

Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands Quarterly Newsletter

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A Message from Our President

Welcome to a special humanities edition of our quarterly newsletter! Throughout this year, but especially over the past few months, we've supported and celebrated our humanities work through a variety of initiatives and events.

This year, as the Humanities Council of the Virgin Islands (HCVI), we were proud to award nearly \$300,000 in grants to 13 organizations and individuals across the U.S. Virgin Islands working to preserve, share and celebrate the humanities and Caribbean culture. In this edition, you'll get to meet each of these grantees and learn a bit more about the fascinating and important projects they're leading to protect humanities in the territory.



In August, we attended the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., joined by our 2026 Great Reads from Great Places authors Mario Picayo and Danica M. David. This year's event welcomed over 45,000 attendees to celebrate more than 80 authors, illustrators and storytellers from all 50 states and the U.S. territories. A special thank you to the support from the Department of Tourism, the Institute and Museum and Library Services and the National Endowment for the Humanities for helping us attend.

We, along with millions of others, were deeply saddened by the passing of Dolly Parton at the end of August. Through our support of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library at the Virgin Islands Children's Museum, we'll continue her legacy of giving by ensuring that Virgin Islands children have free access to books and are able to foster a love of reading in early childhood.

As always, we have so much gratitude for our community, our donors, our partners and our supporters. Thank you for all that you do to help us help our islands reach their fullest potential.

With heartfelt appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Dee Baecher-Brown".

Dee Baecher-Brown, President



[DONATE NOW](#)

[2027 CFVI Angels Giving Campaign](#)

CFVI's 2027 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.

ISLAND UPDATES



In Memoriam: Remembering Dolly Parton and the Impact of Her Imagination Libraries



The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands joins millions around the world in mourning the passing of Dolly Parton — a beloved artist, humanitarian and true pioneer for children's literacy.

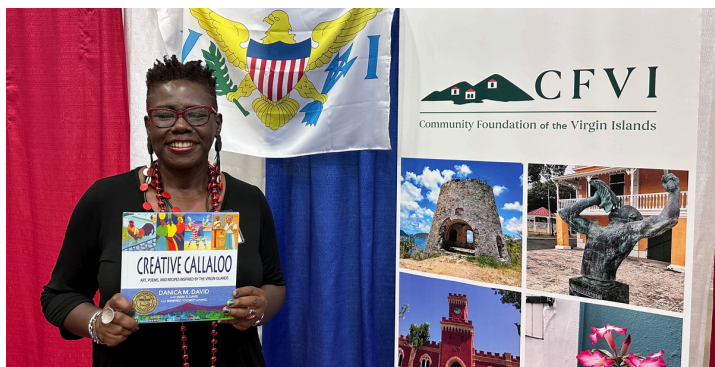
Dolly understood that putting a book in a child's hands could open a lifetime of possibilities, a belief we take deeply to heart at CFVI. Since partnering with the Virgin Islands Children's Museum to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in 2018, the program has gifted more than 140,000 books to children across the Virgin Islands! We are proud to help carry Dolly's extraordinary legacy forward for generations to come.



Judith A. Towle Environmental Studies Fund to Award Up to \$12,000

The 2026 Judith A. Towle Environmental Studies Fund will award up to \$12,000 to support initiatives that address shared environmental concerns in the insular Caribbean. "Preserving the Caribbean's natural environment requires curiosity, collaboration and a willingness to think beyond individual islands," says Towle. This year's grant recipient will be notified in November.

[READ THE ARTICLE →](#)



Virgin Islands Authors Attend the 2026 National Book Festival

CFVI and its selected 2026 Great Reads from Great Places authors, Danica David and Mario Picayo, proudly represented the U.S. Virgin Islands at the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. Thousands of attendees gathered to celebrate more than 80 authors, illustrators and storytellers from all 50 states and the U.S. territories.

[READ MORE ABOUT OUR SELECTIONS →](#)

CULTIVATING CHANGE

A spotlight on our grantees and community impact

Virgin Islands Children's Museum



Dolly Parton Imagination Library

The Virgin Islands Children's Museum (VICM) expanded the reach of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program across the U.S. Virgin Islands with support from CFVI's Family Connection Fund. The program provided 5,792 free, age-appropriate books to 1,080 children from birth to age five across St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, and Water Island—a 25% increase in children served compared with the previous year.

VICM also strengthened community outreach through partnerships with health clinics, the Department of Human Services, local media and the Public Library Division. Since becoming an official Dolly Parton Imagination Library affiliate in 2018, VICM has gifted more than 140,000 books to children throughout the territory.

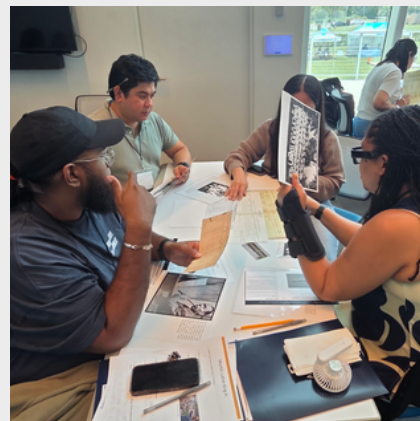
Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts



Youth and Teen Learning and Empowerment through the CMC Arts Artist-in-Residence Program

Programming included literacy, storytelling, sculpture, philosophy, creative writing, visual storytelling, and mixed media workshops led by professional visiting artists, delivering high-quality visual arts and humanities education to youth across St. Croix. Highlights include the Story Catcher literacy program serving 11 elementary students, philosophy and zine-making workshops reaching 33 high school and homeschool students, a summer visual storytelling intensive for 12 high school students, creative exploration sessions for 20 summer enrichment students and a PAL Summer Camp field trip serving 85 elementary and teen participants.

New England Historic Genealogical Society Inc.



PC: Sophia Aubin, Caribbean Genealogy Library

Genealogy in the Classroom: Bringing History to Life with Family History

The New England Historic Genealogical Society Inc. has successfully implemented the American Ancestors Family History Curriculum project in the U.S. Virgin Islands so far. Recently, the organization hosted an in-person teacher workshop at the University of the Virgin Islands RT Park on St. Croix. The workshop, along with optional remote coaching sessions, equipped educators with the tools and resources needed to implement an inquiry-based genealogy curriculum in grades 4–12. The curriculum supports students of all backgrounds through authentic genealogical research methods and interdisciplinary learning approaches.



INSPIRING FUTURES

The latest from our education initiatives and scholarship programs

CFVI Awards Nearly \$300,000 to Support Humanities Programming

The Humanities Council of the Virgin Islands has awarded grants to 13 organizations and individuals across the U.S. Virgin Islands working to preserve, share and celebrate the humanities and Caribbean culture. Read on to learn more about the grantees.



University of the Virgin Islands

Expanding Virgin Islands Humanities Access: Digital Strategies for Youth Participation and Cultural Preservation

Dr. Perry on Orville E. Kean Campus and Dr. Davis-Kahina, Director of the Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center (VICCC), will purchase podcasting equipment to train UVI faculty and students how to create, record, and broadcast digital content. This will expand the Oral History curriculum and create opportunities to produce, record, and digitize Humanities content.

United Jazz Foundation

Preserving the Sound of the Virgin Islands: Documenting Voices, Instruments, and Musical Traditions

Through artist interviews, oral histories, recorded music, musical notation, instrument documentation and cultural research, the project will capture the voices and traditions that shape the region's distinctive sound to produce a publicly accessible collection of recorded interviews, musical recordings, notation, educational resources, and digital archival materials.



Edney L. Freeman

Checkmate to History; Preserving USVI Cultural narratives through Sculptural Play

This project will work to preserve USVI heritage through a tactile educational chess set that digitizes physical master molds into a permanent, open-access Digital Cultural Archive. Scaled resin replicas featuring General Buddhoe, the St. Thomas Coal Woman and the Danish Sentry will be created for K-16 interactive workshops.

Geron Richards

Bamboula/Bomba Documentary

The film will document and bring to light the history that unites both the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as well as the transmission of cultural traditions through dance. Focused on the art form Bamboula of the Virgin Islands and its evolution and ties to Puerto Rico's Bomba, the film will unearth and explore the importance of cultural dance within the Caribbean diaspora.



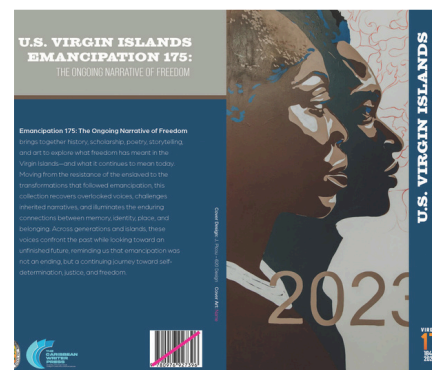
Simfoni Nibbs

Caribbean Stories on the Move: A Mobile Literacy and Humanities Initiative

This project will transform a vehicle into a traveling Caribbean literary and cultural space, serving St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. The truck will carry a curated collection of books by authors and illustrators from across the Caribbean and provide educational programming that highlights Caribbean history, identity, folklore, language, and cultural traditions.

Virgin Islands Museum Civic & Cultural Centre St. Thomas, Inc. Publication and Unveiling of the Emancipation 175 Papers, Essays, Short Stories, Artwork and Poetry

VIMCCC will publish a collection of scholarly papers, essays, short stories, poetry, artwork and photos to be the document of record for the 175th Emancipation. This includes 14 scholarly papers, eight essays, six short stories, 10 poetry sets and numerous photos from scholars and creatives from the Virgin Islands, the Caribbean, the United States and Denmark.



Dollar fo' Dollar Culture & History Committee, Inc.

Dollar fo' Dollar Harbor Tour

With an interactive harbor tour and re-enactment, the 21st annual *Dollar fo' Dollar Culture & History Tour: A Remembrance of the 1892 Coal Workers Strike* will celebrate the hundreds of coal carriers and "Queen Coziah," who protested for better pay. Participants will learn about the history of the 1892 strike through sites such as the Charlotte Amalie Harbor, Hassel Island, and Fort Christian.

University of the Virgin Islands

The Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Teaching Showcase

In partnership with UVI's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and in support of the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Teaching Showcase, this project will create a humanities-based teacher development initiative to strengthen culturally-grounded instruction in PreK and elementary settings.



Center for Educational Growth, Inc.

Cultural Film Showcase

This project will combine storytelling, cultural dance, environmental awareness and historical research to create an educational and culturally engaging film experience that reenacts the traditions, identity and natural beauty of the Virgin Islands. Through film production, audiences and participants will gain insight into traditional dance, music, folklore, and the relationship between the people and the islands.



Kennan Cooley

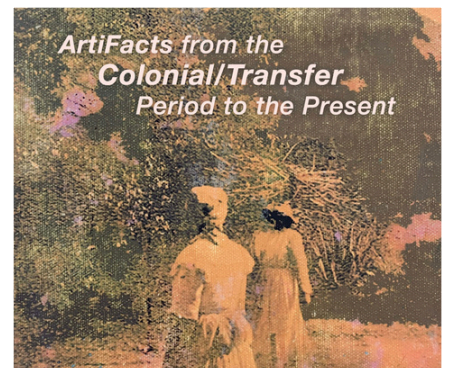
Africonnect: West Africa & the Virgin Islands Cultural Exchange Experience

This initiative will strengthen the historic and cultural connections between West Africa and the Caribbean through music, dance, storytelling, fashion, food, and education. The program will bring West African artists and cultural educators together with Virgin Islands residents to explore the shared heritage that continues to shape identity, creativity, spirituality, and community life throughout the African diaspora.

Janet Cook-Rutnik

Transfer Project: Archiving, Preserving and Exhibiting the Historical Memory of the Danish West Indies Transfer Era

This project will support the documentation, consolidation, preservation and exhibition of visual artwork produced from 2000 – 2025 that examines the Danish colonial period in the Virgin Islands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culminating in the 1917 Transfer of the Danish West Indies to the United States government.



Fireburn Heritage, Inc.

Food, Fire and Freedom: A Short Documentary on Virgin Islands Foodways and Cultural Resilience

This documentary, to be filmed on St. Croix, will explore how traditional foods, farming practices, bush medicine, and survival traditions shaped cultural identity in the Virgin Islands. Through interviews with historians, environmentalists, farmers and chefs, the film examines food as a source of resilience, resistance, healing, and cultural preservation during periods of hardship and social change.

The Children's Museum of St. Croix, Inc.

Story Walk

This project will install a permanent Story Walk, a changeable outdoor display of children's books along a walking route. Story Walks promote literacy and make reading a more engaging and interactive experience. By pairing storytelling with outdoor exploration, the project aims to foster a love of literature and reading, especially for young children, which in turn promotes engagement with texts and language.





VIEWFINDERS

Reflecting on our success, planning for our future



Our 2025 Annual Report: A Year in Review

We're proud and excited to share our 2025 Annual Report, highlighting the programs, donors and partnerships that made this past year possible. We invite you to take a few moments to read the report and celebrate all that we've accomplished together.

[READ THE FULL REPORT →](#)

Humanities Conference Featured in Folklife Magazine

This August, USVI Voices: Heritage, Harmony, and Horizons, our first ever humanities conference, was featured in the Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage magazine. Read our feature, and learn more about how communities across the United States work to preserve and celebrate the humanities.

[READ THE ARTICLE →](#)

FOLKLIFE



COMMUNITY

Through "By the People," the Smithsonian and Humanities Councils Unite to Explore 250 Years of the United States' Cultural Life



Join the CFVI Humanities Group!

This is an open community for anyone working in the humanities across the USVI. Members share grant opportunities, resources, local information, and ideas. They also come together quarterly to share their work, discuss challenges, exchange feedback, and build connections across the humanities community.

[JOIN 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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