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## **DOH to Host Annual Cancer Awareness Walks on St. Thomas and St. Croix, Encouraging Early Detection and Community Solidarity**

**The V.I. DOH will hold its annual Breast and Prostate Cancer Awareness Walks this Friday on St. Thomas and on October 24 in St. Croix, emphasizing early detection, honoring survivors, and supporting those currently battling cancer across the territory.**

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The V.I. Department of Health will host its annual Breast and Prostate Cancer Awareness Walk this Friday on St. Thomas and next Friday, October 24, on St. Croix, the department announced via release Tuesday night. Hundreds of participants have already registered in both districts for the community-wide event focused on awareness, prevention, and support.

“Breast and prostate cancer are the two most common cancers in the Virgin Islands, and it’s important that we continue to raise awareness about early detection — getting annual mammograms, performing regular self-breast exams, and for men, completing prostate screenings,” said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. “The most powerful cancer intervention starts with you.”

Encarnacion added that the event is not only about awareness but also recognition and unity. “This walk also honors survivors and caregivers while standing in solidarity with those who are bravely battling cancer today.”

The St. Thomas walk will begin at 5:30 p.m. this Friday, starting at Crown Bay Marina and continuing to the Cancryn Bridge before returning to the starting point. The St. Croix walk will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, October 24, beginning at Claude O. Markoe School and ending at Buddhoe Park in Frederiksted.

To date, more than 350 participants have registered for the St. Thomas event, while nearly 300 participants have signed up for St. Croix. Both walks will feature giveaways, prizes, contests, and heartfelt testimonials from survivors of breast and prostate cancer. T-shirt distribution for registered participants will begin at 4:00 p.m.

Registration for the event remains open on Eventbrite under the title “Walking Together, Fighting as One.”

Commissioner Encarnacion emphasized that while the walk focuses on awareness, the department’s broader mission is to address healthcare challenges that contribute to cancer risks in the territory. “We not only want to raise awareness about the importance of early detection, but we also want the community to know that the Department of Health is working every day to address barriers to care so that we can reduce the cancer burden in the Virgin Islands,” she said.

She also highlighted the department’s ongoing collaboration with the USVI Cancer Coalition, noting that “Recently, our Chronic Disease Division, in collaboration with the USVI Cancer Coalition, hosted the Third Annual Cancer Summit to review and strengthen the USVI Cancer Plan, ensuring it continues to meet the evolving health needs of our territory.”

The commissioner expressed gratitude to Dr. Lyna Fredericks, Director of the Chronic Disease Division, and her team for leading the coordination of this year’s walks and for their continued dedication to cancer prevention and education.

The Breast and Prostate Cancer Awareness Walk is sponsored by the V.I. Department of Health’s Chronic Disease Division through GVI Award M1924 and Title V funding.