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PEYTON MANNING CONGRATULATES VIDE ON \$40,000 2018 SMARTER FOOTBALL EQUIPMENT GRANT AWARD

ST. CROIX, USVI –The Virgin Islands Department of Education is the recipient of a \$40,000 grant from Riddell Football Equipment in partnership with NFL great, Peyton Manning, in the 18 in '18 Smarter Football Equipment Grant program.

From a pool of 1,400 applicants, the Department of Education was one of 18 who received awards. The Territory's four high schools will each receive \$10,000 in order to purchase new equipment for their football programs, according to Scott Cofiell, Department of Education territorial director of the Division of Sports and Athletics.

“We are very thankful to Riddell to be chosen as one of the 18 in '18 football programs in the United States for the Smarter Football Grant Program,” he said. “This means our high school football programs were recognized for withstanding the adversities of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and coming out even stronger. Our players, coaches, administrators, and parents fought to have tackle football after the storms, in spite of many obstacles, and for this they can feel rewarded by this grant.”

Cofiell said the funds will “allow us to outfit our players in the latest and most-safe equipment on the market. It will allow us to use the new techniques that were learned when our football coaches took part in the USA Football Tip of the Spear Contact Clinic last June.”

Riddell made the announcement of winners on September 5 by releasing a video of the championship-winning quarterback congratulating the Department of Education.

“I want to extend huge congratulations on being selected as an 18 in '18 Riddell Smarter Football Equipment grant winner,” Manning said in the videotaped message. “In the last year, your football programs, schools and communities overcame significant adversity in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Your resilience has inspired all of us. We're excited for all of you and we can't wait for you to continue the 2018 season with some new gear. Good luck.”

Through an online application process, this year's 18 in '18 recipients successfully demonstrated their commitment to teaching smarter tactics on and off the field while continuing to grow their programs and engage the broader community. Winners include teams from all backgrounds and across levels of play, including one college team, 12 high school programs, two middle school teams, and three youth organizations. About 1,400 teams applied and showcased their dedication to improving the sport.

Manning's personal contribution increased the number of equipment grants from 10 in 2017 to 18 in 2018 and, for the second consecutive year, he played a role in evaluating applicants and choosing the grant winners.

"As the industry leader in athlete protection, we are incredibly passionate about working together with exemplary football programs and advocates like Peyton Manning to further advance the sport we all love and believe in," said Riddell President and Chief Executive Officer Dan Arment.

For Riddell, Smarter Football means leading innovation in product design and development to create more advanced protective technologies. Most recently, Riddell unveiled an enhanced web-based data center for team personnel called the [InSite Training Tool](#) complementing its [InSite Impact Response System](#). The new interactive web tool builds individual player head impact profiles and allows coaches to proactively influence athlete behavior through focused training techniques and specialized practice plans.

For more information about the Smarter Football program, visit Riddell.com/SmarterFootball.

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