

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Secures Emergency Radios For Individuals With Disabilities

VIC News / **Published On January 18, 2019 06:49 PM /**

Staff **January 18, 2019**



Members of the disability community in the Virgin Islands will soon be equipped with emergency radios that could mean the difference between life and death in the face of a disaster, thanks to the efforts of the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), UVI announced Friday.

Sixty radios will be distributed to Virgin Islanders who are deaf or hard of hearing, announced Dr. Kimberly R. Mills, senior executive director of VIUCEDD. She explained that the devices were purchased using the proceeds of fundraising efforts in response to the devastating hurricanes of September 2017.

Referring to the immediate aftermath of the two category five hurricanes, Dr. Mills recalled: "When communications were down, the radio was such a key source of critical information. And of course, that information was not accessible to people with hearing impairments."

This harsh reality and the challenges faced by many members of the Virgin Islands' disability community helped steer Dr. Mills, her colleagues and members of the VIUCEDD Board and Consumer Advisory Council to their decision to obtain equipment that would equip those in need with "a viable way to get critical information in an emergency".

Approximately 40 individuals in the St. Thomas-St. John District will receive the special emergency radios (along with a demonstration of how to use them) at an event on January 26, 2019, at the University of the Virgin Islands' St. Thomas Campus. Some 20 or so units will be distributed to residents of St. Croix at a later date. "VIUCEDD remains committed to finding new and innovative ways to serve people with disabilities," said VIUCEDD Board Member Camellia Williams, whose son is deaf/hard of hearing.

"We look forward to continuing to be able to respond to the needs of the people in our community."

In total, nearly \$7,000 was raised through VIUCEDD's GoFundMe campaign and the efforts of the Association of University Centers on Disability.

The remaining funds will be used to secure between 150 and 200 regular emergency radios to be gifted to additional members of the disability community throughout the Virgin Islands.

VIUCEDD is one of 67 Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities in the United States. For more information about the center, call (340) 693-1057 or visit <http://www.viucedd.com>.

VIUCEDD works closely with American Sign Language interpreters and organizations across the Territory, such as the Centers for Independent Living, the Virgin Islands Disability Rights Center, and the V.I. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advocates. Its mission is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families and to provide them with tools necessary for independence, productivity and full inclusion.