GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Governor Bryan Highlights Major Steps Forward To Enhance and Upgrade Health Care for Virgin Islanders

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday's weekly Government House briefing, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. highlighted a number of major announcements that are part of The Bryan-Roach Administration's "Healthier Horizons" initiative to significantly improve health care for Virgin Islanders through a number of efforts to improve patient access, how health care is delivered, and technological innovations.

"Last week was very illustrative of the Bryan-Roach Administration's Healthier Horizons agenda. We started the week with check presentations for $10 million dollars to both the Territory's hospitals, which will help them not only modernize their medi-tech systems for medical coding and patient tracking but will also help them implement a recruitment and retention program for medical staff," Governor Bryan said.

The Governor also made note of last week's Digital Health Summit, which brought together stakeholders throughout the Territory and industry experts from around the world with the goal of bringing uniformity and standardization to health information technology among public and private health providers.

The Bryan-Roach Administration also held a free Diabetes Health and Wellness Fair that provided free diabetes and blood pressure screenings, counseling with diabetes specialists and eye and foot exams. The Health and Wellness Fair was put together by the Virgin Islands Diabetes Center of Excellence, which was funded in part by a $1 million grant from the Office of the Governor.

Additionally, Governor Bryan's proposed Behavioral Health Act was approved by the Senate Health Committee last week. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation that reflects the work and consensus of many stakeholders,

and Governor Bryan publicly thanked Senator Novelle Francis Jr. for being such a persistent champion for the measure, and for mental health overall.

Also last week, the Bryan-Roach Administration unveiled to the public plans for the new Charles Harwood Medical Complex in St. Croix, which Governor Bryan said will be unlike anything seen here in the Territory and is just one of many facilities that will be part of the healthcare infrastructure in the Territory.

The Territory also received full approval from FEMA for the complete rebuild of the Roy Lester Schneider hospital on St. Thomas.

On Sunday, the Governor toured the new dialysis center in the Sunny Isles Annex, which also was made possible by a $1 million grant from the Office of the Governor. The dialysis center will give patients on St. Croix another option for their dialysis care and will help prevent the need to evacuate those patients in the event that a storm damages the dialysis centers on St. Croix.

This week, the Department of Health is hosting the Virgin Islands Health Disparities Leadership Conference at the Carambola Beach Resort on St. Croix from August 1-4.

“All these initiatives along with others are a part of our Administration's continued work to transform healthcare in the Territory and to encourage Virgin Islanders to lead healthier lifestyles. Our Walk out Wednesday activities on all three islands have been a hit and are growing in popularity by the week,” Governor Bryan said. “We encourage everyone to visit ourbestlifeusvi.com for more information or to register for the walk and to get your free t-shirt.”

Monkeypox health advisory
During the weekly Government House briefing on Monday, July 18, Department of Health Medical Director Dr. Tai Hunte-Ceasar announced advisories for residents about monkeypox, a rare virus that is like smallpox but is milder and rarely fatal.

While no cases of monkeypox have been reported in the Territory, the World Health Organization has declared the current monkeypox outbreak as a global emergency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is tracking the cases across the world and planning for a national, coordinated response.

As of July 29, 2022, the CDC reported 22,485 global cases of which the majority are in countries that have not historically reported monkeypox; there are 5,189 cases in the nation with 14 cases in Puerto Rico.

For suspected cases, the V.I. Department of Health (DOH) will send diagnostic samples to reference laboratories and confer with the CDC’s Monkeypox Division for access to medical countermeasure treatment and vaccine prevention. DOH’s Immunization Division has secured 100 doses of the JYNNEOS vaccine for outbreak prevention within the territory and additional doses are available to order today.

Symptoms of monkeypox include fever, headache, body aches, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, and a rash with pimples or blisters. It is spread from person-to-person through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. It can also be spread by respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimated physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. The virus can also be spread during pregnancy through the placenta.

If you have symptoms, please contact a healthcare provider immediately, and all suspected cases should be reported immediately to the DOH Epidemiology Division via the Epi 1 Infectious Diseases Notification form and Territorial Infectious Diseases Specialist.

Governor, Lt. Governor traveling to BVI
During Monday's weekly briefing, the Governor also announced that he and Lt. Governor Tregenza A. Roach are traveling to the British Virgin Islands to meet with Premier Natalio Wheatley on Monday and Tuesday.

"The Lieutenant Governor and I will be out of the territory briefly, as we travel to Tortola for our first official meeting with the new Premier of the British Virgin Islands the Honorable Natalio Wheatley, and we will discuss matters of mutual interest for our territories," Governor Bryan said. "Commissioner Bosede Bruce will serve as acting-governor until we return to the territory, Tuesday afternoon."

Governor's Cup Bike Ride
The Virgin Islands Cycling Federation will host the Governor's Cup Championship Cycling Race on August 7 on St. Croix. The race is sponsored by the Office of the Governor and the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation.

The race begins at 7 a.m. from Sally's Fancy, and there will be cash prizes for the winners in each category of the race as well as mid-race cash prizes for the first riders to arrive at designated locations.

For more information contact David Morales at 340-643-6420.

COVID-19 cases as of August 1
- 11.3% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 207 active cases
- 120 deaths
- There are 2 COVID-19 patients hospitalized at Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- There are 6 COVID-19 patients hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Dr. Hunte-Ceasar also reminded residents that schedules for free vaccinations and testing have changed as of July 1.

COVID-19 vaccinations
All vaccinations will take place as a regular part of the Department of Health's clinic schedules.
The dates and times for vaccinations are:

COVID-19 Testing
The schedule is as follows:
St. Croix – Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Charles Harwood Memorial parking lot
St. Thomas – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday – 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Schneider Regional Medical Center loading dock
St. John – Wednesday from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

More COVID-19 Information
Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 (STX) or 340-776-1519 (STT-STJ). For more information, visit covid19usvi.com.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

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