

# Head of STT soccer club named recipient of Maria Rodriguez Van Heurck Award

## Daily News Staff

ST. THOMAS — Joseph Limeburner, a “beloved” mentor, educator, and youth advocate, has been named the recipient of the 2024 Maria Rodriguez Van Heurck Award, the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands announced in a news release.

Established in 2021 by the Maria Rodriguez Foundation Fund in partnership with the CFVI, the award honors individuals who exemplify a giving spirit, selfless service, and a deep love for their community, according to the news release.

As a result of the recognition, a \$5,000 charitable contribution has been made to LRVI FC, home of the Castaways, a nonprofit, community-based soccer club in St. Thomas headed by Limeburner. The club provides athletic training, mentorship, and opportunities for youth, with a focus on accessibility and inclusion.

Limeburner expressed his deep appreciation for the award, reflecting on his friendship with Maria Rodriguez.

“Maria had an infectious energy — competitive yet rooted in teamwork and kindness,” he said. “Receiving an award in her name is an honor beyond words. Her legacy lives on in every child we help, every game we play, and every act of kindness we extend to others.”

Limeburner, known as “Coach Joe” to many, has dedicated his life to empowering young athletes. As a physical education and health teacher, school nurse, athletic director, and bus driver at All Saints Cathedral School, as well as the president of Castaways Soccer Club, his commitment extends far beyond the soccer field, according to the news release.

“I love seeing kids accomplish things they never thought possible,” Limeburner said in the announcement released by CFVI. “But the biggest thing for me is creating a safe environment for any young-



Coach Joseph Limeburner, president of Castaways Soccer Club.

chance to play, grow, and stay off the streets. I’m grateful for the opportunity to do something meaningful for my community.”

Terra Steuerwald, who nominated Limeburner, emphasized his impact on both athletics and personal development.

“Coach Joe truly embodies the spirit of giving and selflessness,” she said. “He puts in countless hours to ensure every child has access to sports, education, and mentorship. He is not just a coach — he is a lifeline for many young people.”

Beyond the soccer pitch, Limeburner’s “heroism” extends into everyday life, according to the news release, which pointed out that in

without hesitation.

His future plans include developing a multi-sports facility on St. Thomas to provide additional resources for youth, including academic support and mentoring spaces.

The Maria Rodriguez Van Heurck Award was created to celebrate

individuals who embody the late Maria Rodriguez’s unwavering dedication to service. Rodriguez, known for her relief flying efforts after the hurricanes of 2017, made it her mission to help others in both big and small ways, according to CFVI.

“Each year, Virgin Islanders

have the opportunity to nominate someone who shows up for people the way my mom did — with a smile and expecting nothing in return,” said Charlotte Van Heurck, Maria’s daughter. “Coach Joe is the perfect example of what this award represents. His contributions might otherwise go unnoticed, but they are invaluable to our community.”

CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown, expressed the Foundation’s deep appreciation for being part of this initiative.

“It is an incredible honor for CFVI to help uphold Maria’s legacy through this award,” she said. “Managing the nomination and selection process allows us to highlight the often-unsung heroes of our community — individuals like Coach Joe, whose selfless dedication makes a lasting impact. Maria’s commitment to service and generosity lives on through this recognition, and we are proud to play a role in ensuring that spirit continues to inspire others.”

Founded in 2006, Castaways serves boys and girls ages 4-17, providing access to high-quality coaching and mentorship, according to the news release.

“Coach Joe’s passion has built Castaways from the ground up,” said Aaron Payne, a fellow coach. “He works tirelessly — day in and day out — to give kids a safe place to grow. From personally driving players home to ensuring they have meals and academic support, his dedication is unmatched. He truly is a blessing to the youth of the Virgin Islands.”

