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## AARP Makes Long-term Investment in USVI Health With New Outdoor Fitness Park at Altona Lagoon

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**AARP-Sponsored Outdoor Fitness Park in Christiansted, St. Croix, at the Altona Lagoon.**  
**By. AARP IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

ST. CROIX — AARP in The Virgin Islands and the VI Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation have announce an AARP-sponsored outdoor fitness park in Christiansted at the Altona Lagoon, a long-term investment in the health of residents. This donation from AARP includes funding for fitness classes at the park for people of all ages, according to the release. The AARP-sponsored outdoor fitness park is open to people of all ages, though young children must be supervised by an adult.

“We have always worked to help Americans – especially those 50 and over – maintain their health as they age, and this fitness park will help Virgin Islanders stay active and healthy,” said Jo Ann Jenkins, CEO of AARP. “The goal of healthy aging is more important than ever, as average life expectancies have increased. This park can be one tool to help people stay healthy, whether they use it today or in a few months or years.”

A growing number of studies link exercise not only to cardiovascular health and an increased life span, but also to lower rates of depression, dementia and other issues.

According to the release, by the end of this year, AARP plans to sponsor a fitness park in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to commemorate the organization’s 60th anniversary celebrated in 2019.

The fitness parks have been designed and built to serve communities for a decade or more. The first AARP-sponsored outdoor fitness park opened in St. Petersburg, Fla., in April 2019. AARP said it is working with FitLot, a 501c3 organization dedicated to helping communities find the resources they need to plan and build outdoor fitness parks.

Each park includes FitLot™ exercise equipment and comes with programming designed to meet a wide range of fitness levels and abilities. FitLot’s programming includes protocols and instruction on how to safely operate the equipment, even as the nation copes with the pandemic. The fitness parks should only be used when permitted by local authorities in compliance with CDC guidance.

“This AARP Sponsored Outdoor Fitness Park is a symbol of AARP’s commitment to help ensure that the people of The Virgin Islands have a way to exercise and stay healthy as they age,” said Troy de Chabert-Schuster, state director of AARP in The Virgin Islands. “With the use of this park by families and older adults, residents can create connections, engage more, and create a sense of community, helping to make our communities more livable.

"AARP thanks the Governor of The Virgin Islands, Albert Bryan, Jr., and the VI Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation for working with us to make this possible. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department as they provide programs and instructors for Virgin Islanders who visit and use the fitness park, made possible through AARP funding.”

Calvert White, commissioner of the VI Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation, said, "The Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation is elated to collaborate with AARP in The Virgin Islands. A part of our mandate is to provide recreational activities for the community. With the opening of the AARP Sponsored Outdoor Fitness Park, we now have another avenue that can cater to our senior population. We are looking forward to producing programs at the park that will enhance the entire community's physical ability and quality of life. Thank you to AARP for making this a reality!"

AARP said individuals should consult with their doctor prior to beginning any new exercise regimen. AARP also has tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on visiting an open recreational facility. The nonprofit said persons should get their heart and body pumping, soak in some Vitamin D and safely connect with others in the community:

- Bring sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol to wipe down the equipment before and after you use it
- Keep your distance (6 feet) from anyone who is not in your household
- Keep groups small, with no more than 10 people gathered

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use sanitizer after using the equipment, going to the bathroom and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Stay home if you are feeling unwell or have been exposed to anyone who has COVID-19 or any other illness

For a list of open AARP-sponsored outdoor fitness parks, visit: [blog.aarp.org/aarp-fitness-parks](https://blog.aarp.org/aarp-fitness-parks)

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