

The Virgin Islands Consortium

First Lady Cecile De Jongh Represents Territory At Child Advocacy Award Dinner

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First Lady Cecile de Jongh represented the U.S. Virgin Islands at the Child Mind Institute's Fifth Annual Child Advocacy Award Dinner held on November 24 in New York City.

Mrs. de Jongh, who attended the event without the Governor, said she felt "fortunate" to be there, particularly because she has been a longtime advocate for mental health awareness and "understanding for children and their families." Both the governor and his wife were invited as guests of Dr. Harold S. Koplewicz, founding president of the Institute.

"I felt very fortunate to be able to attend the award dinner on behalf of the Governor and his Administration," Mrs. de Jongh said. "We initiated the Mental Health Essay Contest for public and private high school students, started the "My Feelings are a Work of Art" art contest for middle schoolers, and annually promoted Mental Health Awareness Month in the territory through a series of community-wide activities. We must continue to emphasize that there is no shame in having an illness, whether physical or mental, and that acknowledgement is the first step toward regaining health."

Receiving an award at the event was former U.S. First Lady and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was presented with the 2014 Child Advocacy Award for the work of her foundation, Too Small to Fail, which focuses on early childhood development. Dr. Tom Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, also received the 2015 Distinguished Scientist Award. The high-profile event raised over \$6.63 million for the Child Mind Institute.

The Child Mind Institute was established in 2009 to provide clinical care, research and counseling services for children and adolescents living with psychiatric disorders.