

- Good morning, Virgin Islands. This is the show Ability Radio brought to you by Disability Right Center of the Virgin Islands. So this is co-host Archie Jennings and my other co-host are Iris Bermudez and Amelia Headley LaMont not being here present this morning and maybe listening in on the [ inaudible ] airways. We are community organization that also wants to highlight, during the upcoming year, other community organizations and what they're doing within the community. Our focus is more so in a [ inaudible ] with health related issues but disability issues as well. Our, this is a call-in show so remember that you cannot make disparaging remarks against other people. You are gonna be limited to about two to three minutes on your time. And also, we want to be sure that we don't bring up products or self-serving statements about any business organization that you're involved in. We have a great guest with us this morning. Nicole Parsons, good morning.

- Good morning and thank you for having me.

- Great. And first of all, Nicole, why don't you tell us what organization you are associated with here in the Virgin Islands?

- Well, we, my husband and I, Dion Parson, and myself, we have United Jazz Foundation. We funded it in 2013 coming out of our mentoring program that we started here on the Virgin Islands in 2009. And United Jazz Foundation is a non-profit organization focused on dedication towards mentoring young people in their musical career, and especially focused on the financial less privileged at this point, but we are developing more towards other angles as well.

- Okay. My, also, my understanding from the discussion with you, you have a background with working with special needs children?

- That is true, yes. In the Netherlands, I always work with special need kids the first 15 years of my working career, and that started with really difficult emotional, social-emotional damaged young people. There are people who really didn't know what the real problem was anymore because sometimes, we have young children between, you know, the age of, a newborn till five, so many things can happen. And actually, just way to pregnancy, so many things can go wrong. Sometimes, without noticing it by yourself, it is and lot of people say, "Oh, it's the environment." Yes. "Oh, it's the parents." Oh, that can be. "Oh, it's the school." Yes, can be too, but those elements all work together and sometimes, and that's what we spoke about earlier as well, sometimes, it shows there's something within the child how they see by nature, the world. And a lot of these little elements can just disconnect. So the, again, the first 15 years, I work a lot with children that we need, needed to peel like a, like an onion to really see what the basic of the struggle that they got into us. Some kids were really busy, some kids were really scared, some kids were really angry, but it was not the obvious reason that you saw. So we needed to really take two, three years to work intensely to unpeel and then come with the, to the bottom element in collaboration with parents and schools because sometimes you have a, the child that grows naturally and is, you know, nobody sees anything and then the first time of Pre-K or the first time of kindergarten, it stresses out so much.

- Right, right.

- It almost can snap in their brain, it really happen. So we have also had children that, in that sense. So we're not always in a dark side like, oh, it has been beat up, or school left it alone, or no parents. No. Sometimes, like, a little thing like that can snap and then like child can turn inwards. So that's like an autistic related problems can really exit or, you know, show itself through those little elements that we think is not a big deal.

- Right, right. Now, for those who don't know, Dion Parsons is very infamous jazz musician. And he's always been involved with music and jazz his entire life?

- Correct, correct.

- Okay. And your mentoring program was around mentoring young jazz musicians to be, to, I want to, what was the endgame with your mentoring [ inaudible ]

- Well, the, it start, for Dion, it started already here on the Virgin Islands. He, born and raised here, and really musically inclined, worked hard on his craft, fell in love with the music. And when he fell in love with the music and he played, and he developed himself. And by the time he went to college, lose on the struggles socially and emotionally because of the environment and the hard work that he needed to put in. You also run into to the fact that he was so behind.

- Okay.

- So he is really talented, but really behind so...

- Behind mean the skill level?

- Yeah, on the skill level. And those two elements gave him the intense feeling of need to give back. And not only give back in a sense like, "Oh," you know, "We grow up, we [ inaudible ] and now we are going back to our town and give back with money or whatever." That, that's actually an easy part, just to put some money and then run away again. But he, because he really felt it. Some people see him as, you know, a drummer and he, he's a strong man and he knows what he needs to do and he knows what he think is the best route to take. So sometimes, they think, "Okay, where is the emotional part of [ inaudible ] the emotional part really comes from that he's doing what he's doing right now because he felt the pain, he felt the sadness, he felt the depression, fighting to get somewhere and then when you get there, you're actually, skill-wise, so behind, you're left on your own again.

- Uh-huh.

- So going into the practice room for a year really on his own, and every day getting no ensembles and being on the bottom of the list. And that's hard too because you're a big fish in a small pond here. And then you go to the mainland and there's a whole another story. So he brought through it and it's not that he felt felt, "Oh, I don't want anybody to go through this because that's not what we can take away." Everybody, if it's a small town in the United States or anywhere in the world, and you go to big city or a big competitive world where the jazz world is, you always get the period of time like you feel really depressed or really alone or, we cannot take that away. But we can do and what he was determined to do is the one he was really thankful for his mentors, Dr. Trotman, Mr. Frandsen, and he's so, he, just that one left over [ inaudible ] with Georgia Francis. So he felt what they did for him that he really needed to be there. As you said, when you see yourself in front of you, make sure you reach out. But that's the melting part of what happened, so he came back every summer to work with students.

- Well, actually, I saw him, and I can't remember the name of the saxophone that's, right at this time, at Reichhold Center where they gave tribute to the music teacher.

- Yes.

- And I can't remember her name.

- We had Georgia Francis.

- Georgia Francis? Okay.

- Yes, correct.

- And it was very endearing and touching because they highlighted how they began with her and what inspiration she was to them in bringing it back from the Virgin Islands. And that was in [ inaudible ] full circle and they, and discussed what they were gonna do for the Virgin Islands.

- Yes.

- But we'll get back to it in just a second, we're gonna take a commercial break. And again, this is Ability Radio, you and the community. Okay. Back again with Ability Radio, you and your life, and Nicole Parsons. Nicole, we were just talking about how music is so essential to development. Now, I, and I've

seen this before, there is always like music therapy and things of that nature, but you explain to me how it can play and increase the skill level in so many areas within the development of a child.

- True, true. I, and just what we said before, you have different levels that music works for people [ inaudible ] when we sit down and we want to relax, he, put a relaxer music on, it works. So we already know in a really basic level that it has an effect on what we're thinking and how we're feeling. But the beauty is, if you go deeper into the music, and especially jazz music, again, I always say to people, classical music is a part of what we're doing, but the beauty of jazz is because it's so complicated and it's so improvisational. You have the different elements of it, activate different parts of the brain. So if you imagine that you're sitting on a chair, you put really wild music on, you'll fall, feel [ inaudible ] up right away, it's like, "Oh, wait a minute, not quite what I was looking for." But then you already have the proof right there for yourself that it works. It does something without you being in charge, it does something with your brain. Your brain is still a muscle that reacts.

- Right, right.

- And that needs to be trained. So if we look at the positive side for young people, so if we know now it's true that it has an effect, then we're not always in charge of what the effect of the music is gonna be. It can be negative and then [ inaudible ] a lot of problem at these wild house parties and all these young people go nuts because the music drains their brain. But on the positive, that's where we looked in really carefully is like how can we use music. But in the school system, you allow the whole program that everybody needs to be mobilized then you have more work on your plate. Just to get these different parts of the brain activated and that's definitely what jazz music does. So you have different parts of the brain that starts to communicate with each other.

- Okay.

- And again, the same as with the effect that it has with calming music or wild music, that's what it does. So as a young person, even if you don't want to get any better in anything, it will have an effect on the brain till it will challenge you, it will make you, your curiosity will definitely grow. And also the different part of the brain like the part of the brain that you use for math is another part of the brain that you use for reading. Now we need to practice the separate parts just the same with sports. If you're a runner, you develop your muscles to run fast, so you're less focused on the other parts. So with every part of learning, it's a similar thing, we need to do those songs. You know, there's equations for math over and over to know that automatically that eight, you know, eight plus two is ten. So we need to do it over and over, and same with reading, the ABCs. But in this day and age, there is such a switch in skillset in the 21st Century than 30 years ago. Like 30 years ago, a lot of jobs that are now here, didn't exist even 10 years ago, they didn't exist. And the problem is we cannot deny them anymore. So that's what a, not only here on the Virgin Islands, but schools in general, are struggling with is that the business side of society grew so fast that there's a whole another set, skillset that young people need to have to be able to do the jobs that are there. Like, again, 25, 30 years ago, you could easily be like, "Okay, I like this subjects, I'm gonna do it and I'm gonna work for this company, and I'm gonna work there for the rest of my life, and my boss will tell me every day what to do."

- Right.

- "And I do it, I'm fine." And again, there's nothing wrong with that, but the problem is those jobs don't exist that much anymore. More than 80% of the jobs need, you need to bring something to the table. So if your system is pretty much, and I'm not saying only here, I say in general school systems because I work in, and that is a lot to develop the school systems, curriculum-wise, financially to bring them up to par. So it is not pointing out this person did and do this or that, no it's really business world that grew so fast, the technology. So what we're looking at is that most of the systems are based on a skillset from learning, or reading, writing arithmetic, find a subject you like to do in life for the rest of your life and that can be a physician or that can be, they can, you, you're really into building furniture, you got, it really doesn't matter. You make your choice and that's why you do it.

- Great. Okay.

- But that doesn't exist that much anymore. So it's more competitive, people switch more jobs, not only jobs but also subjects, because sometimes, the education is focused on this and then all of a sudden, you run into other things because you're more exposed. Thirty years ago, we, I mean, I was not exposed to a lot of things than only what you grew up in.

- Right, right.

- Now all of us are, and I know about jobs that I didn't even know exist because if I Google it, something pops up. And what I see personally and I cannot speak for the rest of the world, but I did a lot of research and I'm not saying I'm an authority in it, but as a social engineer, you're looking at social solutions, but I see with music education for, starting with really young people, again, music is always beneficiary, that subject we had, so to speak. So it's always good to play the piano and learn the instrument that you're gonna be, you know, more developed. But now I see the necessity, that's not a serious subject because we're looking is how can we get young people to the level that they need to be on with their skillset in a short period of time because we don't have fifteen years to develop it because in about five years, another fifty percent of news jobs are popping up. So that means as young people that are kindergarten now are learning things that may be even don't exist anymore in about 10 years when they graduate.

- Right, right.

- So what I, what I see is that, especially for young people, it starts to be a necessity to use music education to connect the different brain parts. So from a young age, that they learn the critical thinking, that the different parts of the brain are reacting on each other so that means that you're getting more competitive with yourself in a good way. So you're saying, "Oh, I wanna know this, why is this person doing that or why is that person doing that." Instead of, "Hey, I like this, let me get into this." No, your brain automatically will say like, "Hey, I like this, but what is this?"

- Correct. Okay.

- You know, so that's a whole another vision of the world. So we have a lot of young people still, not still, but it is logical again to say like, "Hey, I like this, let me get into this." Forgetting the rest of the world, you know? But critical thinking makes you think like, "Hey, what is this? I like that. Let me keep this here. I'm probably gonna do this, but what is this person doing or what is this about?"

- I was just discussing with you outside that I was probably one of the last generation where we went through school, you got music probably, you know, singing, then I graduate up to instruments and we had a full instrument band by the time I got to high school where they matched you up with instruments.

- Uh-hmm.

- And therefore, you can opt out of it, but part of it was that, for me, was a good study hall as well as music, learning music at that time. And what missing, what was missing, that was also in public schools and they took away from the late '60s all the bands and music rooms out of the public schools in the United States, and that's why I was saying that was the disconnect where you now had hip-hop and, you know, the voiceover and everything because they didn't get the, or have an opportunity to have free instruments and really get themselves exposed to music and music classes.

- True. And it's interesting, like you mentioned, the hip-hop because the hip-hop, and I know there are a lot of people don't like to hear it, but it's really the case and we all need to look at it seriously. A part of why hip-hop started is, yes, the instruments were taking out of the classroom. Plus, a lot of times, by desiring, these guys didn't get a opportunity to do anything else than hang out on a street and communicate with each other, and make music with each other because a lot of times, by design, the neighborhoods were not setup to really cater towards the young man building strong guys. So that, that's another, that's a whole another subject. I'm not gonna get into it, but I'm just pointing it out that, you know,

a society has grown a certain way and at one point, you need to say, "Okay, what is going on these days and what can we do?" And that's also one of the elements that we're working on for these young guys and girls, of course. Plus, you know, the tendency for the young ladies by nature sometimes is reeling more information because they already need to fight a little bit harder.

- Right, right. Well, I got a question for you.

- Yes.

- You have children who have learning disabilities or special learning disabilities, specific learning disabilities with music or a course in music sort of help that child bridge the gap. Will it stimulate their brain to perhaps come, overcome these learning disabilities if it's a, I guess, they're exposed with that in early age?

- Uh-hmm. Yes. There are different levels of how it has an effect. If we look at the most positive side, we say like, "Okay, you have a child with a learning disability." And on the streets, we would say he's a little slow, you know? Intensely listening to music, having the music on, the classical music, the jazz music definitely stimulates because your brain will react the elements that are there. What we cannot change is what is not there. And it's the same with therapy when you're losing a leg, we go, you know, you'll have surgery, and there are all kinds of techniques these days to give you a brace or a, whatever technique we use to make sure you can walk and then we help you walk. So in that sense, music develops the parts that are there and connects you. What I said before, it connects the different parts of the brain so it definitely helps. The other end, it helps a lot because, it also helps a lot with self-esteem and social-emotional connection with yourself and other people that if you are a little slow, you already feel less of a self-esteem. So it works on two angles. That works? Yes, if you listen to the music and you have the music education with it, it develops. So you definitely gonna get more connections between the parts of the brain which makes you more able to function.

- Great.

- And on the other hand, it gives you that self-esteem because doing something well makes you or even if it's just playing the song that you just learn, and it doesn't matter if it takes you a week or a month, but by the time you can do it, because you will be able to do it in the beginning phase, it gives a, it gives a boost. So your atmosphere for yourself, your self-esteem, your self-awareness gives you also the power to do more.

- And we also talked about how it's a, used as a technique for rehabilitation then, right?

- Yes.

- I was talking about traumatic brain injury, and there's music therapy that help the person become rehabilitated [ inaudible ]

- Yes. Yeah, and in that too, you have two [ inaudible ] what you're saying if there is, in rehabilitation, it works really well because again, it comes back to the fact that music penetrates the brain if you want it or not, and it will do something because the brain is a muscle that just, like your arm muscles and your leg muscles. If you don't anything, it will do something. So that is really confident to know that when you let people who are recovering listen to music in a therapy session or even throughout the day that it really stimulates for sure. And again, it comes back to the emotional side as well, this, it gives comfort.

- Okay.

- And that's, and then you have the part with young people or other people or, and it doesn't matter the age range of course, whatever disability bring wise you have, there's always a part of the brain that will pick the music up. So you [ inaudible ] in another sense that, hey, you find out that he can listen to music really well, so certain things in language can be learned through music. You know, with young kids that have certain disabilities, it's also being used to teach them how to speak.

- Okay.

- It's the same with really social-emotional damaged kids that don't wanna talk for instance. Sometimes, they wanna sing. It's amazing to see, so then they will learn like that or you have it autistic young people, and then also when they're adults, expression can be, a social expression can be really hard, but if it's through music, it goes through another channel with has less of a block on their brain. So if you look at, but you see, with autism, if you look at a person then you want them to answer now, you know, answer the question, that, that's gonna be just whole stressing their brain so they will push back and they will shut down.

- Oh, okay.

- And that you can see their eyes sometimes roll away from you because they don't look at you straight at, you know, to start with. But through music, it sometimes gives them the ability, and definitely, if you do it longer and longer to have another outing to give them the opportunity to communicate.

- To express themselves.

- Yes, yes.

- Okay. What is your vision for working within the school system? What would you like to see happen along those lines?

- Yes. The, what, first of all, what we're doing right now, you see, a lot is going on right now. I mean, I need to apply to Commissioner McCollum, she is a force, she's determined to get kids to a level that they really could compete with the rest of the world, and she works like 24/7 to do so.

- Okay.

- So that are, and because of that, it gives us the opportunity to look, "Okay, what can we do to make that happen or to give the young people of the Virgin Islands the opportunity to catch up on the skills of the 21st Century?" So ideally, what we're doing right now is with the highly musically inclined, we're giving them the opportunity to develop, and we're closing that gap that we spoke what Dion had.

- Right, the skills gap.

- The skills gap with the mainland. So it's more exposure, we're bringing artist, and to work with them, top artist. So I think for the path with the musically inclined, we're on a really great path. We still need to build, you know, we're not satisfied yet, you know, like, "Okay, we have the [ inaudible ] residents and we have the VI Youth Ensemble and we're fine."

- Okay.

- No. We're, you know, we're still competitive. We know there's a lot needs to be build up. But ideally for us, also for the young people, that we really could start that music education from Pre-K all the way up. We do now a lot with fifth grade till the middle school, and then junior high and high, but I really would love to see the music program within the classroom that these young people get the chance to develop these skills, and then people see the effect. They see it now with the highly musically inclined when you, I can promise everybody, you will see an effect in children. It clears up the brain gets. I'm not saying the brain gets brighter, but I don't know if you know the difference when you see something, somebody walks the street and you look, "He's not that happy today." You know, and then you have, you don't have to smile to have that expression in your eyes.

- Right, right.

- Sometimes, when somebody's smiling, you say, "No, that's not right. That, those eyes are not open." You know, so for me, personally and for our organization, we see if we can use music education, it's a, and I'm pointing it out seriously, it's a necessity to get these kids to a level to really be able to connect

with the, with the rest of the world because still, a lot of kids who have scholarships, we are really grateful that it happens, more than 60% don't get eventually the jobs on the level that they study for. So that means they paid either a lot of money, which is hard to pay back in their student loan, or they got the scholarship and they made it through the scholarships and get disappointed because on the mainland, you're just number thousand fifty or something, you know. So my ideal is if we can start very young in a structural way within the school system, and the commissioner really applaud it, and we're working hard to see how we can make that happened. But that also will bring the community together because early learning involving parents, guardians, anybody, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers, everybody, is really important. And I think the uplifting part is with this, they will bring at home, we, we're working on a lot of material that is being used in the school, but also that you can bring home, share with the community, with your, with, you know, your living environment, and it, and it will bond because we cannot live without a bonding of our home circle.

- Right.

- And a lot of people think you can because it's so individual these days. But if you look closely to the people who really make it in this world, most of them, more than 80%, 90% comes from a tight home circle that boost them to really be able to do what they're doing.

- And you wanna mention the name of your organization and any contact information you wanna give?

- Yes. The name of our organization is United Jazz Foundation. That's our foundation and we can be reached, I mean, people can reach me through email. That's my first name Nicole, and then @unitedjazz.org, or they can, you know, they can call us on 212-222-4070.

- And I was thinking that we may take a break right now and get back to it, but I want to go on more in the school system a little bit.

- Yes. Okay.

- Thank you. Okay. Back with Ability Radio and I guess we have a caller.

- Hi, good morning, Archie. Good morning, Nicole.

- Good morning.

- Good morning, Ms. Iris?

- Hi, this, yes, this is Iris [ inaudible ]

- Hi, Iris.

- Hi, Nicole. Thank you for being on the program. It's very interesting what you're saying. My question to you is the students that have gone through your program, Mentoring Through the Arts of Music, have they continued to be involve in music or was that just a passing [ inaudible ] because everything you're saying is that, you know, it develops with the child and the child keeps, you had to [ inaudible ] that interest in you, like...

- Yeah. No, that, no, thank you for the question, Iris, because then, so you have two types of students that we have right now is we have the ones you are highly musically inclined and wanna pursue a career in music, and we have students that are highly musically inclined and will use music for the rest of their lives, but more in a social way. But again, it stimulates their brain, so they're really great, and it stimulates the brain in that sense that you're focused and your social abilities and your skillset for whatever subject you're doing will be beneficiary. So yes, we have students of ours, most of ours are in college and some of them already finished college and they, in music degrees. And I forgot to mention earlier what is really important. We don't lose track of them, so work a lot with them here through high school. But when they go to college, our real men train starts because eventually, if they come into the jazz scene, we're already mentoring them throughout their career. So we have a lot of contact with the ones who are in college. The

ones who are not pursuing music, we still have contact with them. A good example is Anisha Lynch and Jophier Adams. They, they're not studying music, but they're highly musically inclined, so they, they come back home [ inaudible ] the 23rd, we have a concert and Anisha is gonna sing for sure. So, you know, this is a group that we try to keep them together because I remember Dion telling me and explaining to me how he'd work when he was in high school that the bond was the band, and everybody knew each other. And almost everybody out of his age range was actually successful in pursuing a career either music or in other subjects, and there were even students that were better than other students who actually eventually made it into jazz scene, but never pursue music because they just, you know, didn't feel right in about of doing it. So it's always beneficiary and it looks, when you go for scholarships, and when you go for jobs, if you have been in bent, they will put you on a higher list of getting hired or getting a scholarship because you know what? They'll say, "Wait a minute, this young man or this young lady put extra time in something else that beneficiary, it does beneficiary to the brains element." They definitely can focus, otherwise they couldn't survive the program. They definitely worked hard on it. So they will look, they definitely look at it. That's hundred percent sure. If they get all this application, same for scholarships, the first thing they do is, "Okay. Sports and music," those kids there or, you know, of course, the extra curriculums like jazz and everything, but they look at all those extra curriculums that that students did. And then sometimes, it's also really that a college is looking at it because if you're studying business or you wanna become an engineer, but you are really able to play music, they go, "Oh, let me give this kid a scholarship because we need him or her also to do something for the music program." So it definitely works in both ways. That's why we don't say we only work with the students that pursuing music because there are a lot of, and if see the history of the Virgin Islands, there are a lot of great musicians on the Islands throughout the last 60, 70 years that play music in the evening while they had another job during the daytime, so...

- Well, thank you so much. Thank you very much for being on the show. Thank you.

- No, thank you for the question, Iris. I thank you, for sure, for having me.

- Oh, Nicole.

- Yes,

- We were pursuing that idea or the line of conversation about how it helps people, students starting, maybe, beginning from preschool [ inaudible ]

- Yes.

- And would you further describe that?

- Yes. Now, and again, it comes back to brain development. So if you see psychologically in a clinical sense where the different growth of the brain is and how would that goes all the way to when they're 12 till 13, 15, you know, 16 years old, and when the brain is really developed, you know, sometimes we think that an eight-year-old and a nine-year-old like, "Ah, you have to know this, you're already eight years old." And they'll say, "No." Me and the other person is hard for a nine, ten-year-old because the brain of that subject is fully developed by twelve. So we can ask it from an eight-year-old and say, "Okay. If an eight-year-old can do it, you can applaud it, but if you understands what he's doing, I don't think so that much." You know?

- Right.

- So if you start younger, you start younger making the connection they should, between the different elements of the brain which is only beneficiary. It's, it, it's, it makes you more motivated, it makes you more interested in things, it makes you more critical, and so forth. Sometimes, we warn the students as well, I was like, "We develop that you start to criticize everything around you." So we don't mind if you start a discussion with us so you're gonna win it, but I said, "But we warned parents too." So, you know, kids are gonna be more critical of you as an adult as well, which is not easy for...

- Any parent to go through.

- ...any parent to go through. And then you have a...

- I've been, I've been there.

- Yes. And then you have a cultural aspect as well. It's like one culture is, you know, that they have these lists out throughout the world, like, this culture is the easiest for kids and this is the difficult. But if you grow up in a culture where it's not common to say to your parent, "Why should I do it?" They look at you like, "Are you kidding me?" "Why?" "You just asked me why you need to this and I'm just telling you to do it." So, but that, that's gonna change, so I'm warning parents that bringing the kids to the program like, "You're gonna have some discussions, which is great." But back to the younger ones, so if you start younger, it, it's always easier. It's always easier if the brains is, elements are starting to connect in younger. So that's why I say eventually, for, from Pre-K all the way out to high school, that is, for me, ideal, yes.

- And we were also talking about children along the autistic spectrum.

- Uh-hmm.

- And how does music relate to their development?

- Well, again, music reacts that makes the brain do something. The biggest thing is like there is a growing group of autistic young people, that is one. Two, the people on the estimate is the amount of young people from very young [ inaudible ] of course, with autistic related problems. That is a huge group that we also need to focus on just as much as the one who's clearly autistic because there is a whole spectrum that leads up in that sense, and there are students, if you're in that range that is, that is character, brain, and social environment, just what I said, there are situations that a kid getting so much stress that it flips literally inside.

- Uh-huh.

- So he's not born autistic because there's a lot of times people think you're only getting born like that. No, there is a developmental stage. Yes, there are kids that born like close down from day one. But there are a lot of, in the spectrum, there are a lot of sight signs that can be developed and you can turn kids in other way. If you look at that spectrum of young people, music definitely makes a difference, it does.

- What are the some of the signs [ inaudible ] that parent may look out for?

- Well, stress factor, like how does your little one reacts on moments with a lot of tension, like you have kids who wants something or don't wanna do something and just get mad. But you have also kids that, yeah, I don't know another way of saying he's in the sense to make it clear and not that technical, but you also have kids who freak a certain way and you're thinking like, "That's a little bit too much," you know?

- Okay.

- Or get into a panic, like screaming and yelling, and just like, you know, "I don't wanna go into a store." You know, like screaming and yelling, and then really closing their eyes and turning around and, so it, because it is, the, those kids are really affected by a kind of stress factor. And that's why we know from the outside, we don't know it from the inside.

- Okay. We got a caller.

- Good morning.

- Good morning.

- Good morning.

- I have--I have a question about the interrelationship between the child development issues you're talking about [ inaudible ] I had believed was one of the focal points of what it is you do.

- Yes.

- Am I missing something here?

- No.

- Or that's about the work?

- No, no. It's definitely--that's why, I said it in the beginning and I'm, I maybe should've repeated a few more times, is that why jazz is such a great tool to use for the development is that because jazz has so many different elements to it. So it's improvisational--yeah.

- Yeah, I understand that piece. The question that I'm trying to get to is, what physically are you able to do to get kids involved in this. For example, are there teachers that are available for the kids that come in, are there instruments available, like that kind of thing.

- Okay.

- What is the mechanics of getting these kids involved in using jazz for whatever developmental purpose you have in mind for them.

- You know, that, great, thank you for asking that because that is, you know, we can't talk technically, but this is just a really simple and huge problem. What we're doing right now is, again, we're building with the government and with the Department of Education, we're trying to get more instruments to the territory. We're building different programs, so we have a program that we're bringing artist in to teach because it is hard to get that level that we need to bring people in, which is not easy. So that's what we're doing right now. But ideally, what we're working towards is that the music on east islands has a--has a space on a certain level that has the teachers for young people to sign up and follow music in any sense. And again, we, we're working hard on grants, we're working hard with federal organizations to get more here. But have a few programs going that are really intense and it's in the public school system, one is the mentoring program for, you know, just for young people, with Jazz at Lincoln Center that runs from first grade, from first grade to fifth grade. And then we do Mentoring Through the Arts of Music. That's purely exposure, that's bringing musicians in, sorry, the Jazz for Young People, we're bringing people in, working in the classroom and giving concerts in the schools to expose them. Similar for middle school. And then we have more intensely Artist in Residence, though there are five Artist in Residence, the brass, woodwind, brass specialist, woodwind specialist, percussion specialist, and a vocal specialist coming in four times a year for two weeks working in junior high and high schools, giving private lessons, and also working with the ensembles and the bands and the band directors. That is a pretty intense program and that's on all islands. So a week here, every time a specialist comes in for two weeks in a row, one week, Saint Croix, one week, Saint Thomas. And then we have the VI Youth Ensemble that is for high school, the, going up from ninth grade. And that is with audition and we come together twice a month on a Saturday at the UVI Music faculty, and that's for all the best high school students on all island. So mind you that Department of Education is stimulating it so much that Saint Croix students are literally being flown in every other Saturday to come to Saint Thomas to work within the program. That's a really intense program. We work on the music skills with Artist in Residence, and the VI Youth Ensemble. That's really focused on the music skills, the training, and the one on one time that they need. Because private lessons on a, on a regular basis doesn't exist in the territory, and we really need to get to that point. And that's what we're start to cover, but we're not--we're not done growing. So the more money needs to come to the territory, more money need, needs to be implemented to really give every child the opportunity to develop themselves.

- When are, your ensembles is having a program pretty soon, aren't they?

- Yes. We have a, for, we have the VI Youth Ensemble, the Tap Ensemble, because we have three ensembles because the ninth graders who are just coming in who are really enthusiastic, they just doing other things than the ones who are just came from the seat playing at the Kennedy Center for instance. But the [inaudible] ensemble is playing at the Pitarckle Theater, the 23rd to really present their talent and what they worked on. And again, we talk to them about it as well, and relate it to what the gentleman was asking.

- Is somebody on?

- We have, it's always a problem with music for students to be taking serious. And Dion thought me in a really good way to say like, "I'm going to work." You know, "I'm not going to play. I'm going to work." So the work that these young people need to put in, and that we are pushing them to put in, and they don't always, they're not always happy with us...

- [ inaudible ]

- ...they're happy with the result after a few months, but not at the moment, but it's really worked. So we still need everybody to understand if you, I mean, in your situation when you're a lawyer and your wife says something and you say, "I'm sorry, I'm in a meeting," and, "Why can I not sit in your meeting?" And you're like, "Yeah, duh [ inaudible ] but with musicians, it's hard to students because they think, "You're only practicing, you're only have--you're playing tonight. Why don't you--why can I not come?"

- Right, it's a discipline.

- It's a discipline and...

- The discipline [ inaudible ] requires and [ inaudible ]

- ...it's also a perception from people to take them a little bit more serious because they work really, really hard every day, every day because otherwise, you really cannot make it.

- All right. Well, at this point in time, we got to take another break [ inaudible ] Nicole and we'll get right back to you. All right. Back with Ability Radio, you and your life. And Nicole, this, it's such a great conversation. I'm not really understanding how deeply connected music can be with our autistic children. I like to invite you back to go and explain it more for the parents with children with special need and especially those with children with autism. But again, could you give some information on contacting your organization?

- Yes.

- And your upcoming shows that are coming up.

- Yes. So, you know, again, thank you for having me. And for me, it's a great pleasure to talk from my angle, from my knowledge what we can do and what we are planning to do. And again, I would love to come back to go, get more into the nitty-gritty with, you know, the part of autism and autism related social-emotional problems. I would love to because there are so much more to tell.

- Okay.

- And definitely for parents as well, like what can you do or recognize, and teachers, and so for sure. And if people wanna contact us, know, and want more information, you can get the general email address as [info@unitedjazz.org](mailto:info@unitedjazz.org). We have a Facebook site that's pretty updated, that is United Jazz Foundation on Facebook. And our phone number is 212-222-4070. And on the really highly, highly musically inclined site

the, and the result in that end, if you wanna see what our top students are capable of, come to Pistarckle Theater on the 23rd. Doors will open at 6:15.

- All right. Thank you very much.

- Thank you.

- And again, you and your life, signing off for this Saturday morning. Thank you, Virgin Islands, and have a great holiday season.