

For Immediate Release

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PROJECT PROMISE CELEBRATES 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS (JANUARY 19, 2024) – Project Promise, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk youths in St. Croix is excited to celebrate 10 years of making a difference on St. Croix and beyond.

“I founded Project Promise in 2014,” says Executive Director and Founder Resa O’Reilly Shearn, “after witnessing the many challenges facing our youth. Our vision was to create programs that will teach youth how to make positive choices, avoid risky behavior, tap into their full potential, and lead happier, healthier lives. Despite many challenges that include a devastating hurricane and a global pandemic, we have turned this vision into a reality!”

When Resa started Project Promise, she had no idea how wide the organization’s impact would be. Highlights of the past decade include:

Salt River Bay “Open Outdoors for Kids” Program – Provides every public school fourth grade student on St. Croix with the opportunity to visit and learn about the Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve. Since 2014, over 3870 students have benefited from this three-part program, which is now the longest consistently running program within our local National Parks Service.

The Caterpillar Project – Project Promise’s flagship program, the Caterpillar Project provides eight years of support to a group of selected youth. The holistic program includes life coaching, mentoring, educational intervention, career exploration, personal wellness, creative expression, cultural awareness, family support services and a heavy emphasis on community service. “We are currently serving our second cohort of students,” Resa shares.

Toys for Tanzania Program – Since 2016, each year as part of the community service aspect of the Caterpillar Program, students have helped select toys, sports equipment, and school supplies to send to the children at an orphanage in Tanzania. This annual service project has sent hundreds of toys to Tanzania and has provided the Caterpillars with lessons in smart shopping, math, and budgeting, as well as an opportunity to learn important life lessons such as giving back.

Excellence and Leadership Recognition Program – The Excellence & Leadership Recognition Program is designed to acknowledge and recognize three outstanding public high school seniors; one senior from each high school who have gone above and beyond, despite all odds. Since 2017, twenty-one outstanding St. Croix high school students have

been honored for their achievements and presented with \$500 scholarships, gifts and more.

Educating South Africa Initiative – In 2018, Project Promise raised funds to pay the school fees for 30 disadvantaged children in South Africa, where public school is not free. Project Promise board members, staff, students, volunteers, and the St. Croix community raised nearly \$10,000 to help the students. The Caterpillar Project participants raised more than \$1,000 which covered the school fees for 3 of those 30 students.

Buck Island “Ticket to Ride” Program – Provides every public school fifth grade student on St. Croix with the opportunity to visit and learn about the Buck Island Reef National Monument. Over the course of five years, 1589 students have participated in this three-part program through our partnership with Big Beards Adventure Tours and the National Park Service.

Summer of Service Cross-Country Trip – In 2019, the participants in Project Promise’s Caterpillar Program drove across America for an incredible three-week trip of a lifetime. Starting in New York and ending in Los Angeles, the trip allowed participants the opportunity to experience first-hand the history, sights, and sounds of the mainland. The students made an impact on numerous communities across the nation by completing a wide variety of service projects during the trip.

Completion of Community Center – With help from the business community, community groups and community members near and far, Project Promise was able to complete a long-standing need, a space of their own. In 2022, after two years of fundraising and construction, Project Promise opened the doors to their newly rehabilitated home and community center in downtown Christiansted.

Empowered Me Program – Empowered Me classes and activities center around the following programming pillars: Personal Wellness, Financial Literacy, Career Exploration, Creative Expression, Cultural Awareness, Community Service and Life Skills. This holistic enrichment program provides weekly classes on a variety of topics for St. Croix youth ages 10 to 18.

FIRST Global Challenge – In 2023, Project Promise accepted an invitation to put together a team of 4 students and 2 adult mentors that travelled to Singapore to represent the Virgin Islands at a global Olympics-style robotics event. Coming together with 900 students from over 127 different nations was an incredible, potentially life-changing experience for our participants.

“The past 10 years have been truly amazing!” Resa exclaims. “I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished, including all the people we have impacted through our community service projects. Of course, we could not have done it alone, and we are truly grateful for

the support we have received from so many people and organizations both on and off Island.”

Project Promise invites the public to come celebrate its 10th Anniversary at this year’s Havana Nights. Project Promise’s annual Havana Nights fundraiser, featuring Cuban music, food and salsa dancing will be held on February 10th at St. George Village Botanical Garden; tickets will be available through the organization’s website, www.projectpromistvi.com.