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Have You Heard of 'The Village'? Get to Know the Territory's Only 25-Bed Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Center

Community Center / **Published On February 14, 2021 06:45 AM /**

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Last updated on Mon. Feb. 15, 2021 at 8:39 a.m.

Marsha Taylor, regional director of The Village met with the Consortium on the beautiful old plantation grounds of #1 Sion Hill, St. Croix on Tuesday morning. After bouncing back from possible closure last year, she shared the positive things taking place at the treatment center, to include prevention programs for youths and families.

The Village—VI Partners in Recovery Inc./ WestCare is the territory's only 25-bed (Males-18, Females-7) residential substance abuse treatment center for adults who seek a safe place to commence their recovery from addiction or substance abuse. The Village accepts clients with co-occurring disorders (the combination of a substance use disorder and a mental illness). Either

disorder can develop first, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The Village partners with Frederiksted Health Care and Department of Health's Division of Behavioral Health, Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Services to treat mental health concerns.

Clients participate in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings. The heavy work to unload the baggage of their lives in the fourth step of The Twelve Steps is done in the safe space of treatment. After discharge, they are encouraged to work with a therapist and continue attending AA or NA meetings in the community.

"Don't give up. Don't leave until the miracle happens," is the cheer they spread to residents, Ms. Taylor said.

Aftercare is offered through St. Croix Mission Outreach, Inc. Both agencies frequently collaborate to get clients into treatment or into sober living, according to Mission Outreach's Program Director Chainie Lang, in interview with VIC.

Despite the setbacks The Village faced a year ago, "We are at a place where we are definitely able to give our motto out and do what we say we are going to do: 'Uplifting the human spirit.' We plan on doing that in every direction that we can, from our young to the elderly," said Ms. Taylor. The Village is hoping to provide substance abuse treatment services to adolescents and mental health services to the homeless population in the near future, in response to dire community needs.

When does substance abuse start?

Substance abuse does not commonly start in adulthood. Clients often have a history of childhood trauma or abuse and experimentation with alcohol and marijuana from a young age, Ms. Taylor explained.

The Village's two prevention programs are extended to adolescents, young adults, and the entire family.

Progressive Lifestyles is a substance abuse prevention program for young people, ages 12 through 24, who participate in the Prime For Life online course, team up in peer advocate groups for discussions, raise awareness on community issues, conduct HIV/ Hep C testing, volunteer and earn community service hours. They receive a \$25 gift card for their participation.

"There are lots of opportunities for reflection: thinking about their lives, future, and values," according to program coordinator Kariel Granger.

Since February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, The Prevention Program partnered with the Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council (VIDVSAC) to build community awareness around teen dating violence during Respect Week— February 8-12— via The Village's [Facebook](#) page.

"Parents don't know their children are in relationships. We want teens to know the signs of teen violence and know their rights although the V.I. doesn't have a law to protect teens," expressed Darlene Springer, St. Croix outreach coordinator of VIDVSAC, in an interview with the Consortium.

The second program scheduled to be live in March 2021 is The Strength Project. This evidence-based program will target children ages 6 to 17 with parents to help the family unit grow closer, improve communication, problem solve, and provide parenting skills. It is a free 7-week virtual program that is funded by the local government.

Xawntoia Franklin, program trainer and owner of Franklin Solutions, broke down how sessions will be conducted. Each session is two hours: In the first hour, parents meet separately to learn complementary skills. The family is put together in the second hour to practice those skills. Thereafter, specific skills are practiced at home.

This method of intervention is far more effective than traditional family counseling in which parents and children are counseled separately in a vacuum and expected to practice on their own at home, Ms. Franklin said. "During the seven weeks, they're being supported to implement techniques together. Follow up sessions will be held."

Resources

For treatment or employment at The Village, call (340) 719-9900.

For more information on the prevention programs, call (340) 718-3310 or visit the Prevention Office at #181B Richmond.

Teens can visit this [website](#) to learn more about cultivating healthy dating relationships.

For more information on aftercare programs, sober living, off-island treatment options, or support for families, contact Mission Outreach at (340) 778-4357.

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are held live and virtually. Click [here](#) for times and location by island or call the answering service at (340) 690-5283.

Narcotics Anonymous meetings are held weekly outside at the Canegata Ballpark on St. Croix on Saturday evenings at 5 pm.