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**Valerie Peters Selected as New Executive Director of Virgin Islands Conservation Society**

The Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VICS) is please to announce its new Executive Director Valerie Peters. Peters is the foundation’s first female executive director, replacing Paul Chakroff, who has been the executive director since 2009. Chakroff was elected as a new board member and will continue to play an important role in supporting VICS.

Peters’ goal in this new position is to expand the society’s role from environmental education and advocacy to serving as community liaison by raising awareness, engaging, educating, informing and connecting the Virgin Islands community to find solutions to the many environmental challenges we face. She also aims to take positive action to protect and preserve the people and the natural resources of the Virgin Islands for a more resilient and sustainable future. To this end, VICS will soon launch a new website including a new eco-directory and eco-calendar.

Peters was raised on the island of St. Thomas and developed a passion for the environment at a very young age. In addition to owning and running Valevents and serving as marketing director for Coral World Ocean Park, Peters has been volunteering and operating environmental programs with VICS since 2010. She began by launching the Blue Flag Eco Label through a MOU between the Hotel and Tourism Association and VICS, with a primary focus on the sustainable management of recreational coastal environments. Peters has engaged in a variety of projects including Reef Fest, the Smith Bay Watershed Study, Flood Education project, countless community coastal clean-ups and education outreach projects.

Peters has recently launched the internationally recognized Eco Schools program and certification in the USVI. Joining 20 million students in 67 countries, the program is both an award and an environmental management system. Eco Schools is an environmental education program that promotes long-term, whole-school (students, teachers, parents and community) action for sustainability and resilience. Unlike a one-off project, its lasting impacts involve and engage participants through a clearly laid out process, with ongoing support and guidance from VICS.

Outgoing Executive Director Paul Chakroff served as the Virgin Islands Conservation Society Executive Director from 2009 to 2020. He previously served as executive director of the St. Croix Environmental Association. Chakroff left the USVI after the two 2017 catastrophic Category 5 hurricanes to pursue his is PhD in climate change and sustainable development at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa. He was formally thanked and recognized for his efforts at a recent VICS board meeting, where fellow current and past board members expressed their appreciation for his services. VICS looks forward to continuing working with Chakroff in his new role as board member.

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The Virgin Islands Conservation Society, Inc. (VICS), incorporated on June 4, 1968 under the leadership of Isador Paiewanski and is the oldest local non-profit environmental conservation organization in the U.S. Virgin Islands. VICS supports the protection of natural resources through member services, program development, training, leadership development, public education, environmental certifications, and promotes public/private sector partnerships.

**Donate Today** - The Virgin Islands Conservation Society relies on the generous financial support from individuals, corporations, local businesses, and foundations to fund its operating costs, programs, and services. VICS has established a Fiscal Sponsorship at the “The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands” or “CFVI”. Donations may be made via credit card by calling CFVI at 340-774-6031 or on their website via PayPal by going to http://www.cfvi.net/donate/donate-fund.php. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please be sure to identify your donation is for the VI Conservation Society or VICS in the memo section.