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VIDE and Suffolk-CBNA Joint Venture Hosts Project Launch Ceremony Marking the Start of the Modernization of the Lockhart K-8 School

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), in partnership with the Suffolk-CBNA Joint Venture, the Government of the Virgin Islands, and the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR), officially launched the modernization of Lockhart K-8 School during a ceremonial event held Thursday, September 10, at the school's campus on St. Thomas.

The Project Launch Ceremony marked a significant milestone in the Territory's ongoing efforts to transform and modernize public school facilities while creating learning environments designed to meet the evolving needs of Virgin Islands students, educators, and communities.

The renovation and expansion of Lockhart K-8 School will create a new 1,070-student campus that supports a changing educational vision for U.S. Virgin Islands public schools. The project is designed around a commitment to educating the whole student within a values system that prioritizes resilience, flexibility and adaptability, access to quality education, and sustainable, high-performance design**.**

A key component of the project is a new two-story building addition that will increase the school's capacity and provide modern spaces focused on teaching and learning. The addition will include classrooms, teacher planning areas, and collaboration spaces designed to support educators and enhance the student learning experience.

"Today is more than a project launch. It is the launching a vision. A vision that says our children deserve schools that inspire them, protect them, prepare them, and communicate to them every single day that their future matters." said Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D., Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Education**.** "We are not simply renovating a building, we are transforming the educational environment and the future of our children."

"Lockhart K-8 School represents a lasting investment in the students, families and community of St. Thomas," said Suffolk President Jeff Gouveia on behalf of the Suffolk-CBNA Joint Venture. "For us, this work is about more than building a school. It is about honoring the trust placed in us by the Government of the Virgin Islands, VIODR and VIDE, rebuilding stronger and delivering a safe, resilient facility that will serve students for generations. We are also committed to being a good

member of the community by creating opportunities for local contractors, workers and businesses and strengthening the Virgin Islands construction industry for the future."

"The Lockhart K-8 School is the fifth VIDE project launched in 2026 under the Rebuild USVI initiative. It is just one of six projects included in the first bundle procured to modernize educational facilities on St. Thomas," remarked ODR Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien. "FEMA's partnership and willingness to support innovative solutions have been vital to this progress. Congratulations to all stakeholders on reaching this critical milestone!"

Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. reaffirmed the Government of the Virgin Islands' commitment to modernizing school facilities and creating high-quality educational environments for students across the Territory. "Together with the Department of Education, I am proud of the talent, vision and hard work on display here today. It took a lot of people to get us to this moment, from the Lockhart family and the Department of Education to FEMA and our design build partners. Today, we celebrate not simply the modernization of Lockhart K-8 School, but an investment in the people of the Virgin Islands, because where our children learn matters. We are not just rebuilding a school building; we are transforming the educational environment in which our young Virgin Islanders will learn, grow and prepare for their futures. This is about creating a place that inspires our children and gives our educators the tools and environment they deserve," said Governor Bryan.

Governor Bryan remarked, "What may have once seemed like an impossible dream is becoming a reality. And as we celebrate this important milestone, we are reminded that when we work together, remain committed and trust in God's plan, He shows us that He has so much more in store for the people of the Virgin Islands. I am proud of what we are building here today and excited about the future we are building for our children."

The ceremony also provided an opportunity to recognize the Lockhart family, whose members were in attendance and were acknowledged for their family's historic contribution to the school and the St. Thomas community. The family donated the parcel of land upon which Lockhart K-8 School was built, making their contribution an important part of the school's history and legacy.

Adding a special moment to the ceremony, the Lockhart K-8 School Choir**,** led by Mr. Malvern Gumbs, delivered a musical selection that invigorated those in attendance. The performance served as a powerful reminder of the students at the heart of the project and the importance of creating a modern school environment where they can learn, grow, and thrive.

The modernization of Lockhart K-8 School is part of the Virgin Islands Department of Education's broader vision for rebuilding and modernizing public school facilities throughout the Territory. Through strategic investments in school infrastructure, VIDE and its partners are working to provide students and educators with safe, resilient, sustainable, and high-performing learning environments.

To learn more about the New Lockhart K-8 School and the Virgin Islands Department of Education's plan to build new schools in the Virgin Islands, visit www.newschoolsvide.com**.**

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