

# Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands Quarterly Newsletter

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## A Message from Our President

As the year unfolds across our islands, we at CFVI continue the work of uplifting our communities through grantmaking, scholarships, and initiatives rooted in our shared culture. In this edition, we highlight a few moments from the opening months of 2026.

One of the defining moments of the year so far was the Voices of the VI Humanities Conference, held March 19 & 20 at the University of the Virgin Islands. With more than 100 participants in-person and virtually, the gathering brought together culture bearers, artists, scholars, and community leaders for two days of meaningful exchange. Through a keynote, panel discussions, and a youth-elder dialogue, the conference sparked new ideas, strengthened connections, and laid the groundwork for future collaboration across the territory.

This period also marks the opening of our annual scholarship cycle which is now open through April 30. In 2025, we supported 60 Virgin Islands students, and we look forward to continuing that impact in 2026. With more than 35 scholarships available across a range of fields, we encourage you to share these opportunities with the students in your community.

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



## CFVI hosts *Voices of the VI* Humanities Conference at UVI

The Voices of the VI: Dialogue & Discovery Humanities Conference brought together community leaders, scholars, artists, and cultural practitioners for two days of reflection and collaboration. Held as part of the [By the People: Conversations Beyond 250](#) initiative, the event featured keynote addresses from CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown and UVI President Dr. Safiyah George, alongside a series of panel discussions that explored themes such as cultural preservation, storytelling, historical memory, and the role of the humanities in shaping our future. Through these sessions, speakers shared insights on the importance of safeguarding the Virgin Islands' cultural heritage while also fostering community collaboration. [Click here to learn more about the program's speakers.](#)



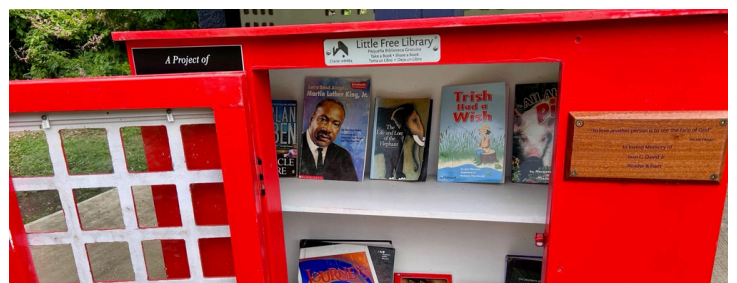
[Click here to view more photos.](#)

The conference also emphasized interactive and intergenerational conversations, with attendees participating in facilitated dialogue circles, workshops, and collaborative sessions designed to spark connection. Panels and breakout discussions encouraged participants to examine issues like agriculture, education, and arts programming through a humanities lens, while also highlighting opportunities for cross-sector partnerships. By the closing remarks, participants not only showcased a diverse range of voices and perspectives, but also reinforced the humanities as a powerful tool for strengthening community ties and shaping the future of the U.S. Virgin Islands.



## CFVI and local authors featured on PBS's *Reading Road Trip*

As the USVI's Center for the Book, CFVI was recently featured in an episode of PBS's digital series *American Stories: A Reading Road Trip*. Learn more about our vibrant literary history and culture from local experts, authors, and humanities advocates. [WATCH THE EPISODE](#) →



## Virgin Islands Daily News spotlights CFVI's literacy initiatives

CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown sat down with Sara Kirkpatrick of Virgin Islands Daily News to discuss the impact CFVI's literacy initiatives and humanities work continues to have across the territory. [READ THE ARTICLE](#) →

# CULTIVATING CHANGE

A spotlight on our grantees and community impact

## Friends of the VI National Park



### Funded by the Edward S. Moore Family Foundation

The 2025 Summer Trail Crew included 11 Virgin Islands students (ages 15–18) in an eight-week conservation and skills program. With CFVI's support, the crew maintained 20+ miles of trails, preserved historic sites, and contributed to environmental restoration while building leadership, teamwork, and professional skills. By combining hands-on trail work with environmental education and community engagement, the program not only maintained park resources but prepared generations of Virgin Islands youth to become lifelong conservation stewards and active community leaders.

## Engineers for Tomorrow Outreach



### Funded by the Margaritaville Wyndham Educational Fund

This grant supported 13 hands-on engineering workshops for youth ages 8–13, including nine through the Wesley Methodist After-School Program and four open Saturday sessions. Participants explored topics like generators, solar cars, traffic lights, bridges, and AI by designing and building their own projects. Students gained practical skills and real-world insight into engineering—learning how everyday technologies work while becoming active creators and problem-solvers.

## Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands



### Funded by the Popular VI Community Fund

Through support from the Empowerment Through Enterprise grant, adolescent girls at the Queen Louise Home for Children gained hands-on experience in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and business development. Participants launched three youth-led businesses producing Madras toddler apparel, handmade jewelry, and customized beauty products and cosmetology services. Through a Youth Business Acceleration Course, expert-led workshops, and community pop-up markets, students built skills in business planning, budgeting, marketing, and customer engagement.



# INSPIRING FUTURES

The latest from our education initiatives and scholarship programs

## Dolly Parton Imagination Library expands with CFVI funding

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program is a no-cost book gifting program that mails high-quality books to children from birth until they begin school. Since 2018, CFVI has been a proud supporter via grants made to the Virgin Islands Children’s Museum, the USVI steward for the program.

The most recent grant award from CFVI will further support the expansion of the program, covering current enrollment and projected growth in 2026. The grant funds will be utilized to cover the costs of providing free books to children, as well as support administrative and marketing expenses to reach more families in the USVI.

Since inception, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library has gifted more than 137,000 books to 2,500+ children throughout the territory. [Click to learn more about the program.](#)



## Hear from our scholarship recipients

### Twanna Hodge

A graduate of Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, Twanna is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies (PhD) at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research focus centers around the experience of mental health professionals in providing care to Black Caribbean communities. She hopes to improve Virgin Islanders’ mental health literacy and access to mental health information.

[Hear more from Twanna in this video.](#)

# ON THE HORIZON

Upcoming grants, opportunities, and events

## New Funds, Fiscal Scholarships, and Grants

### Webinar: Financial Aid 101 - Understanding Your Award Letter

Led by Sonam Aidasani, a graduate of All Saints Cathedral School, this webinar will provide guidance for students and families in breaking down financial aid award letters and assessing financial aid for the 2026-2027 academic year.

**April 11, at 11 a.m. AST**

[Register here.](#)

### General Scholarships - Undergraduate & Graduate

Each year scholarships are offered in a variety of subject/focus areas, such as marine biology, arts/humanities, accounting, education, and health sciences. Scholarships specific to students enrolled/enrolling at the University of the Virgin Islands are also available.

**Accepting applications: March 2 - April 30**

[Click here](#) for more information.

### Lawyers' Scholarship

Up to two scholarships of \$5,000 each for Virgin Islands residents enrolled in a U.S. law school, with priority given to students with limited financial resources.

**Accepting applications: March 2 - April 30**



## 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.

[DONATE NOW](#)



# VIEWFINDERS

Reflecting on our success, planning for our future

## 2025 Maria Rodriguez Van Heurk Award recipients announced

The Maria Rodriguez Foundation Fund was founded in 2021 to recognize a member of the U.S. or British Virgin Islands community who embodies Maria Rodriguez’s spirit of selfless service. Each year, Virgin Islanders nominate an individual that shows up for people the way Maria did – with a smile on their face and with nothing expected in return. Selected nominees receive the Maria Rodriguez Van Heurk Award and \$5,000 to be used in the USVI or BVI in support of eligible charitable activities. The 2025 award recipients include **Alex Israel, Keith Smith** and **Dr. Morgan Monsanto**. Each nominee was chosen for their giving spirit and selfless service in a range of areas, including community sports, recreation projects and health initiatives. Congratulations to all!

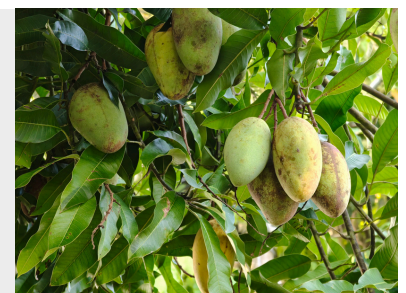


## CFVI and Lutheran Social Services host tent at 2026 Agriculture Fair

In February, the community came together on St. Croix to celebrate culture, connection, and the incredible work of our local farmers. Our CFVI team was there to volunteer and read to youth in the Early Head Start Cozy Reading Corner. Free books were provided for all ages along with a variety of engaging, family-friendly activities that made literacy fun and accessible for all.

### Did You Know?

In partnership with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), CFVI distributed funds from the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program, designed to strengthen local and regional food systems. [Learn more about our grant work in the agriculture space here.](#)



# 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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