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Media Contact:

Sean Liphard
Communications Manager
seanl@cfvi.net
202.770.7535 cell

CFVI Partners with Cruzan Rum's Island Spirit Fund and GlobalGiving to Distribute more than \$495,000 in Grants throughout the USVI

Funds support environmental/marine recovery, workforce development, and housing recovery projects

U.S. Virgin Islands, December 8, 2020

— Following the 2017 hurricane season, St. Croix-based Cruzan® Rum established a direct aid fund to ensure that in the future no one would have to “weather a storm alone.” Cruzan® set up the Island Spirit Fund to address the ongoing needs of communities affected by the storms. Through donations of \$1 dollar for every case of rum sold, the Island Spirit Fund is supporting several organizations in the U.S. Virgin Islands, including the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI). So far, Cruzan has raised more than \$3.5 million for the Island Spirit Fund.



"St. Croix faced many challenges in the devastating wake of Hurricane Maria, but the resiliency of the Crucian people and our sense of community never wavered," said Gary Nelthropp, Cruzan Rum's Master Distiller. "That's what we like to call our 'island spirit,' and I'm honored to help extend this spirit to others in a sustainable and ongoing way through the Fund, ensuring that no community, near or far, weathers a storm alone."

Established in partnership with GlobalGiving, a nonprofit organization that connects donors with grassroots projects around the world, the Island Spirit Fund provides disaster relief by issuing grants to local organizations with "boots on the ground" and lasting relationships in affected areas. The Fund prioritizes both short-term recovery and long-term stability projects, including: environmental rebuilding, community planning, workforce development and job creation. By responding directly to affected communities' needs, the Island Spirit Fund takes a customized approach to providing relief including, but not limited to, nourishment, supplies and volunteer support. The Fund is currently focused on the areas still recovering from Hurricane Maria's devastation and is also prepared to respond to future storms.

"Our partnership with Cruzan is a unique and powerful one that helps this leading brand invest in the immediate and long-term recovery of the U.S. Virgin Islands and beyond. CFVI is a critical partner in reaching community-led nonprofits that are addressing ongoing needs and investing in building a more resilient and sustainable USVI," said Donna Callejon, Executive Lead of Disaster Response at GlobalGiving.

Of the more than \$3.5 million that has been contributed to the Island Spirit Fund to date, CFVI has received and distributed more than \$495,000 across the Territory to a variety of organizations to support environmental/marine recovery (primarily focused on native tree restoration and debris management/recycling) and workforce development projects. An additional award of \$370,000 was recently provided to CFVI from the Island Spirit Fund, and will be re-granted to eligible nonprofits on St. Thomas, in accordance with the guidelines established by CFVI donors.

"In the aftermath of the hurricanes in 2017, our colleagues at Cruzan Rum were among the first to reach out and help," said CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown. "The generosity of Cruzan and the wonderful projects funded through the Island Spirit Fund capture the very best of our islands! CFVI is so grateful."

CFVI grants awarded through funds raised from the Island Spirit Fund via GlobalGiving:

(NOTE TO REPORTERS: Please contact Sean Liphard at CFVI if you're interested in additional information/photos or scheduling interviews with any of the grantees listed below).

Clean Sweep Frederiksted | Urban Garden | St. Croix | \$40,000

Twenty participants in this program learned the fundamentals of urban farming/gardening, including farming as a business, garden design, composting and weed management, vertical gardening, and bug management. More broadly, this project aims to combat urban decay in Frederiksted by creating an opportunity to provide financial and food stability, social empowerment, and beautifying empty and abandoned lots within the town.

**Coral Bay Community Council | Environmental Recovery / Waste Reduction
St. John | \$30,000**

More than 260 cubic yards of hurricane debris were removed (combined total with DPNR efforts) from the shorelines and roadways of Coral Bay. Grant funds also supported the design and creation of a donkey- and chicken-proof litter receptacle, in cooperation with My Brother's Workshop, for future deployment around Coral Bay's restaurant areas.



**Friends of Virgin Islands National Park | Native Plant Restoration
St. John | \$40,800**

This project supported Virgin Islands National Park's efforts to remove non-native, invasive plants as well as to restore native plants and trees on St. John, while offering the local community seedlings and information on the value of planting native plants and trees. More than 300 native plants/trees were planted along coastlines. Additionally, a community plant giveaway helped raise awareness about the project, the value of native plants, and to foster a sense of ownership and pride for the island's environment. 339 native trees and plants were distributed to community members.

**Island Green Living Association | Commercial Composting/Vegetation Chipping
St. John | \$100,000**

The Island Green Brush Chipping Pilot Program was launched to recapture a rich and valuable resource on St. John (brown & green material), reduce the volume of debris headed for the territory's overflowing landfills, and lower solid waste transportation costs. A brush chipping yard was established at the Susannaberg Transfer Station (STS)

and heavy equipment was purchased to process vegetative debris into mulch for community use.

**SEED SPOT | Empowering Entrepreneurs to Fuel Recovery Efforts
St. Thomas | \$34,500**

SEED SPOT is providing training and resources to local entrepreneurs to build their capacity to innovate and lead change in the local community. The project's 2-Day Launch Camp event (2DLC) was held in July 2020, with 24 VI entrepreneurs, 22 volunteer mentors, and six VI organizing team members participating in the virtual program.

St. Croix Environmental Association | Native Tree Restoration | St. Croix | \$15,000

Funds were used to increase the number of native trees on St. Croix through planting and community tree giveaways. The community received 170 trees that were given away and another 140 trees were planted at the Southgate Coastal Reserve and Barren Spot Bat Tower. Funding also allowed for the purchase of equipment and supplies to aid in long-term upkeep and maintenance of the planted trees.



St. George Village Botanical Garden | Trees for St. Croix | St. Croix | \$77,124

The Trees for St. Croix project promoted tree planting on St. Croix through the development of a 1,500 sq. ft. nursery and seed bank, where 6,000 trees were planted, and the training of staff and volunteers to facilitate fruit collecting and seed processing. Trees were propagated, grown and distributed to more than 1,000 interested residents, primarily to replace trees lost during the 2017 Hurricanes Irma and Maria.



University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) | Campus Recycling Project | USVI | \$50,000

The recycling pilot program launched at UVI has served roughly 2,000 beneficiaries to date by placing indoor and outdoor recycling bins around the UVI campus on St. Thomas. The recycling bins were also deployed at a community Agriculture Fair on St. Croix to spread awareness. Student ambassadors are engaged in educating fellow students managing quality control on items placed into the various bins.

University of the Virgin Islands | Glass Recovery Project | USVI | \$50,000

Grant activities included the purchase of glass crushing machines and supplies so that recycled crushed glass can be repurposed into sandbags, which will be sent to local government and nonprofit entities for distribution to residents and businesses. This project is ongoing.

**University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) | SEAS Your Tomorrow Program
USVI | \$33,333**

The Supporting Emerging Aquatic Scientists (SEAS) Your Tomorrow Program creates a transferable model for broadening participation in STEM that uses innovative partnerships, support programming, and targeted interventions to build scientific identity and increase interest and engagement in STEM by U.S. Virgin Islanders in related undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs.

**We Grow Food | Bordeaux Farmers Fruit Tree Restoration Project
St. Thomas | \$25,000**

This project resulted in more than 900 hours of volunteer labor serving 33 farmers and planting and distributing over 550 fruit trees on St. Thomas. A workshop on best practices for preparation of the fruit trees prior to hurricane season was held for local farmers, in partnership with the University of the Virgin Islands.

Individuals interested in making their own contributions to the Island Spirit Fund can do so by purchasing any of Cruzan's quality rum products or by making a direct

donation via IslandSpiritFund.org. In addition to the brand's case-matching donation program, Cruzan will also absorb the cost of all transaction fees associated with all donations to the Island Spirit Fund, so that 100% of donors' generosity goes directly to communities in need.

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About the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands

Since 1990, the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) has been a catalyst for positive change in the Territory through initiatives committed to youth, learning, family support and the environment. With a professional staff and a volunteer Board of Directors composed of community leaders, CFVI is a trusted advocate and supporter of programs that ensure opportunity and sustainability for current and future generations. CFVI is a registered non-profit organization entirely supported by individual donors, grants, trusts, corporate donations and estate planning. For more information, visit cfvi.net.

About Cruzan Rum Distillery/Beam Suntory

Named for the people of St. Croix (Crucians), Cruzan Rum Distillery is a quality spirit, crafted for consumers to embrace all of life's flavors surrounded by quality people. Cruzan Rum, distilled by the Nelthropp family, who has called the island home for eight generations, is a better tasting rum due to its ingredients and a unique five-column distillation process. Cruzan touts one of the cleanest-tasting rums in the industry – a characteristic derived from crafting a spirit with low levels of fusel oils, a by-product of the fermentation process which, if not removed, can taint the smell and taste of the rum.

Beam Suntory was created in 2014 by combining the world leader in bourbon and the pioneer in Japanese whisky to form a new company with a deep heritage, passion for quality, innovative spirit and vision of Growing for Good. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, Beam Suntory is a subsidiary of Suntory Holdings Limited of Japan. For more information on Beam Suntory, its brands, and its commitment to social responsibility, please visit www.beamsuntory.com and www.drinksmart.com.

About GlobalGiving

GlobalGiving connects nonprofits, companies, and donors around the world to accelerate community-led change. Since 2002, GlobalGiving has made it safe and easy for people and companies to support the causes they care about through our long-term partnerships with thousands of high-impact organizations all over the world. When disasters happen, GlobalGiving makes it possible for local nonprofits to fundraise on an international scale and access the support they need, efficiently delivering donations to organizations that are best suited to provide immediate relief and long-term recovery. GlobalGiving is a top-rated (4-star) charity on [Charity Navigator](#) and is accredited by the [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#). To learn more, please visit www.globalgiving.org.