

\$65K Charity Cheque - Organizations Will Be Carefully Selected - Premier

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Several local charity organizations will benefit from a \$65,000.00 cheque which was handed over to Government by AH Riise and AH Riise BVI Billfish Tournament.

The money will be distributed among the organizations which will be identified by government in conjunction with AH Riise Community Fund Committee.



Premier Honourable Ralph T. O'Neal, OBE and Vice President of AH Riise Mr. Sebastiano Paiewonsky-Cassinelli are pictured here along with members of the AH Riise BVI Billfish Tournament Steering Committee and the BVI and AH Riise Community Fund Committee. Photo Credit: Dwayne Mactavious/GIS

On Tuesday Premier Hon. Ralph T. O' Neal who collected the cheque was also at the time celebrating his birthday. "It is nice to receive a cheque like that on your birthday, even if it is not for you." The Premier expressed Government's gratitude for the donation. "I want to express thanks on behalf of the Government and people of the British Virgin Islands for this generous contribution you have made."

Tuesday's presentation brought to \$90,000 the total amount donated to BVI charities by the Billfish Tournament organisers. A cheque for \$25,000 was previously presented to the Family Support Network.

The AH Riise Billfish Tournament was conceived with three objectives, to promote the BVI as one of the best fishing locations, stage a world class tournament and to raise money for local charities.

Referring to the disbursement of the funds, Hon. O'Neal noted that the beneficiaries will be carefully selected. "I do not think it would be fair to give a contribution to any fly by night organisation, but rather an organisation that you can see and know that it is going to the community to help in some way or the other," he said.

A Government Information Service (GIS) press release stated that the Premier added, "Apart from the contribution, what I see at these fishing tournaments is the camaraderie, fellowship, clean entertainment and fun people have when they come to take part in these tournaments and I sincerely hope it would be possible for them to be continued."

The Premier also expressed gratitude to the organisers for choosing the BVI as a location for the Billfish Tournament. "We do appreciate very much your having the BVI for the centre of these fishing tournaments and we will endeavour to do our very best to make it as easy as possible for those who would come," he said.

GIS stated that in making the presentation to Premier O'Neal, Vice President of AH Riise Mr. Sebastiano Paiewonsky-Cassinelli said in addition to contributing to local charities, the tournaments provide significant long-term benefits for the BVI.

He said, "We wanted to attract high net worth individuals to the Territory and show off the natural beauty of the BVI." He also spoke of the possibility of potential return visitors.

According to Mr. Paiewonsky-Cassinelli, most of the anglers said, "They were looking forward to returning and telling their friends about the incredible beauty, great fishing and unsurpassed hospitality offered by the BVI and its people."

Another benefit Mr. Paiewonsky-Cassinelli identified was the injection into the local economy.

"A conservative estimate of the dollars brought here during a tournament would be \$1,000,000. As an example, a boat fishing the tournament will consume 12,000 gallons of fuel during their stay, not to mention the money spent on housing, local dining and provisioning for their guests and crew," he revealed.

He also spoke about intangible benefits including the publicity that will help to attract anglers to future billfish tournaments.

Mr. Paiewonsky-Cassinelli acknowledged that the success of the tournaments would not have been possible without the support of the Government and the BVI Tourist Board, among others.



Government of the Virgin Islands (UK) Administration Building
Photo Credit: BVI Platinum News