

Rally for excellence

STX Foundation, Elena Christian recognizes students' successes

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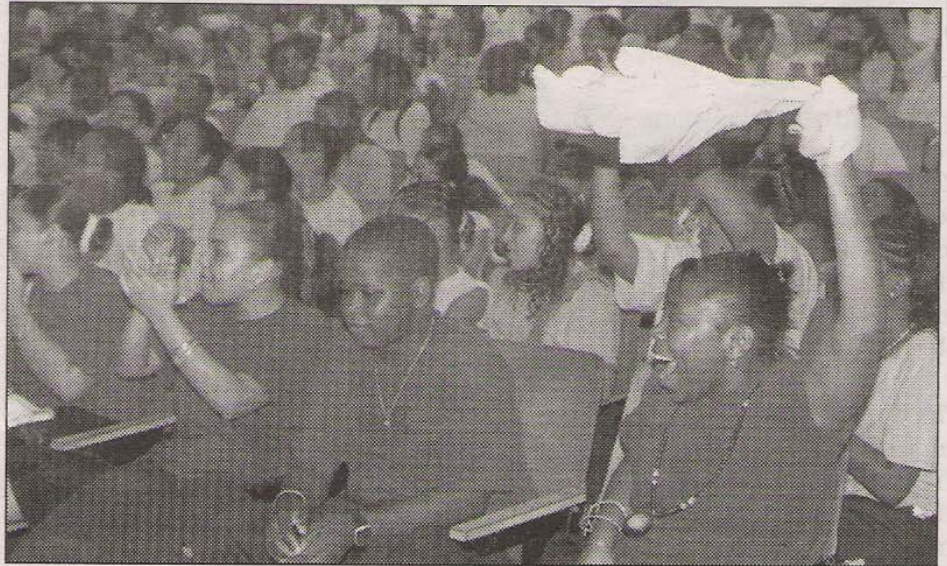
ST. CROIX — The St. Croix Foundation and Elena Christian Junior High School held a Character Development Program Pep Rally in the Elena auditorium Friday to reward students and faculty in recognition of their successes in academic excellence and service.

The St. Croix Foundation, a non-profit corporation established in 1990 with a mission of fostering economic and social development throughout the territory, initiated a comprehensive education initiative in partnership with Elena in the fall of 2005.

The education initiative, Model Schools Initiative, includes reading remediation, standardized test preparation, a youth philanthropy project and administrative supports. Each piece ultimately serves to fulfill the foundation's overarching and long-term goal of developing a strategic and collaborative approach to transforming public education in the VI, according to a St. Croix Foundation press release. The awards ceremony provides students and administrators with incentives for continued growth and achievement.

"The foundation believes that recognizing students, teachers as well as the school's dedicated support staff for even the smallest successes is one of the most effective motivational tools," Deanna James, St. Croix Foundation chief operations officer, said in a prepared statement.

Students received awards in recognition of the good behavior and academic excellence they have demonstrated throughout the school year. Students were recognized for outstanding grades, citi-



Kristin Duncan

Elena Christian Junior High School students cheer during a Character Development Program Pep Rally on Friday.

zenship, leadership and most improved behavior, as well as most improved reading, math and social studies.

Awards for the students consisted of gift certificates to Urban Threadz, Education Central, H2O Restaurant and McDonald's. Honor roll students will also receive a pizza party. The faculty and staff at Elena were also recognized during the award ceremony with gift certificates for GNC and Bacchus Restaurant.

Students Randallia Knight and Natalie Avila served as mistresses of ceremony during the pep rally. All of the students stood and sang the Star Spangled Banner and the VI March. After a prayer by Jahfarrie Gordon, students from Team D recited a poem which focused on the theme of caring, which was the character trait highlighted at Elena this month. After the poem, a group of five students sang an original hip-hop song. The highlight of the pep rally was the

guest speaker, Ronnie Benjamin Jr.

Benjamin, founder and leader of St. Croix's own Midnite reggae band, talked to the students about how the math and science they are currently learning in school relates to the rest of the world. Before he began talking to the students, Benjamin performed a couple inspirational songs on his keyboard. He also performed a song with local reggae artist Desiree.

After his performance, Benjamin talked to the students about the importance of learning math, science and English while in school. He told the students he used to be just like them when he was younger because he too put on his school uniform and went to classes before graduating high school. He told the students they can become anything they want in life if they stay in school and study.

"I came here to speak to you guys to let you know anything is possible," Benjamin said.