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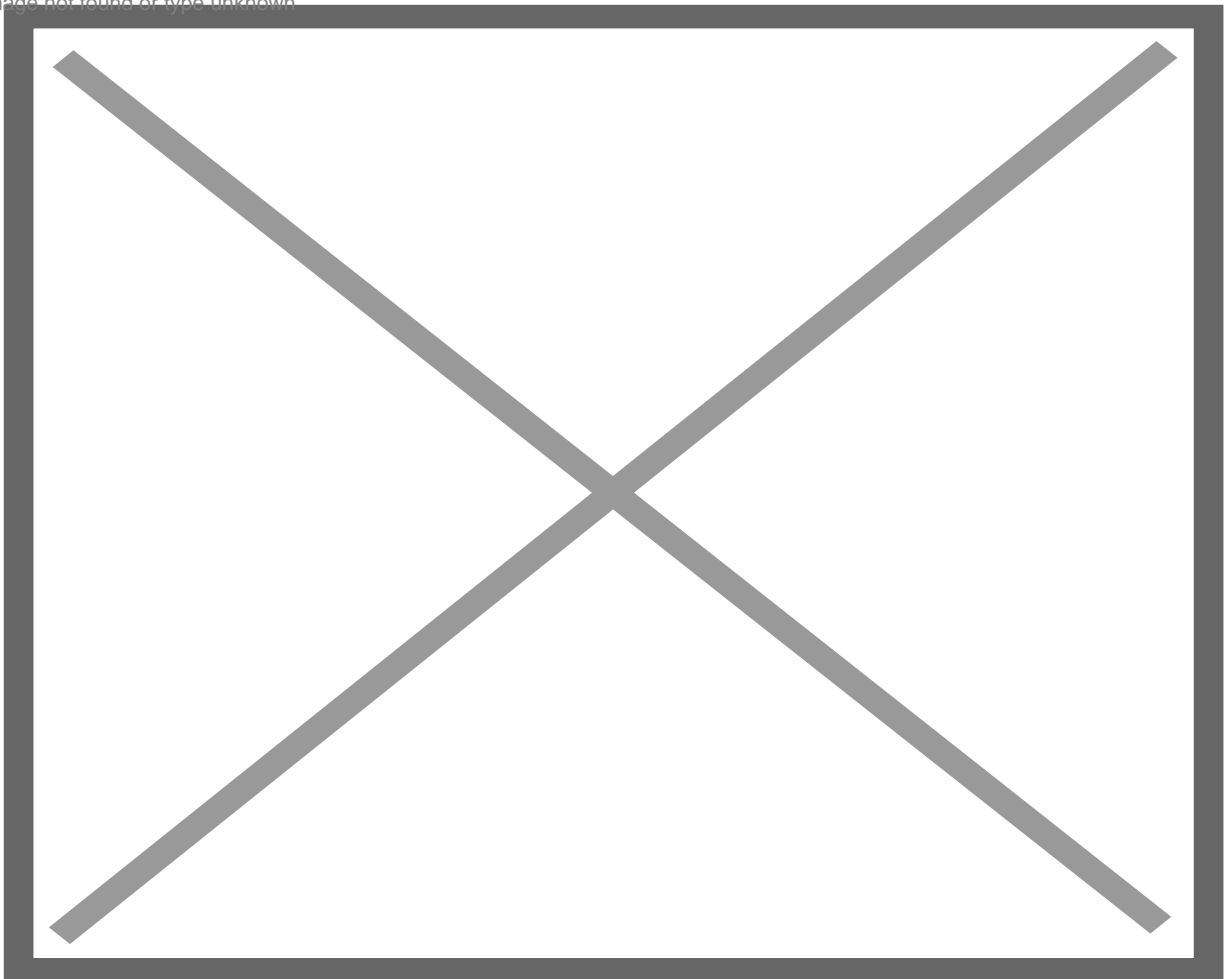
USVI Wellness Fair Receives Overwhelming Response, Residents Thankful

Island-wide participation in the free health services event highlights the community's gratitude and the substantial demand for accessible healthcare

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Residents endure waits for much-needed dental, optometry, and medical screenings, praising the initiative despite delays due to high turnout. Above, the St. Croix Educational Complex. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Nearly a week into the USVI Wellness Fair, residents across the territory who turned up at the free health care event are expressing pleasure and gratitude for the no-cost medical services, despite several having to wait hours or come back several days later to receive treatment.

This, of course, is due to the overwhelming number of individuals taking advantage of the free service. “Well the only thing is I came from Tuesday but then I had to go home and come back today cause there was so many people and I had nothing done but today I had everything done. It was a very good day for me,” said one resident who had just received treatment on Thursday. The services, provided by military health care professionals from the U.S. Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training Program, in collaboration with the Office of Governor and the V.I. Department of Health, includes dental and optometry care, as well as medical screenings, pediatric physicals, and mental wellness checks.

Due to the large turnout, some residents seeking care had to wait multiple hours and even days to be seen by medical professionals, however for many, the services were worth the wait. “Yesterday I came in at 8:00 a.m. and left at 4:00 p.m. because there was some confusion with people that were sent home the day before because of no power. All in all I can’t complain and [I] received information that was needed,” another resident said. This resident, who is a senior and uses a cane, said the officials working at the event assisted her with a wheelchair and even walked her to her car afterwards. “I came for my eye and I had good results cause I was having serious problems with my eye. They don’t know what I have and she give me a good exam and she told me what could be wrong with it,” the resident continued, describing how her local doctor was unable to diagnose her eye problems, while the health care professionals at the fair provided her with answers. This resident, along with others, said the health care professionals told them that their prescription glasses will be mailed to them free of charge.

While two other people who came to the fair together on Wednesday, returned on Thursday, and were told to come back on Friday, described the experience as “annoying,” another resident said “they have everything organized,” and “my experience with it was excellent.”

For one Crucian who received dental and optometry services, the fair was particularly uplifting for the community in light of many other issues that residents of the Big Island must contend with. “It’s something good that they’re doing for the people seeing that you know things kinda tough on the island,” the resident said. Another echoed the sentiment, saying, “It was a very serious thing the governor tried to do, at least he did something nice cause we have so much problems in this island.”

The health fair is stationed at the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School gymnasium on St. Thomas, and the Educational Complex school gymnasium on St. Croix. Pediatric services are being delivered at the Department of Health maternal and child health clinics. The free services began on June 1st and will wrap up on Sunday.