

Using Sport For Social Change

“Focus Virgin Island youth through sports and fitness, giving them the confidence they need to set personal goals, achieve their aspirations and create opportunity for themselves, their family and their community.”

By Dean Doeling



Hello, and welcome to my first news letter regarding my “Sport For Social Change” initiative for U.S. Virgin Island youth. My hope is to keep everyone informed of my/our progress in focusing U.S. Virgin Island youth through sports and fitness.

Over the past month I have received some very heartfelt responses about my “Sport For Social Change” proposal, from many “St. Johnians” such as parents of the children, school faculty, mentors of the kids, their friends, their family members

and St. John business owners. What I am finding out, is that there is an overwhelming need and desire to help these kids (going to one of the three schools on St. John) with their sports and fitness needs. Their needs are the same as our kids here stateside. In fact, they are U.S. Kids!



Julius Sprauve School
257 students

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The “help” I am referring to as a short term goal, is getting these kids and their schools some much needed sports equipment. I am talking about the basics here: Soccer balls, basketballs, some nets for their hoops, footballs, sports bags, track singlets, bats, baseballs, gloves, tennis rackets, tennis balls, cheer attire,

swimming attire... just as a start.

Here is one of the responses I received from a wonderful woman- by the name of Beth, who is a 13 year resident of St. John, and has two children of her own going to school there:



Giff Hill School
180 students

•What sports and recreation programs are currently offered?

“Giff Hill School has made some strides in the past year in increasing our athletic offerings--we will have a flag football, basketball, swim, sailing, volleyball, cheer-leading squad, surfing, and tennis team this year. Our flag football season is underway and the team is 3-1 (which is quite a feat considering the size of our school compared to who they are playing), but they don't have jerseys or cleats or team bags or anything that your typical school team would consider standard equipment. The Rec department is offering baseball right now, and also offers basketball.

American Legion runs a flag football league just for St. John. That league is separate from the school league and for boys and girls 8-13. The coaches are volunteers from the community.”

•Who runs the athletic programs?

“Mostly community volunteers.”

•What needs are not being met regarding sports in the schools?

“There is no money for equipment, facility maintenance, etc. As we have no representation in the Vi government, St. John receives very little funding for our public facilities. Our school offers aid to 55% of our students to ensure that the demographic of GHS reflects that of the community, but the amount of aid that we provide seriously limits any discretionary funds that we might- otherwise have.”

•What athletic equipment needs are there?

“We are lacking everything, basically. But, we are sort of used to making do with little so the kids still manage to play sports and have a blast with old and broken equipment or whatever they can find!”



Guy Benjamin School
73 students

•Other concerns?

“My concern as a 13 year resident of the VI and a parent of two kids here is that our island is becoming more and more fractured. The houses are getting fancier in the “Snowbird” neighborhoods, but the schools and recreation facilities for the children of this island are falling apart. We are trying to build our community from within again, and one easy way to do this is to have kids play sports together, even if they attend different schools. Becoming teammates

makes them friends. My children are 5 and 9 and have lived here their entire lives. They do not see race or money, they see people. They are much more evolved human beings as children than most adults I grew up with in Georgia, mostly because they have grown up playing with kids from other backgrounds and realize that we are all more alike than we are different. That is why I work to raise money for GHS because I believe all St. John children deserve access to quality education and athletics, regardless of their families' economic situation....

This is just one response out of several, but the tone of every response has been the same: "Please see our

kids, hear them, let them know they matter!"

It is my desire to help Focus Virgin Island youth through sports and fitness, giving them the confidence they need to set personal goals, achieve their aspirations and create opportunity for themselves, their family and their community.

I appreciate all of you and your desire to help thus far. Please keep this idea alive by sending me suggestions and/or ways that you think that you can help. Please also tell other people about my goal to help these kids and ask them to email me with their suggestions and ideas. As a short term goal and a show of good will, I would like to get the 3 schools of St. John some equipment

immediately. As a longer term, sustainable goal, I will continue to work with these wonderful people to see what sort of programs they have that Nike might be able to enhance, as well as what Nike can do in the future to help the kids, the schools and their community.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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