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'Ridiculous'

Watlington derides senator's request for primary election recount **Page 4**



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Record day for Henry, McMaster at NACAC Championships

Back Page



Daily News photo by ANDREA MILAM

Former President Bill Clinton talks with St. John Christian Academy kindergarten teacher Kemuel Bailey while Julie Joseph, right, listens on Friday in Cruz Bay. Clinton visited the territory to announce new solar array projects for the academy and Giff Hill School on St. John and the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas.

Clinton brings energy to V.I.

Former president touts cooperation on visit to St. John, St. Thomas

Family Resource Center, 2 schools get gifts of solar arrays

Disasters an 'opportunity to save the place you love and make it better.'

Pages 2-3

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Clinton visits St. John school ahead of press event

By **ANDREA MILAM**
St. John Correspondent

ST. JOHN — Before Friday's official announcement of solar array donations to the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas and two schools on St. John, former President Bill Clinton, along with Bloomberg Philanthropies' Tom Secunda and a representative from Expedia, toured one of those schools, the St. John Christian Academy in Cruz Bay.

Clinton was met by the Christian Academy's Pastor Reginald Joseph, who said the solar array donation will save more than \$1,000 a month that the school typically spends for electricity.

"This is a huge help to us, and the money we save on energy spending can now be put toward helping the school and our students," Joseph said.

Representatives from Giff Hill School, which will also receive a donated solar array, were on hand for Clinton's Christian Academy tour.

Giff Hill board member Miles Stair said the school currently spends \$4,000 a month on electricity at the upper campus alone.

"This very generous gift will allow us to provide enhanced scholastic support as well as a green footprint for the upper campus," Stair said.

Clinton met with Christian Academy students and parents, who wrote "Welcome President Clinton" on their classroom chalkboard.

The former president spent time speaking with the students, commenting on the artwork they'd created while waiting for his arrival.

Joseph explained the damage his school suffered during Irma to Clinton, who listened attentively and asked pointed questions about the buildings' construction.

Clinton then met with Jason Cawthron, the St. John resident who is doing the assessment for the two schools' solar arrays, to discuss the kind of technology that will be used.

The two, along with Joseph, Secunda, Stair and Katherine Cheng of Expedia, discussed the need to build with resilience and how climate change is affecting the Caribbean.

"I hope that this will help," Clinton told Joseph regarding the solar array donation, before he and his entourage departed for the St. Thomas press conference.



Daily News photos by ANDREA MILAM

Former President Bill Clinton arrives in Cruz Bay at St. John Christian Academy to tour the school Friday before heading to a press conference on St. Thomas.



“
This is a huge help to us, and the money we save on energy spending can now be put toward helping the school and our students.

— St. John Christian Academy Pastor Reginald Joseph, on the donation of a solar array for the school.

Clinton talks with a group of students at St. John Christian Academy in Cruz Bay during a tour of the school on Friday.

Clinton highlights need for cooperation

Former president announces solar projects, encourages WAPA to invest in renewable energy to help territory's homeowners

By SUZANNE CARLSON
Daily News Staff

ST. THOMAS — Former President Bill Clinton visited the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas on Friday to announce a partnership to install solar arrays at that facility and two schools on St. John.

“This is a huge deal, just think about it. The Virgin Islands could become the first place in the entire Caribbean to do what every place in the Caribbean should do,” which is maximize renewable energy resources to provide the lowest-cost, most environmentally responsible means of power generation to its citizens, Clinton said.

While the current administration of President Donald Trump has doubled down on climate science denial and shown no willingness to support renewable energy initiatives, Clinton said solar energy and other forms of alternative power generation are essential to society's survival.

Cooperation is also an essential part of the social fabric, Clinton said, and he implored Virgin Islanders to continue working together on hurricane recovery efforts rather than follow the national trend of division and authoritarian rule.

“What this proves is that partnerships work better than people working alone. And they work a whole lot better than people fighting each other all the time. So, I have found — and I could probably fill this Family Resource Center with the studies that prove groups make better decisions than lone geniuses, much less people who think they are and aren't,” Clinton said.

Clinton said he presided over a host of natural disasters in his 22 years in politics, including floods, tornadoes and wildfires.

“It's amazing what you can do if you see these disasters as an opportunity to recommit yourself to save the place you love and make it better,” Clinton said.

The cascade of hurricanes and natural disasters in 2017 meant that the Virgin Islands did not necessarily get as much national support or exposure as if Irma and Maria had struck in isolation, according to the president.

“And yet, you didn't give up,” Clinton said.

He encouraged the V.I. Water and Power Authority to invest in solar energy and partner with homeowners to facilitate a cheaper, more reliable, more renewable energy grid.

“I want to point out that cooperation is better than conflict, even though it's all out of fashion today,” Clinton said, before highlighting the trade partnerships that have made production of cheaper, more technologically advanced solar panels possible — partnerships that have been under threat under the Trump administration.

In addition to the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas, solar panel systems also will be installed at St. John Christian Academy and the Giff Hill School.

The solar panels, batteries and installation provided are being funded by Expedia Group as a commitment of the Clinton Global Initiative Action Network on Post-Disaster Recovery, in partnership with Tom Secunda and Bloomberg Philanthropies, Construction for Change and the Sextant Foundation.

Referring to the panels that will be installed at the three sites, Clinton said they were created through cooperation.

“This is a Canadian company that supplies these, and they are made in Milwaukee, Wis., and Canada, and in China. And as far as I can see, nobody's mad at anybody,” Clinton said. “We create jobs by providing the most up-to-date, high-tech product that will provide much cheaper energy.

“Think about what this Family Resource Center does, they provide counseling, support groups, shelter, food and clothing to survivors of domestic violence. You can't do it without power,” the president said. “When the solar installation is complete, we'll not only be able to keep the lights on, even in future storms, but you'll save thousands and thousands of dollars every year — money that can then go back into these life-changing programs.”

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Daily News photo by SUZANNE CARLSON
Gov. Kenneth Mapp, Family Resource Center executive director Vivian St. Juste, former President Bill Clinton, and Lt. Gov. Osbert Potter meet at the center on St. Thomas on Friday.



Daily News photo by ANDREA MILAM
Clinton talks with St. John resident Jason Cawthron, who did the solar assessments at St. John Christian Academy and Giff Hill School, while Pastor Reginald Joseph, right, and Giff Hill School board member Miles Stair look on Friday.

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What this proves is that partnerships work better than people working alone. And they work a whole lot better than people fighting each other all the time. So, I have found — and I could probably fill this Family Resource Center with the studies that prove groups make better decisions than lone geniuses, much less people who think they are and aren't.

— Former President Bill Clinton, in a speech at the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas