

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI's Andre Joseph, A Former At-Risk Youth, Chosen As Presenter In National Youth Development Workshop

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ST. CROIX -- The University of the Virgin Islands' Cooperative Extension Service recently announced the selection of one of its former participants in the local Children, Youth & Families at-Risk (CYFAR) Program, who was chosen to participate in the recently held [National CYFAR Meeting](#) in the D.C. area in May.

Andre D. Joseph, above right, was one of three former CYFAR participants from throughout the U.S. who were chosen to make presentations to an audience of over 250 attendees representing the U.S. and its territories. Attendees wanted to hear how the

CYFAR Program impacted the former participants' lives. The 2 day meeting also emphasized the importance of evaluation of programs, building community partnerships and strategies for increasing sustainability of programs.

Under the auspices of the National 4-H Program, CYFAR is federally funded and seeks to improve the quality of life of youth and families across the nation. Approximately 47 CYFAR programs exist throughout the U.S. and are managed through land-grant institutions, like UVI, receiving funds from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In the earliest iteration of the program, computer technology was the primary focus of programming to minimize the digital divide in the country. Although computer technology continues to be important in the program's mission, special emphasis is now placed on nutrition education, physical activity and gardening in light of the increased national concern regarding obesity. The current program in the territory is entitled, "Healthy Youth Leading the Way in the Virgin Islands". With an overall goal of reducing childhood obesity and modifying the eating habits of youth, the program seeks to have a long-term impact on the health and welfare of the community.

At the Tutu Highrise on St. Thomas, and the New Testament Church of God on St. Croix, 5-14 year olds get a steady stream of information and experiences in the three aforementioned focus areas during the afterschool program held Monday – Friday. Youth also receive tutoring, homework assistance and 4-H programming. Both parent and volunteer involvement are encouraged.

Approximately 14 years ago, Mr. Joseph joined the after school program at the Croixville Apartments where he changed from a wayward young man to a budding poet, and is now an aspiring businessman. He is presently a student at the University of the Virgin Islands - St. Croix campus majoring in Business.

He is a good example of the 4-H motto "to make the best better". When youth are given the opportunity to succeed they are quite capable of "stepping-up to the plate" to display their best.