GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Press Contact:
Kimberley Causey-Gomez, MSW
Commissioner
Kimberley.causeygomez@dhs.vi.gov
Phone: (340) 718-2980

PRESS RELEASE

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VI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES ANNOUNCES REOPENING OF SENIOR CENTERS TERRITORY-WIDE

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez is excited to announce today that the Division of Senior Citizen Affairs (SCA), Socio-Recreation Program safely re-opened the Senior Centers on all three islands.

All three of our Senior Centers were temporarily closed for the health and safety of our seniors during the COVID19 Pandemic. Due to the restrictions being lifted in the Territory, all locations have begun providing socio-recreation activities to our elderly Virgin Islanders. STRIVE Center located at the DHS Knud Hansen Complex in St. Thomas re-opened on March 22, 2022, with a total number of **33** participants; Adrian Center located in St. John re-opened on March 29, 2022, with a total of **28**; and at the Christiansted Lagoon Pavilion (temporary site) the St. Croix Richmond Center on April 1, 2022, with a total of **75** territorial participants.

All three Senior Center Reopening activities featured lively music and dance. Cultural Dancers and a Mocko Jumbie sponsored by the Department of Tourism kicked off the St. Thomas STRIVE Center event with homage to our cultural heritage. There was also live entertainment provided by a live Soca Band on St. Thomas and of course wonderful local foods to please the seniors. By afternoon, the Fraco Truck was onsite to provide sweet treats for everyone. The Department of Health's Mobile Health Van was on hand at both the STRIVE and Adrian Senior Center Reopening events to provide free COVID-19 Testing, Vaccinations, and Booster Shots.



The St. John Adrian Senior Center began their Reopening with a blessing of the newly reconstructed V.I. Housing Authority George Simmonds Terrace Community Center. The Adrian Center is housed in this beautiful new facility in Estate Adrian on St. John. The Adrian Center Seniors were treated to the sounds of a live jazz band and of course heart-felt hymns sung by everyone. A Tai Chi Instructor was on hand to round out the day with the Adrian Seniors resuming their physical body stretches and breathing.



The St. Croix Richmond Senior Center activities reopened with music and dancing to the sounds of a live DJ. Our three Senior Vans brought seniors from across St. Croix to the beautiful Christiansted Lagoon Pavilion for a day of tasty local food and drinks-which included Souse and Potato Salad and a variety of sweet treats. The Seniors were indeed extremely happy to be reunited and they sang, talked, and danced throughout the day.



Socio-Recreation plays a key role in the well-being of older adults and in enhancing their quality of life. For seniors, as for people of all ages, involvement in socio-recreation activities can satisfy a variety of needs. Among the important benefits of socio-recreation for the senior population are increased health and fitness, opportunities for socializing which enhance mental and emotional well-being, using skills and talents developed throughout their lifetime, and learning new skills. Our senior population is quite varied, with a diversity of interests, strengths, and abilities.

Commissioner Causey-Gomez stated, “I applaud and give thanks the committed DHS Division of Senior Citizens Affairs Staff, who diligently worked to stay connected with their Seniors throughout the temporary closure of the Senior Centers during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic and has now successfully and safely opened all Centers. They are our heros!”

There is more excitement to come as the DHS Division of Senior Citizens Affairs gears up for observance of Older Americans Month (OAM) in May in coordination with the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. and Lieutenant Tregenza Roach administration, other governmental departments, churches, and private agencies. Every May, the federal U.S. Department of Health, and Human Services Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads the nation's observance of OAM. In 2022, ACL will be focusing on aging in place – how older adults can plan to stay in their homes and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. The 2022 OAM theme is **Age My Way**, and it is and opportunity for all of us to explore the many ways older adults can remain in and be actively involved with their communities.

For more information about DHS socio-recreation services to our senior population, kindly contact:

St. Croix:
- Mr. Alvin Milligan, Assistant Administrator, SCA
- E-Mail: Alvin.Milligan@dhs.vi.gov
- Phone: (340) 725-5756

St. Thomas/Water Island:
- Ms. Shereese Jurgen, Director of Therapeutic Recreation
- E-Mail: Shereese.Jurgen@dhs.vi.gov
- Phone: (340) 643-1014 or (340) 774-0930 Ext. 4248/4251

St. John:
- Ms. Abigail Hendricks, Adrian Center Project Director
- E-Mail: Abigail.Hendricks@dhs.vi.gov
- Phone: (340) 776-6144

For general information, please visit the Department of Human Services website, www.dhs.gov.vi or on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/usvidhs).

For more information on Covid-19, the new strain of coronavirus, please visit the USVI Department of Health's website, www.doh.vi.gov/coronavirus or text COVID19USVI to 888777. #COVID19USVI

The Department of Human Services (VIDHS) exists to provide social services to members in our community with diverse needs. In times of national uncertainty and hardship we act as a safety-net and exist to inspire hope and empower change through non-judgmental, quality delivery of needed services and resources. Please visit the Department of Human Services website, www.dhs.gov.vi for more information.

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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