



Coole planners

Rotarians, Innovative give homework organizers to students



TOM EADER
Bureau Chief

ST. CROIX — The fifth- and sixth-graders at Charles H. Emanuel Elementary School will be able to keep track of all their homework assignments after receiving Coole School Planners during an assembly Thursday on campus.

“I’m going to use it for my homework to get all my assignments done, and I think it’s amazing that you guys gave us these planners.” Kasan Wheatley, 11, a fifth-grader, said.

Members of Rotary Club of St. Croix and the Innovative Companies team, primary sponsors of the Coole School program, distributed the homework planners to the students at the end of an official ceremony, which began with the students reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the “Virgin Islands March.”

Susanna Smith, Rotary Club of St. Croix West president, read the history of the Safe and Drug Free Coole School program, which was written on the assembly program. She said the program began in 2000 when the Virgin Islands National Guard Counterdrug Task Force began supporting the Office of the U.S. Attorney with its After-School Peer Helpers Homework Assistance program at Juanita Gardine Elementary School.

The Coole School Planners were identified after researching for a tool to assist students in capturing their homework assignments and parental involvement, as well as academic achievement, Smith said. She said the goal of the program is to assist in building students’ resilient factors against drugs, violence and neg-

Students from Charles H. Emanuel Elementary School hold up their Coole School Planners during an assembly Thursday on campus.

Tom Eader

ative behaviors while VING personnel serve as role models for the students.

"What began as a collaborative effort in hopes of achieving academic success has blossomed into a program that takes into consideration the total child," Smith said. "Targeting fifth- and sixth-graders, the planners focus not just on organizational skills, but life skills that can foster positive decision making."

Shawn O'Donnell, Innovative Companies chief executive officer, told the students Innovative is pleased to partner with the Rotarians and VING to provide them with the planners. He said both his parents are teachers, so they had him make his own homework planner using a spiral notebook when he was in elementary school.

"It would always keep me on track," he said.

O'Donnell said one of the first companies he worked with after college distributed a similar planner to its employees.

"This is a great tool not just to get through fifth grade or sixth grade, but to also get through your whole life, whether its college, school or even in work," he said. "So we're very supportive of anything to help out with our education and our youth."

Command Chief Master Sgt. Neville Lee, of the VI National Guard, said VING didn't know the program would turn out so successful when it started in 2000. He said VING thought the program would end due to lack of resources. He thanked the Rotary Clubs and Innovative Companies for stepping up and "helping the community."

After flipping through the Coole School Planner, Lee said one phrase inside the planner that stuck out to him was, "Dream It, Believe It and Do It." He said VING had a dream it believed in back in 2000, the guardsmen are doing it now.

"Whatever you want to do, believe it and then, ultimately,

Lee pointed out that the planner encourages six character traits — integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

"Ultimately, it's all about being a good citizen in our community," he said. "Once again, you can be anything that you want to be. All this is doing is helping you to get there. Just make sure that you use that."

Sheryl Finch, school counselor, spoke on behalf of acting Charles H. Principal Delicia Espinosa. She described the planners as a "wonderful and essential tool" for the school year.

"Our students know the value and treasure these planners for the whole school year," she said.

The students demonstrated their appreciation for the planners by singing the Charles H. Emanuel "Hornets" official song before the planners were distributed to them. The students immediately began flipping through the planners after receiving them.

Shaliyah Barnes, 11, a fifth-grader, said it felt "good" to receive the planner. She said the fact that the sponsors distributed the planners to the students "means they care."

"I think the planner is cool so I can write down my homework in it," Barnes said.

James Herrera, 12, a sixth-grader, received his first Coole School Planner last school year. He said he used it to write down all his homework assignments.

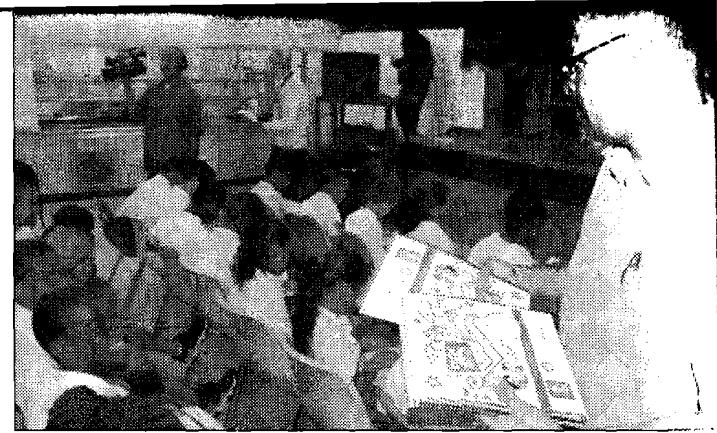
"The planner helped me to stay organized," he said.

Adrienne Seward, Rotary Club of Mid-Isle president, thanked all the sponsors who contributed to the Coole School program, including Rotary Clubs of St. Croix, West, Mid-Isle and Harborside, as well as Innovative Companies and Innovative employee Jennifer Matarangas-King; Colette Griffin, Mary Sluss and Business World; VING and Charles H. Emanuel Elementary School.

The four St. Croix Rotary Clubs have purchased and distributed

Coole and Drug Free Coole School program since 2007 in the spirit of collaboration. Innovative Companies partnered with the Rotarians in 2011 to sponsor the purchase of the Coole School Planners for the students.

The Rotarians distributed 1,300 Coole School Planners this year to fifth- and sixth-graders in all the island's public, private and parochial schools, as well as to home-schooled students. Each of St. Croix's four Rotary Clubs were assigned different schools to distribute the planners. Charles H. Emanuel Elementary School was the last school to receive them.



David Beck, Rotary Club of St. Croix past assistant governor, distributes Coole School Planners to students Thursday at Charles H. Emanuel Elementary School.

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