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Four USVI Organizations Awarded \$47,500 in AARP Community Challenge Grants to Support Older Adults

Projects include green space development, disaster preparedness for older residents, kitchen upgrades for a Meals on Wheels hub, and a six-month digital literacy program pairing teens with seniors to reduce isolation and improve connectivity.

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Four Virgin Islands organizations will share \$47,500 in Community Challenge grants for 2025, the AARP has announced.

This year, grants went to organizations with projects that will help residents, especially older adults, improve how they live and stay connected in their neighborhoods.

The St. Croix Foundation will work on developing an accessible green space at Sunday Market Square. The St. Croix Intergenerational Community Garden & Wellness Space aims to “foster resilience, food security, and health aging by creating a welcoming environment for older adults and families,” according to a release from AARP.

Also on St. Croix, the Tradewind Foundation will conduct disaster preparedness training for residents of the Big Island who are 50 or older. Participants are expected to “learn evacuation procedures, emergency planning, and communication strategies” through “workshops, resources, and emergency response training.”

Meanwhile, the St. John Heritage Collective will embark on repairs and upgrades on the kitchen at St. Ursula's Mission. The improvements “will enhance health standards and electrical capacity, ensuring ongoing service for older adults and vulnerable populations.” This project is expected to bolster the St. John Meals and Wheels program, and improve disaster recovery.

Finally, the V.I. Youth Advocacy Coalition will run their six-month Digital Bridge Initiative program, which helps older adults in the territory improve their digital literacy. “Trained high schoolers will teach smartphone use, online safety, cloud storage, telehealth and key services” to the senior participants in the program, with the goal of “promoting independence and reducing social isolation.”

“AARP Virgin Islands is proud to work with communities across the state to help make them more livable for people of all ages,” said Troy De Chabert-Schuster, AARP's Director in the Virgin Islands. “These projects are about turning great local ideas into real improvements that make everyday life better, especially for older Virgin Islanders.”