

The Virgin Islands Consortium

AARP Leadership Visits USVI In Wake Of Storms; Organization Has Donated Over \$500,000 To Local Nonprofits Since September

VIC News / **Published On May 15, 2018 11:01 AM /**

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ST. CROIX -- AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins, AARP Foundation President Lisa Marsh Ryerson, AARP Foundation Vice-President Aiyshen Padilla, and AARP Regional Vice-President Kelly Clark visited St. Croix on May 10 to meet with nonprofit organizations across the territory which have received grants from AARP's Hurricanes Irma and Maria Relief Fund, a recent release has made known. These grants were made to nonprofits throughout the USVI participating in hurricane relief efforts.

In September 2017, AARP and AARP Foundation created a relief fund to collect donations for the victims of the two deadly storms. Approximately \$600,000.00 was collected, AARP said. The organization said it worked closely with Troy de Chabert-Schuster, state director of AARP in the territory, and then selected nonprofit organizations to receive the funds which will be used to continue the hurricane recovery and restoration.

Part of the visit from the leadership of AARP and AARP Foundation was to learn more about the work of the nonprofits receiving donations. The leadership also made site visits with three of the organizations to engage in a volunteer hands-on experience with hurricane victims and to take part in the recovery and restoration efforts, according to the release.

“AARP and AARP Foundation are grateful to our partner organizations who are helping us to rebuild the communities around the island,” said Jo Ann Jenkins, CEO, AARP. “It is humbling to see the destructive power of nature, but I have been encouraged and inspired to see what we can do when we work together.”

“It is deeply moving to see the resilience and the resolve of everyone who was affected by the devastation,” said Lisa Marsh Ryerson, president of AARP Foundation. “We are committed to nurturing and reinforcing that resilience. We are so grateful for the outpouring of support from our donors across the nation and are proud to be a part of helping to rebuild the USVI.”

Mr. de Chabert-Schuster added, “I am thrilled that we have been able to contribute to the rebuilding of our community. I am honored to welcome the leadership of AARP and AARP Foundation to The Virgin Islands. AARP-VI looks forward to strengthening our partnership with the grantee organizations as we look beyond the rebuilding process to resiliency and sustainability.”

Funds were granted to the following organizations:

- Legal Services of the VI – \$50,000. Provide disaster relief civil legal services such as civil legal assistance in the areas of family law, landlord-tenant, FEMA application assistance and appeals.
- St. Croix Foundation - \$75,000. Supporting holistic community development including, coordination and direct support of front-line relief efforts serving vulnerable populations and residents with unmet rebuilding needs.
- Women’s Coalition of St. Croix - \$75,000. Disaster Relief for older adults on St. Croix. This will include crisis intervention, safe housing; transportation; medical assistance, and outreach.
- Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands - \$113,823. Providing support and relief services to the vulnerable populations of The Virgin Islands.
- American Red Cross of The Virgin Islands - \$113,500. Support emergency shelters and meet one-on-one with people staying there to help them plan their next steps and connect with available assistance, and assisting with plans for long-term health care for some residents who are still in shelters.
- My Brother’s Workshop - \$75,000. Using our youth to help repair homes of senior citizens which have had damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

- Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands - \$75,000. Provide counselling, outreach to the elderly to include meal delivery, minor home repairs, house cleaning, referrals to mainstream services, assistance with the FEMA and SBA processes, advocacy and emergency housing.

The grantees shared their work and needs with the leadership of AARP and AARP Foundation during a breakfast meeting on Thursday morning. Following the breakfast meeting, AARP leadership accompanied the American Red Cross to Claude O. Markoe Elementary School where they taught the students about natural disaster preparedness. The leadership then had a luncheon with AARP-Virgin Islands volunteers at the State Office, according to the release. Following the luncheon, AARP leadership assisted Catholic Charities of The Virgin Islands in the cleaning The Light of Christ Retreat Center in Fredericksted which will be converted into a homeless shelter.

The afternoon was concluded at Flamboyant Gardens, an assisted living community operated by Lutheran Social Services of The Virgin Islands. At Flamboyant Gardens, AARP leadership assisted the residents in affixing their important photographs on beautiful pieces of local mahogany fallen by Hurricane Maria.

AARP and AARP Foundation said they are proud to have been able to provide the territory with with this support. Mr. de Chabert-Schuster expressed delight to have been able to assist in the process of selecting the grantees of these funds and looks forward to continuing work with these organizations to rebuild the USVI and make it an even more beautiful and prosperous place to live, according to the release.

Feature Image: From left to right: AARP Vice-Pres. Aiyshen Padilla, AARP-VI Operations Specialist Sherilyn Pogson, AARP-VI State Director Troy de Chabert-Schuster, AARP Regional Vice-Pres. (East and Caribbean) Kelly Clark, AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins, and AARP Foundation President Lisa Marsh Ryerson at Flamboyant Gardens, St. Croix. (Image Credit: Denise Bennerson)