

Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative



from left: Feliza Fenty, Shara Pollock, Latoya George, Diedre Chiverton, Connillia Williams, Adrianna Soverall, Daniella Flax, Alyssa Harrigan and Rea Vanterpool

In order for Virgin Gorda and the BVI to effectively address the emerging challenges of the 21st century, there is an urgent need to invest in the island's next generation of leaders. Young people must be identified, trained, rewarded and given incentives to return to the islands to contribute to our social and economic well-being of the Island. Excerpted from Report: Summary of Observations and Recommendations from Virgin Gorda Community Leaders (November, 2006).

The Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative (VGYLI) evolved from a series of meetings held from November, 2006-March, 2007 with leaders from business, churches, education, government and youth who are concerned for the island's youth. VGYLI's mission is to inspire young people and give them the tools and training to develop their full potential, broaden their horizons, strengthen their character and develop their leadership abilities so they can positively contribute to a better future for their community. This leadership program provides educational training opportunities for young people; catalyze community projects; and develop public-private partnerships to prepare young people in the BVI to become leaders of the 21st century. VGYLI The Stone Soup Leadership Institute, a 501c3 non-profit organization, facilitated the community planning process and will provide training and technical assistance for the Initiative.

This Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. VGYLI is a fellowship program where young people will receive mentors, internships and/or job training and practice their leadership skills by working with younger students and developing projects within their organizations, churches and communities. The community is invited to share their time, talents and resources so these young people can better contribute to their island. The first VGYLI orientation was held on March 16 with Feliza Fenty, Shara Pollock, Latoya George, Diedre Chiverton, Connillia Williams, Adrianna Soverall, Daniella Flax, Alyssa Harrigan and Rea Vanterpool. Their dreams are to be doctors, journalists, graphic designers, entrepreneurs and hospitality industry leaders so they can positively contribute to their island.

The official launch will be held on Saturday June 30 with a training session from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Virgin Gorda campus of H.S. Lavity Stoutt Community College. On Sunday, July 1, youth will have an environmental education experience sailing with Patouche. Select VGYLI youth will travel to Vieques participate in the 4th Annual Summer Institute of the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative: www.vyli.com. Applications for youth ages 15-23 are available at HLSCC c/o Vanessa Rymer at 495-5251. Youth, families and sponsors are invited to community event at The Mineshaft on Friday, June 29 from 5-7 p.m.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute was founded in 1997 by Marianne Larned, author of the Institute's educational curriculum and best-selling book, *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*, with an introduction by Walter Cronkite who chairs the Institute's International Advisory Council: www.soup4world.com. The Institute has assisted other Caribbean islands and island communities of Martha's Vineyard, Hawaii, Philippines to develop youth-community initiatives that engage people to work together to help build healthier communities and a sustainable world. VGYLI is collaborating with other BVI organizations and invites them to nominate young people. While this is a Virgin Gorda-led initiative, youth representatives from other BVI islands are invited. Early support came from Germaine Fritz, A Dream Come True Villa Rentals of Virgin Gorda. In-kind contributions from L&S Car Rentals, Speedy's Car Rentals, Martha Holder, Dr. and Mrs. Kirk Kanter, The Bitter End Yacht Club. In-kind sponsors for the VYGLI training program are Air Sunshine, Caribbean Wings, Patouche, The Mineshaft Café and Toad Hall with special thanks to Dr. Almein O'Neal for her support at HLSCC.