

St. John

# Musicians join voices for benefit song

By **ANDREA MILAM**  
Special to The Daily News

ST. JOHN — As Hurricane Irma thrashed the island of St. John and photos of the devastation found their way out, longtime island visitor Dean Doeling sunk into heartbreak at his Portland, Ore., home.

The Just Play event that he hosts each year for St. John's children was set to celebrate its ninth anniversary in October, and Doeling's happiness and anticipation of the event gave way to worry and sadness.

"I was devastated, just knowing that people I love down there were going through this, and when I started to see the photos posted online, I was just heartbroken," Doeling said. "Not only would I not be able to put on the Just Play event for the kids, but everyone down there was just trying to survive. It broke my heart."

Doeling, a drummer in his hometown band, Slicker Country Band, found his emotions beginning to materialize as a song, with lyrics paying homage to the strength and resilience of St. John's people.

"I didn't know how far I would go with it but I had some basic ideas, so I thought, 'Okay, I'll give it a shot,'" Doeling said.

With the help of some local musician friends, the song began to take shape, and Doeling decided he wanted someone from St. John to sing vocals. He contacted Shikima Jones, who performs at weddings and other local events.

"When I listened to the music and really analyzed where he was going with the lyrics, I told him I didn't want to be the only singer on the song," said Jones. "St. John talent is so colorful, and I thought we should incorporate others."

Jones floated the idea of a "We Are the World"-style recording, and the song soon evolved into a collaboration between 14 island musicians and choirs. Doeling filled a backpack with recording equipment and flew down to St. John last week. The St. John Inn offered him free accommodations, the St. John School of the Arts allowed him to record there, and St. John Catering donated bottles of water for the musicians.

"I have been treated so graciously," Doeling said. "It brings tears to my eyes to think about the ways the people of St. John have helped in this process."

Over the course of a week in a makeshift studio, the island's musicians lent their talent



Daily News photos by BILL STELZER  
Members of the Moravian Choir sing 'Love City Rise Up! The song, recorded over a week on St. John, is now being mixed and mastered.



Ronald Lee Jr. performs on steel pan.



Haile Israel plays electric guitar.

to the track, dubbed Love City Rise Up!

"I was blown away by how everyone interpreted the song with their voices or their instruments," Doeling said. "I came away with so many inspiring tracks from these lovely humans, who just added so many layers and

complexity to this song."

In what Doeling has dubbed a "labor of love," he will now spend the next month preparing the song to be sent to a recording studio for its final mix, which will then be mastered in Nashville, Tenn. CDs will

## 'Love City Rise Up!'

Irma tried to take away what matters to us most,  
From our tiny islands of St. Thomas, Tola and Just  
But there is another island that's home to you and me  
Irma can't take away our pride right here in Love City  
Irma take the buildings in Mongoose  
In Wharfside off come the roofs  
Coral Bay fares no better, And all our homes are gone  
Rise up Brother and Sister now as we must carry on  
Love City rise up  
And hold your head up high  
Our love and pride for you will never fade away, no  
Love City Strong  
Where we belong  
So hold your head up  
Love City and rise up  
Time will help to heal the wounds that we all have endured  
The road ahead is long; but it's ours to rebuild  
Winds of change will come and go, but we must stand as one  
United in our love and faith for this island we call home  
We are VI!  
We stand as one!  
We are Love City strong!  
Love City rise up!  
And hold your head up high  
Our love and pride for you will never fade away  
Love City Strong  
Where we belong  
So hold your head up  
Love City and rise up!

## Musicians

Moravian Choir  
Broheem on Sax  
Shikima Jones  
Lauren Jones  
Magne  
Mark Wallace  
Miss Ingrid  
Ronnie  
Klingsberg  
St. John School  
of the Arts  
Children's  
Choir  
St. John  
Recovery Choir  
Evanna Chinnery  
Nathan Visel  
Kenny Rawlins  
Ronald Lee Jr.  
Haile Israel

be produced and the song will be available for sale online, and the proceeds will be distributed evenly among St. John 501c3 organizations.

"No matter how much money it raises, it's yet another experience of St. John coming together to create something life-affirming out of chaos," said Kristen Carmichael-Bowers, who heads the St. John School of the Arts Children's Choir and the St. John Recovery Choir. "The adult singers as well as the children told me afterward how much it meant to them just to make the recording. It fills us up and reminds us of our joy in community."

Doeling anticipates the CDs and the digital version of Love City Rise Up! will be available in time for the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Irma. The song can be pre-ordered at <https://lovecityriseup.bigcartel.com/>, and Doeling hopes to have 1,000 pre-orders in time for the Sept. 6 anniversary.

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