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Office of the Governor's Territorial ADA Coordinator Commemorates the 36th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

U.S. Virgin Islands Reaffirms Commitment to Building a Barrier-Free Territory

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Governor's Territorial ADA Coordinator's Office, in partnership with the Virgin Islands Disability Network Partners, successfully commemorated the 36th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on Monday, July 27, 2026, bringing together government leaders, disability advocates, partner organizations, and community members to celebrate the landmark civil rights law and reaffirm the Territory's commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and equal opportunity.

Held under the national theme, "The World Works Better With Us," the virtual ceremony featured educational presentations, partner remarks, disaster preparedness resources, musical performances, community recognition, and a celebration of Disability Pride Month.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. delivered keynote remarks recognizing the significance of the ADA and reaffirming his Administration's commitment to ensuring that every Virgin Islander has equal opportunity to participate fully in community life.

Territorial ADA Coordinator Julien Henley, Sr. welcomed participants both online and in-person as he emphasized the importance of continued collaboration among government agencies, nonprofit organizations, advocates, businesses, and community members to remove barriers and expand accessibility throughout the Territory.

The program featured a presentation by Shammi Carr, the lead for Carr's Advocacy and Workforce Services, LLC (CAWS), provided attendees with an overview of the ADA's history, purpose, structure, enforcement, and its continued importance more than three decades after its enactment.

The ceremony also highlighted the work of the Virgin Islands Disability Network Partners through remarks from the leaders and representatives of each organization, including:

- Mr. Angus Drigo, Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI)
- Dr. Shamika Thomas, Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD)
- Ms. Monique Bute, Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living (VIAIL)
- Ms. Kimberly-Joy Washington, Department of Human Services, Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services
- Ms. Camellia Williams, representing the Virgin Islands Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advocates (VIDHHA)

Attendees also received valuable emergency preparedness information from of the Virgin Islands Department of Health Deputy Director Aesha Rivers representing Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, Director Tina Beamer of the American Red Cross, and Director Daryl Jaschen of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA), emphasizing the importance of ensuring that emergency planning remains inclusive and accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Musical performances enriched the celebration throughout the program. Oleik Lédée, a talented blind accordion musician from the U.S. Virgin Islands, performed the National Anthem, the Virgin Islands March, and provided music during the closing Disability Pride slideshow. Acclaimed blind pianist, vocalist, and recording artist Neville Peter delivered a special musical selection that inspired attendees through his message and music.

The program concluded with a special ADA appreciation video produced by Gerard Evelyn, an Assistive Technology Specialist with VIUCEDD, respected radio host, and advocate who is blind. The ceremony also featured the reading of the Disability Pride Month Proclamation by VIUCEDD's Chardonnay Boynes, accompanied by a commemorative slideshow celebrating the achievements, resilience, and contributions of individuals with disabilities throughout the Virgin Islands.

The Office of the Governor's Territorial ADA Coordinator extends its sincere appreciation to all presenters, partner organizations, American Sign Language interpreters, volunteers, production staff, and attendees whose participation made this year's observance a success.

The Virgin Islands Disability Network Partners include the Office of the Governor's Territorial ADA Coordinator, the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands, the Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living, the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Human Services Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services, and the Virgin Islands Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advocates.

As the Territory commemorates 36 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Office remains committed to working alongside its partners to advance accessibility, strengthen inclusion, and build a Barrier-Free Territory where every Virgin Islander has the opportunity to live, work, learn, and participate fully in community life.

The livestream can be found on Government House's Facebook page. For more information about the Americans with Disabilities Act, accessibility resources, event presentations, and slideshow items, visit www.vi.gov/ada.

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Photo captions:

ADA VIRTUAL1 - Territorial ADA Coordinator Julien Henley, Sr. gives remarks

ADA VIRTUAL2 – Special Assistant Edidiong Utibe

ADA VIRTUAL3 – Governor Bryan gives remarks

ADA VIRTUAL4 - Oleik Ledee, local musician