – ESTATE TUTU. THREE HUNDRED THIRTY (330) CHILDREN PARTCIPATED; AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME WE HELD A 4-TO-14 YEARS OLD GIRLS SOFTBALL SUMMER CAMP.

ST. JOHN - WE HAD TWO SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM SITES: CRUZ BAY RECREATION CENTER AND ORVILLE BROWN BASKETBALL COURT. ONE HUNDRED AND TWO (102) CHILDREN PARTICIPATED.

IN THE DISTRICT OF ST. CROIX: WE HAD SIX SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM SITES: VINCENT MASON POOL - F'STED, ISAAC BOYNES BALLPARK - GROVE PLACE, RONALD CHARLES GYMNASIUM - CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, PEDRO "PEI" CRUZ BALLPARK AND ESTATE PROFIT COMMUNITY CENTER - MACHUCHAL, RUDY KRIEGER COMPLEX - SION FARM AND D.C. CANEGATA BALLPARK - CHRISTIANSTED. THE SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM AND SITES INCREASED FROM THREE SUMMER CAMP SITES TO SIX. AND IT ENDED WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY (420) CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

THE SPORTS AND ENRICHMENT CAMPS THAT WERE CONDUCTED INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS: MARINE SPORTS, SWIMMING LESSONS, WATER EXCURSIONS, HIKING, KAYAKING, SWIMMING, SNORKLING, FISHING, ARTS & CRAFTS, FUNDAMENTAL AND SKILLS OF GAMES, SOFTBALL, BASEBALL, VOLLEYBALL, BASKETBALL, SOCCER, BOXING, TENNIS, GIRLS SOFTBALL, CHEER LEADERS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

I RECOGNIZED THAT DSPR EMPLOYEES WORKED HARD AND EVEN GO THE EXTRA MILE TO DELIVER QUALITY SERVICE AND ASSURE THAT EACH CHILD BE SATISFIED. IT IS WITH GREAT PRIDE THAT I SALUTE ALL DSPR EMPLOYEES FOR THEIR DEDICATION AND DEVOTED SERVICE GIVEN TO THE CHILDREN THROUGH THE SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM.

I WOULD BE REMISED IF I DON'T ACKNOWLEDGE THE DEPT. OF LABOR, DEPT. OF EDUCATION, DEPT. OF HUMAN SERVICES, DEPT. OF HEALTH AND THE DEPT. OF FIRE SERVICES FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE AND COLLABORATION. THEY WERE VERY SUPPORTIVE AND HELPFUL. SO, ON BEHALF OF DSPR, THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH – THANK YOU, ALL!

MOREOVER, ONE OF DSPR MAJOR INVESTMENT IS THE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM. THE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN CONSISTENT WITH FABULOUS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

DISTRICT OF ST. THOMAS: WE HOST OVER FIFTEEN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS USING ALL OUR FACILITIES: CULTURAL PROGRAMS, TUTORING, COMPUTER TRAINING, MULTIPLE FITNESS PROGRAMS, THE PEE WEE LEAGUE, T-BALL LEAGUE, BASEBALL LITTLE LEAGUE, STORM BASEBALL LEAGUE, SOFTBALL PROGRAMS, GIRLS AND BOYS BASKETBALL, FLAG FOOTBALL, SOCCER, TENNIS CLINIC, TRACK AND FIELD. ONE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN (1,167) STUDENTS PARTICIPATED.

ST. JOHN: WE HAVE FIVE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM SITES: WE HOST THE MOCKO JUMBIES PROGRAM, FLAG FOOTBALL, BASEBALL, MUSIC, DANCE, DRUMMING, BALLET, TAP AND THEATRE, CHOIR AND ORFF MUSIC, CULTURAL STEEL PAN PLAYING, TAIK WON DO CLASSES, FUNDAMENTALS OF MARTIAL ARTS, SELF-DEFENSE, DISCIPLINE AND ORDER. ACTUALLY TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE (235) STUDENTS BENEFITTED FROM OUR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM IN ST. JOHN.

DISTRICT OF ST. CROIX: WE HAVE SIX AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM SITES: WE HOST TUTORIAL PROGRAM, ARTS & CRAFT, LEARN TO SWIM, TAKE ME FISHING, SOCCER, TENNIS, BASKETBALL CLINIC, BASEBALL, SOFTBALL, VOLLEYBALL, AEROBIC, CULTURAL ACTIVITY, DANCE AND THEATRE. ONE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE (1,651) STUDENTS PARTICIPATED.

BESIDES OUR PROGRAMS WE ALSO ASSIST MANY NON-PROFIT SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BROUGHT PROFESSIONAL SPORTS SCOUTS AND EDUCATORS FOR BOTH DISTRICTS. SCOUTING OPPORTUNITY WAS GIVEN TO THE BASEBALL PLAYERS, CLINICS AND TRAININGS WERE CONDUCTED FOR COACHES, CHILDREN AND YOUTH BASEBALL PLAYERS. ALSO, ALL THE SCHOOLS WERE VISITED IN ST. CROIX BY THREE PROFESSIONAL SPEACIALISTS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS, WHO PRESENTED SPORTS ORIENTATIONS. SIMILAR ORIENTATIONS WERE ALSO HELD IN ST. THOMAS AND ST. JOHN.

DSPR HAS BEEN ASSISTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE SPORTS SEGMENT AND HAS MAINTAINED THE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS TERRITORY-WIDE. THIS IS A PROGRAM THAT WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO EXPAND BY PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND/OR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS.

OUR MANDATE TO SERVE THE PUBLIC AND PARTICULARLY THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH IS SERIOUSLY TAKEN. "ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH SHALL RECEIVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITY" IS THE MOTTO THAT HAS KEPT US WORKING HARD INSPITE OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION CRISIS TO MAINTAIN THE PARKS AND FACILITIES IN THE BEST POSSIBLE CONDITION.

I MUST SAY THAT DSPR REMAINS COMMITTED TO DELIVER QUALITY SPORTS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES. WE WILL CONTINUE WORKING TO ORGANIZE SPORTS PROGRAMS, PREPARE AND BUILD MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR ATHLETES BY PARTNERING WITH ORGANIZATIONS, BRINGING SCOUTS, PROFESSIONAL SPORTS SPECIALISTS, HEALTH/FITNESS EDUCATORS AND SPORTS RECOGNITIONS PROGRAMS.

TO CONCLUDE, I COMMEND EACH ONE OF YOU FOR THE STAND YOU HAVE TAKEN TO ADVOCATE FOR THE CHILDREN/YOUTH PROGRAMS SERVICES. I WISH YOU GOD'S BLESSINGS TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU, TO THE VIEWING AND LISTENING AUDIENCE AND THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS.

THANK YOU AND WE STAND READY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE.