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ODR Allocates \$1.3 Million in CDBG-DR Grants to Strengthen Housing, Mental Health, and Youth Programs

Funds provide crucial support for vulnerable populations in the Virgin Islands, addressing urgent community needs

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The V.I. Office of Disaster Recovery has announced the allocation of more than \$1.3 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds to support three critical community programs across the territory. These funds aim to enhance services for vulnerable populations, focusing on homelessness, mental health, and youth development, as part of ODR's broader mission to strengthen community resilience in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

According to a release issued Thursday, the largest grant of \$1 million was awarded to Liberty Place, a Community Action Team located in Frederiksted, St. Croix. This funding will be used to provide supportive housing and shelter services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The initiative will address urgent housing needs and offer safe and stable accommodations to the most vulnerable members of the community. Liberty Place's Executive Director, Leslie Raymer, emphasized the importance of this funding in meeting the critical needs of the area.

In St. Thomas, Meeting the Needs of the Community (MTOC) was awarded \$257,108 to expand its mental health and behavioral counseling services. Formerly known as the Methodist Training and Outreach Center, MTOC will use the funding to provide support to residents affected by post-traumatic stress and other issues stemming from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. This initiative aims to address the growing demand for mental health resources in the wake of the devastating storms. MTOC's Executive Director, Dan Derima, highlighted the significance of this funding in helping the community recover emotionally and mentally.

Project Promise in Christiansted, St. Croix, received \$95,000 to support its Caterpillar Afterschool Program, which serves at-risk youth aged 10-18. The program provides academic support, life skills training, and mentorship to foster positive development and resilience among young people in the community. Resa O'Reilly, Executive Director of Project Promise, expressed gratitude for the funding, noting that it will help ensure the continued success of the afterschool program and its impact on the lives of young residents.

"These grants are a testament to our ongoing commitment to improving the quality of life for all Virgin Islanders," said Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, Director of the Virgin Islands Office of Disaster Recovery. "By investing in these critical community programs, we are not just addressing immediate needs but also paving the way for a stronger and more supportive future for our territory."

The CDBG-DR program is administered by the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program focuses on providing support for unmet needs, with an emphasis on low- and moderate-income residents and businesses.