

July 2026

Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands Quarterly Newsletter

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A Message from Our President

In this edition of the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands newsletter, you'll get a glimpse into a few of the moments that have defined 2026 thus far. As we approach the year's midpoint, we're both proud of the milestones we've achieved and equally excited for the initiatives that are forthcoming in the second half of 2026.

An incredible highlight of the past few months was the announcement of the first-ever recipient of the Rashida A. Hodge Scholarship, the largest scholarship we've awarded in our 36-year history. In addition, we awarded 78 scholarships to students across the territory through our annual scholarships cycle. We also awarded the Lawyers' Scholarship to two aspiring attorneys. You can read more about all of these and the wonderful recipients in this edition.

We're also excited to share our selections for 2026 Great Reads from Great Places. As the USVI affiliate of the Library of Congress's Center for the Book, each year we select one youth book and one adult book to represent the Virgin Islands at the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. Read on to learn more about this year's incredible books and authors.

As always, thank you for your continued support. Together, we are investing in our people, preserving our stories, and shaping a strong future for our islands.

With heartfelt appreciation,



Dee Baecher-Brown, President



ISLAND UPDATES



Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands selects first-ever Rashida A. Hodge Scholarship recipient

Adaina Smith of St. Croix has been selected as the inaugural recipient of the Rashida A. Hodge Scholarship, the transformational award that provides full tuition, fees, housing and mentorship for up to four years at North Carolina State University. The scholarship was established through a \$1 million endowment created by NC State alumna and Microsoft executive Rashida Hodge in partnership with CFVI, where she also serves as a board member.

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CFVI welcomes two leaders to its Board of Directors

Deepening the expertise of its leadership team, CFVI announced two additions to its Board of Directors. **Angelina Daswani** has returned to the board after a brief hiatus, while **Richard Berry** joins as a new member. Together, they will help guide CFVI's charitable activities by shaping policies related to operations, investments and grantmaking. [LEARN MORE →](#)



Angels among us: CFVI honors the supporters who lift the Virgin Islands community

CFVI's 2026 Angels Reception brought together a passionate group of supporters to celebrate the spirit of giving that has fueled CFVI's work since 1999. Generously hosted by Mike Allietta and Ryan Bolton, the evening welcomed Angels, individuals and businesses who contribute \$500 or more annually, and whose collective support has provided more than \$8 million in unrestricted funding.

CULTIVATING CHANGE

A spotlight on our grantees and community impact

St. Croix Swimming Association



Every Child A Swimmer

The 2025 Banco Popular Grant supported the St. Croix Swimming Association's Every Child A Swimmer Program, providing free swim lessons to 78 children aged 4-11 from local public schools. The program successfully taught water safety skills, reducing drowning risk and helping children develop confidence in swimming. Many participants who initially feared water transformed into confident swimmers, highlighting the program's significant impact on children without prior access to swim instruction.

St. John Rescue



St. John Junior Rescue Squad

The St. John Junior Rescue Squad program engaged 16 students in comprehensive emergency response training, covering life-saving skills like CPR, AED and First Aid. Participants experienced diverse field trips to Viterna, 911 Control Center, a pediatric expo and the Bureau of Corrections, which provided unique insights into emergency services. The program, led by instructors Bob Malacarne, Jackie Browne, Landry Boysen, Brett Huntley, and Valerie Boysen, was particularly notable for the students' success in winning a CPR compression competition against VIFEMS.

The University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)



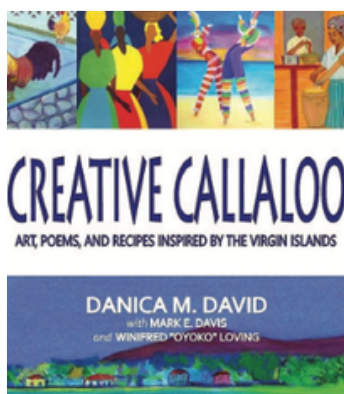
Collaboration & Conversations: Connecting Virgin Islands Historical Collections & Community Knowledge to an Emerging Generation of Humanities Scholars

This grant was used to expand UVI's Oral History Curriculum by creating an ongoing collaboration with existing Oral Historians; Virgin Islands Museums, Libraries, and Archives; and Curriculum Developers and Educators in the Virgin Islands. This funding created a launching pad for new undergraduate researchers working on Virgin Islands history – complete with scripted and UVI student produced introductory videos, a UVI Library Lib Guide and a presentation at a major national conference.



INSPIRING FUTURES

The latest from our education initiatives and scholarship programs



Announcing our 2026 Great Reads from Great Places

As a proud affiliate of the Library of Congress's Center for the Book, we are excited to announce the 2026 selections for "Great Reads from Great Places." This national program is more than just a reading list — it's a celebration of our islands' rich cultural heritage, the voices of our local authors, and our role in sharing those stories with the world.

2026 Adult Selection: *Creative Callaloo: Art, Poems, and Recipes Inspired by the Virgin Islands*

In this vibrantly illustrated book, St. Croix artist **Danica M. David**, poet Winifred Oyoko Loving, and chef Mark E. Davis serve us a delicious and nourishing blend of recipes, poetry, art, history, and more.

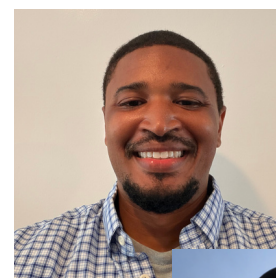
2026 Youth Selection: *Broo 'Nansi and Hummingbird*

This brand new stand-alone tale from author and publisher **Mario Picayo** is full of twists, turns, humor and wisdom as Broo 'Nansi offers to cheer up his friend Broo Ram Goat by making costumes for the upcoming carnival.

Our 2026 Lawyers' Scholarship recipients

Martial Webster Jr.

Martial currently serves as a public school math teacher. Born on St. Croix, he is pursuing a law degree at Texas Southern University. His goal is to provide effective representation and early intervention for young people and ensure they have access to proper legal guidance.



Ki'Janne' Alfred

Prior to receiving the 2026 Lawyers' Scholarship, Ki'Janne' received undergrad scholarships from CFVI in 2020 and 2023 for her exemplary work as a student. She will start law school in August 2026 at Howard University.



ON THE HORIZON

Upcoming grants, opportunities, and events

New Funds, Fiscal Scholarships, and Grants

Judith A. Towle Environmental Studies Fund

A fund established at CFVI in 2003 in recognition of the commitment of Judith Towle to increasing environmental awareness in the Caribbean. Annual grants are awarded for innovative solutions that address shared environmental concerns in the insular Caribbean.

Accepting applications: July 31 - Sept. 15

[Click here](#) to view more information.

Popular VI Community Fund

In partnership with CFVI, Popular Inc. established the Popular VI Community Fund with a goal of supporting youth education, youth economic empowerment, and/or environmental projects in low to moderate income communities.

Accepting applications: Aug. 25 - Sept. 25

[Click here](#) to preview the application.



2026 CFVI Angels Giving Campaign

CFVI's 2026 Angels Giving Campaign raises funds that directly contribute to the well-being of Virgin Islands residents. Programs, operating costs, and much of our community outreach are provided each year through generous Angel donations.

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VIEWFINDERS

Reflecting on our success, planning for our future



Humanities Conference recap

In March, CFVI held its two-day humanities conference at the University of the Virgin Islands, bringing together more than 100 in-person and virtual attendees. The conference convened artists, scholars, cultural leaders and community advocates to explore the importance of the humanities and their role in preserving and advancing the culture and history of the Virgin Islands.

2026 General Scholarships awarded

We're incredibly proud to share that this year, we've awarded 78 scholarships to Virgin Islands students throughout the territory. These awards support students pursuing a wide range of interests including science, music, early childhood education, business, performing arts, athletics, culinary arts, sustainability and more.



CFVI helps send students to space camp

The scholarships, funded by the Kym's Kids Caribbean Agency Fund at the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) in partnership with RapierMed, LLC, cover all expenses—including travel, lodging, and personalized Space Camp flight suits.

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ABOUT US



Our mission

To be a **catalyst** for positive change and enrich the quality of life in the Virgin Islands while preserving our islands' **unique cultural heritage** by inspiring philanthropy, strengthening nonprofits and engaging the community. We do this by **connecting people and resources** with community needs.

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