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Lutheran Social Services Marks 120 Years of Serving the Virgin Islands Community

Founded in 1904, LSSVI celebrates its legacy of compassion, offering programs like Early Head Start, eldercare, and housing for individuals with disabilities while continuing to support the most vulnerable residents

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A circa 1915 photo shows children and childcare workers on the Ebenezer balcony (left), a 2023 image captures a group at Ebenezer Gardens (center), and a recent photo features the new Early Head Start East Center. By. LSSVI

Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands (LSSVI) is celebrating a major milestone this Friday, December 13, as it marks 120 years of service to the Virgin Islands community. The

organization's journey, rooted in compassion and support, has spanned more than a century and continues to address the evolving needs of the region's most vulnerable residents.

Originally founded in 1904 by Crown Princess Louise of Denmark as the Queen Louise Home for Children, the agency was established to combat high infant mortality rates on St. Croix. Since then, LSSVI has transformed into a comprehensive nonprofit organization that provides a wide range of services, from childcare and eldercare to housing for individuals with disabilities and disaster recovery assistance.

LSSVI's programs now include the Early Head Start Program, designed to support infants, toddlers, expectant mothers, and their families. The organization also oversees several federally subsidized housing facilities such as Flamboyant Gardens, Ebenezer Gardens, Danish Gardens, Genip Gardens, and Bougainvillea Gardens, which serve low-income seniors and adults with disabilities.

In addition to housing, the agency operates group homes like Sister Emma Cottage, Ginger Thomas, and Yellow Cedar, which provide around-the-clock care for children and adults with developmental and physical disabilities. These homes are essential in ensuring residents can live with dignity and a sense of purpose.

Reflecting on this milestone, Junia John-Straker, CEO of LSSVI, expressed gratitude for the community's continuous support. "As we celebrate 120 years of service, we are deeply grateful for the unwavering support from our donors, volunteers, and community partners," she said. "Your generosity has empowered us to provide vital services to the most vulnerable in our Virgin Islands' community. Reaching this milestone allows us to reflect on our rich history, the countless lives touched by our work, and the resilience of our organization. Together, we will build on this legacy, creating brighter futures for children, families, and individuals in need."

The anniversary also highlights the organization's resilience and its role in fostering a supportive community. Looking ahead, LSSVI said it remains dedicated to enhancing the lives of children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities through innovative programs and compassionate care.

The public is invited to join LSSVI in celebrating this 120-year journey of service and shared achievements.