

STOP THE BLEEDING

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SECOND LADY HOSTS YOUTH SUMMIT FRIDAY ON ST. THOMAS

Cheryl Francis, Second Lady of the United States Virgin Islands, will launch the first activity of her “Stop the Bleeding Campaign” with a Youth Summit on Friday. Over 800 students from St. Thomas’ public, parochial, and private schools have been invited to participate in the Summit and explore issues ranging from self-esteem to conflict resolution. They will convene at the University of the Virgin Islands Sports and Fitness Center from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Francis, through her recently established Stop the Bleeding Foundation, a non-profit organization, is dedicated to promoting, educating, confronting, and fostering accountability in the Virgin Islands community against the mistreatment, violence, abuse and hurt of V.I. youth. This will be accomplished through innovative communication, agency collaboration, and responsible action. According to Francis, “Stop the Bleeding” will be the bridge that unites all agencies of change—private, public, government—to work together in unity for the sole purpose of helping young parents and saving children throughout the territory.. “This is my passion”, Francis said, .,” too many of our families are falling by the wayside and our children are suffering in the process.” Francis has assembled a core committee of community volunteers including the clergy to aggressively address the issues that are plaguing many Virgin Islands families.

Through research, Francis has discovered that Virgin Islands children moving from adolescence into the teenage years are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school and turning to drugs, violence, and other misbehaviors as life alternatives. Armed with this information, Friday’s Youth Summit and one planned for October 5 on St. Croix will provide an opportunity for young people to speak with each other, speak with adults, and speak to the community of their concerns.

Lieutenant Governor Gregory R. Francis will bring remarks in support of his wife's initiative before students are introduced to motivational speaker and St. Thomas native Devin Robinson who will present the keynote address. Robinson, once a troubled youth, is now a radio personality and author who travels the country speaking to youth about issues of the day. . Robinson's Atlanta-based radio program "Minding Our Business" offers empowerment through business, behaviors, and books. His thought-provoking "Motivational Minute" is heard on radio stations across the country and he authors a weekly column in the Virgin Islands Daily News entitled "180 Degrees."

Judge Audrey Thomas will make a presentation entitled "You Matter" , members of the clergy will address the topic of "Dealing with Everyday Issues" and Laurie Christian, Director of Lutheran Social Services' Teen Line will discuss Conflict Resolution. Entertainment including a step show, a presentation by the Virgin Islands Police Department, informational exhibits, and a question and answer session are included in the Summit activities.

While thanking the many facets of the community which have come together to make the first Youth Summit possible, Francis says, "We simply cannot abandon our families. Together we are definitely going to stop the bleeding and start the healing of our families," Francis concluded.

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