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PRESS RELEASE

RSVGPF Engages South Rivers Community in Walk-through and Town Hall Meeting

The Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) conducted a successful community engagement event in the community of South Rivers, in the Eastern Policing Division, on April 18, 2024. The initiative included a community walk-through followed by a town hall meeting, attended by the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Commissioner, other Gazetted officers from the RSVGPF High Command, and several Senior and Junior officers.

This community policing initiative aimed to provide the residents of South Rivers a platform to voice their grievances, compliments, and constructive criticism. The event was a direct response to recent concerns about safety in the area, and it allowed police to listen to the community's concerns.

During the town hall, Superintendent of Police (SOP) Mr. Hesran Ballantyne, Divisional Commander of the Eastern Division, addressed the attendees, emphasizing the historically peaceful reputation of South Rivers. He highlighted the uncharacteristic nature of the recent violent incidents and stressed the importance of community cooperation in crime reporting with the mantra "If you see something, say something."

SOP Ballantyne also tackled the issue of praedial larceny, urging community members to discourage such offenses and support local farmers by purchasing rather than stealing produce. He referenced various government initiatives available to support agricultural stakeholders and touched upon the ongoing investigation into the murder of Clinton Hackshaw, reassuring the community of the police's commitment to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

In his remarks, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) in charge of Crime Mr. Trevor Bailey emphasized the crucial role of partnership between the community and law enforcement in effectively addressing crime. He also commended the efforts of SOP Ballantyne and his team for their exemplary crime-solving record in the Eastern Division. In 2023, they achieved a remarkable

milestone by solving 100% of the homicides committed in the district. ACP Bailey used this achievement to appeal to the community's sense of peace and heritage, reminding them of the temporary gains from crime versus the lasting negative impacts.

He further emphasized the importance of community involvement in maintaining public safety and reassured the audience that solving crimes, especially murders, is a top priority and that the impressive results in 2023 are indicative of the dedicated efforts of the police force. ACP Bailey called for an end to the stigmatization of individuals who cooperate with police investigations as "Informers," asserting that being informed and informing the police about illegal activities should be viewed as an act of responsible citizenship.

The ACP also discussed the broader impact of crime on community cohesion and economic stability. He encouraged the community to support and participate in initiatives like the National Firearm Amnesty program, which he detailed as not only a measure to reduce the number of weapons but also as a way to foster a safer environment for everyone. By turning in illegal firearms, residents directly contribute to decreasing the potential for violent incidents and enhancing overall community safety, said ACP Bailey.

Commissioner of Police (Ag) Mr. Enville Williams, in his address to the gathered residents, reinforced the RSVGPF's commitment to working "shoulder to shoulder" with the South Rivers community. He recounted his experiences in the 1990s, while working at the Colonarie police station, recalling a time when community members could walk freely without fear. The Commissioner stressed the importance of maintaining this peaceful way of life and encouraged residents to report any individuals threatening their safety.

Also highlighting the issue of praedial larceny, Commissioner Williams strongly advised against this crime, emphasizing that everyone has the right to enjoy the fruits of their labour. He also addressed concerns about the slow police response to community reports, asserting that any negligence in duty from officers would not be tolerated under his watch. He assured the community that favouritism has no place in the RSVGPF and that accountability is paramount.

In addition, Commissioner Williams provided an update on the National Firearm Amnesty, reporting that 13 firearms and 219 rounds of ammunition had been collected thus far. He urged those aware of illegal firearms to encourage their surrender, highlighting the stringent new amendments to the firearm act.

COP Williams reiterated the importance of strengthening the bond between the police and the community, ensuring that residents see the police not just as enforcers but as partners in creating a safe and peaceful community. His remarks were aimed at promoting a commitment to openness and dialogue. He invited ongoing communication between residents and law enforcement to address and mitigate community-specific issues, emphasizing the need for a collaborative approach to maintain safety and harmony within South Rivers.

The town hall meeting in South Rivers proved to be a fruitful exchange, with residents engaging with Gazetted officers of the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force. Participants raised critical questions and also offered compliments, reflecting a robust community interest in

the various aspects of police work and in improving local policing strategies. This varied engagement highlights the community's vested interest in the themes discussed and their commitment to enhancing safety and security collaboratively.

This event has once again underscored the vital role of community policing initiatives in fostering a collaborative environment where public safety and community welfare are jointly addressed. The RSVGPF remains committed to enhancing these interactions and building stronger relationships with all communities across St. Vincent and the Grenadines, ensuring a collective effort towards a safer and more harmonious society.

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