



Philanthropy & You

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

University of the Virgin Islands

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Allie Petrus - Overcoming Odds & Passing It on Through Philanthropy

“My life story is about overcoming odds,” said Allie Petrus. In school he had below average grades, was on welfare and lived in public housing. Today, he and his wife, Beverly, are successful business owners that manage four businesses – Petrus Plaza, PG Gas, Subway Restaurant and Sbarros Restaurant.

All the scripts that are written say that persons who come from various backgrounds are destined to remain in the same place, he said. “The way I found that I could overcome that is by educating myself.”

Petrus, a former Virgin Islands senator, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration with a concentration in international business and tourism management and a Master’s of Arts degree in Public Adminis-

tration. He earned a Master’s of Arts in Business Administration from the University of the Virgin Islands in 2001.

Having both experienced personal and financial struggles to complete their educations, they decided to give back by creating the Petrus Family Scholarship Fund at UVI. Their first

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- Allie Petrus

donation to the fund in 2013 was made in honor of Allie Petrus’ 50th birthday. Family and friends, in lieu of gifts, were asked to donate money toward creating the scholarship.

“My tithing is giving to those that are less fortunate,” said Petrus. “I think I was placed in this position strategi-

cally for that purpose. From a philanthropic standpoint, our thing is to always give back to people – to try to improve their lot and their trajectory.”

Unlike many scholarships that focus on students with high grade point averages (GPA), Allie Petrus wanted to make this scholarship available to

students who don’t often get many opportunities. Students eligible for the Petrus Family Scholarship Fund must have a minimum GPA of 2.5, reside in the Virgin Islands, and demonstrate financial need. Preference is given to students that reside in public housing.

“Education is the only equalizer in taking a person who is from an impoverished background and equalizing the playing field,” he said. “All people need is just a hand up, not a hand out.”

The Petrus’ found that giving the scholarships was so meaningful that they increased their donation to \$15,000 annually. As a result, four UVI undergraduate students can receive the scholarship annually.

Thus far, the Petrus Scholarship Fund has provided \$25,000 in scholarships to eight UVI students studying in various fields, including nursing, psy-

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In my eleven years at UVI, I have been privileged to work with many individuals and organizations who lend support to the wonderful work our faculty and students are undertaking. In this installment of Philanthropy and You, you will meet an alumnus and his wife who made a tremendous investment helping students who reside in public housing to make a successful transition to college life. Mr. and Mrs. Petrus are entering their third year of supporting the Petrus Family Scholarship Fund at UVI with a mission to provide greater access to higher education for aspiring students who are capable of accomplishing great things in our campus community.

I spent a few hours with Mr. Hakim Potter the day he received one of the UVI Scotiabank Scholarship awards at a Business After Hours event held earlier in the year. I was impressed with his story and the life aspirations he shared freely with everyone he made contact with that evening. As with many UVI students, Mr. Potter is intelligent as well as engaging. His story will provide you with some insight on the diversity of experiences we have at our institution.

In the next few months you will receive occasional updates on the UVI School of Medicine accreditation process. This is an historic opportunity to have a fully-accredited medical school operating within the territory.

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Recipients of the 2014 Petrus Family Scholarship Fund join with the fund’s founders. From left to right, are UVI President David Hall, Trevesia Queeley, Jhozna Gilbert, Beverly Petrus, Kaylena Percell and Allie Petrus.



Allison and Beverly Petrus

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chology, criminal justice and education majors.

“Meeting those students has been gratifying to me,” said Allie Petrus, who has had an opportunity to meet many of the students.

Television commercials letting the community know about the scholarship are currently running. Allie Petrus said that he wanted to ensure that students and parents are fully aware that these scholarship opportunities are available.

“Get yourself educated, that is the foundation for everything, because that is the greatest equalizer of the haves and have nots,” said Allie Petrus.

He hopes to continue to play an important role in the future of the territory. “Our life goal is that we would like to play a major role in developing a vocational school,” said Petrus, who believes there is a need for skilled workers in the territory. “I like creating things. This is my passion. I like to see something from nothing, turn into something.”

Endowments: Legacies That Positively Affect Future Generations

For former Commissioner of Education Gwendolyn Kean, educating the youth was everything. Although Kean, who passed away in 2003, is no longer with us, her wish to educate the youth lives on in her endowment with the University of the Virgin Islands.

“All of her life she had a love of children and the need for them to be properly educated in terms of raising a standard in the society we live today,” said Felipe Ayala, executor of the Kean Estate. “It was her intent that the money that she had made in her life, not having children of her own, would go to the children of the Virgin Islands to ensure that they have all the opportunities afforded to them.”

“She wanted to ensure that children had the opportunity to be

“She wanted to ensure that children of the Virgin Islands had the opportunity to be educated and be better citizens of the world.”

- Felipe Ayala about Gwendolyn Kean

educated and be better citizens of the world,” he said. “In my life, she always ensured that I was better educated and had access to things.” Ayala continued, “There are a lot of children that don’t have the opportunities that I had growing up.”

Through Kean’s endowment, the Ann Elizabeth Richardson Distinguished Professorship of Music was created, for which Lorna Young-Wright was selected as the first recipient. “She embodies what my Godmother wanted her endowment to be,” said Ayala. “If I can leave Ms. Young-Wright in charge of that endowment in perpetuity I would be



Lorna Young-Wright

happy because she gets it. Everything that she does is what my godmother wanted the gift to be.”

“The University is really fortunate to have her,” he said, adding that she has done much to educate children by enhancing their University experience.

In Spring 2015, Young-Wright coordinated “Stories and Conversa-

mer first lady of the Virgin Islands, remembers going with her mother to set up her endowment at UVI. Edith Galiber set up the endowment to support the nursing program at UVI. Edith Rose Galiber, a Virgin Islands native, was a nurse herself and thought it was important to give back.



Cecile de Jongh and Edith Galiber

“I think it is important for the people who are able to get the scholarship to know that somebody local, somebody that they may know or have heard of, supports them,” said Cecile de Jongh, speaking for her mother who suffers from Alzheimer’s. “I think it is similar to having your friends or family support you in your endeavors.”

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HAKIM A. POTTER

Hakim Potter: Education is the Pathway to a Better life

on UVI's Board of Trustees.

In his quest for education, Potter pursued financial assistance through a scholarship offered by Scotiabank. In 2014, he was awarded a \$5,000 Scotiabank Scholarship for Fall 2014 and Spring 2015. "These funds have helped me to sustain myself and keep a peace of mind while studying," Potter said.

Dr. Donald Drost, UVI physics professor, said he still remembers the first day he met Potter. "When he walked in the classroom before the start of class, he came straight to the front desk, extended his hand to shake hands with me and told me he was Hakim Potter," he said.

"He was a very interactive student,"

said Dr. Drost. "Mr. Potter distinguished himself in class with a finish that put him in the top 10 percent of about 200 entering students. He is an excellent student with a fine personality and ability to relate to people."

In 2011 Potter won the VI Idol using the name "P Solo." His love for dancehall and R and B has taken a back seat, as education is his primary focus.

In his freshman year, Potter took managerial accounting and is grateful to UVI Professor Dr. Eustace Esdaille, who mentored him and two other students in the class. Now Potter, returns the favor and tutors students in need.



Hakim Potter flips off of the UVI Wille Mac boat during a Science 100 class trip.

Hakim A. Potter does not consider himself to be a traditional college student. Not dependent on his parents for support, Potter is paving the way to his own success.

"Working to attain a degree at UVI has given me great joy," said Potter, a junior at the University of the Virgin Islands. "The expertise I have gained while earning my degree, has opened my eyes to experiences that I would not have had. Achieving a higher education, will give me the opportunity to have a better life."

With a keen mind for finances and a forward thinking interactive personality, Potter has opted to experience all that college life has to offer. He is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration with a concentration in finance and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Accounting. Potter is a Golden Key Honor Society member, Dean's list awardee, 2013-2015 Homecoming King and 2015 Bureau of Internal Revenues' Volunteer Taxpayer Assistance Program participant. He also sought to be a student trustee

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De Jongh said that her mother decided to give an endowment so that she could give a gift that would benefit many people for as long as possible.

"I think that she would be happy to know that there are nursing students

out there who are becoming nurses, in small part, because of a gift that she was able to give," said de Jongh. "She was a nurse in the community for almost 35 years." She really enjoyed going out, meeting and helping people.

"That is something which she wants to see and wants to inspire in other young women and men through nursing," she said.

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The University community is working tirelessly on the plan to make this school a reality for our institution. If you have not visited www.uvi.edu lately, please visit our homepage and select the links for the UVI School of Medicine to keep abreast of our progress with this initiative.

Thank you for all that you do for UVI!



Mitchell Neaves
Vice-President for
Institutional Advancement



Ways to Give to UVI School of Medicine

The University of the Virgin Islands is in the development phase of creating a School of Medicine in the Virgin Islands. Our goal is to secure \$10 million in development and operational funding to enable the first UVI School of Medicine class to enroll in 2016. This funding would supplement the generous lead gift – a \$30 million commitment – by Dr. Chirinjeev Kathuria, a physician and Chairman of New Generation Power, as part of his passion for strengthening the health and welfare of the Virgin Islands. Demonstrating broad support and financial commitment is a necessary step in the accreditation process as well.

Former Virgin Islands Gov. John P. deJongh, Jr. has committed the territorial government to help provide

funding for medical school buildings, creating a public-private partnership that is essential for success. “The Virgin Islands is truly fortunate to be eligible for LCME accreditation of its planned medical school,” said de Jongh. “This advantage over every other medical school in the Caribbean will put UVI’s medical school on the map and ensure its success ... I fully expect that the opening of the medical school will change the health-care landscape of the Virgin Islands, as well as enhance the University of the Virgin Islands’ reputation as the preeminent learning institution in the region.” Gov. Kenneth Mapp added his support for the School of Medicine in his remarks at UVI’s 2015 Commencement Ceremonies.

You can join the effort through

contributions for:

- Endowed faculty positions that will ensure that we produce highly qualified graduates equipped to practice medicine in the USVI, the Caribbean and nationally.
- A state-of-the-art simulation training center that will provide UVI medical students, as well as practicing physicians and nurses from the USVI and beyond, with the training they need to maintain licensure and certification to practice their medical specialties.
- Student scholarship programs to ensure that the UVI Medical Programs can enroll the best students independent of financial circumstances.
- Endowments to support research and teaching opportunities that

will further the understanding and practice of medicine in the USVI, the Caribbean and other communities around the world.

- Innovative learning and communications technologies that will enable knowledge exchange and research collaboration between the Virgin Islands and strategic partners on the mainland and in other parts of the Caribbean.

UVI is striving to develop knowledgeable and caring physicians committed to providing quality health care in the Virgin Islands and Caribbean region.

For more information contact the University Development Office at: (340) 693-1040.

