

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Human Services Safely Reopens Senior Centers on All Three Islands With Entertainment, Other Activities

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The V.I. Dept. of Human Services announced Monday that the Division of Senior Citizen Affairs (SCA), Socio-Recreation Program safely re-opened the senior centers on all three island.

All three senior centers were temporarily closed for the health and safety of our seniors during the Covid-19 pandemic, D.H.S. said.

"Due to the restrictions being lifted in the territory, all locations have begun providing socio-recreation activities to our elderly Virgin Islanders," D.H.S. said. The STRIVE Center located at the DHS Knud Hansen Complex in St. Thomas reopened on March 22 with a total number of 33 participants; the Adrian Center located in St. John re-opened on March 29 with a total of 28; and at the Christiansted Lagoon Pavilion (temporary site) the St. Croix Richmond Center opened on April 1 with a total of 75 territorial participants.

D.H.S. said all three senior center reopening activities featured lively music and dance. Cultural dancers and a Mocko Jumbie sponsored by the Department of Tourism kicked off the St. Thomas STRIVE Center event with homage to the territory's cultural heritage. There was also live entertainment provided by a live Soca Band on St. Thomas and local foods to please the seniors. By afternoon, the Fraco Truck was onsite to provide sweet treats for everyone, D.H.S. said. The Department of Health's Mobile Health Van was on hand at both the STRIVE and Adrian Senior Center Reopening events to provide free Covid-19 Testing, vaccinations and booster shots.

The St. John Adrian Senior Center began their reopening with a blessing of the newly reconstructed V.I. Housing Authority George Simmonds Terrace Community Center. The Adrian Center is housed in the new facility in Estate Adrian on St. John. The Adrian Center Seniors were treated to the sounds of a live jazz band and heart-felt hymns sung by everyone, according to the release. A Tai Chi instructor was on hand to round out the day with the Adrian Seniors resuming their physical body stretches and breathing.

The St. Croix Richmond Senior Center activities reopened with music and dancing to the sounds of a live DJ. "Our three Senior Vans brought seniors from across St. Croix to the beautiful Christiansted Lagoon Pavilion for a day of tasty local food and drinks-which included Soupe and Potato Salad and a variety of sweet treats," D.H.S. said. "The Seniors were indeed extremely happy to be reunited and they sang, talked, and danced throughout the day."

According to the release, socio-recreation plays a key role in the well-being of older adults and in enhancing their quality of life. For seniors, as for people of all ages, involvement in socio-recreation activities can satisfy a variety of needs. Among the important benefits of socio-recreation for the senior population are increased health and fitness, opportunities for socializing which enhance mental and emotional well-being, using skills and talents developed throughout their lifetime, and learning new skills. The senior population in the territory is quite varied, with a diversity of interests, strengths, and abilities, D.H.S. said.

"I applaud and give thanks the committed DHS Division of Senior Citizens Affairs Staff, who diligently worked to stay connected with their Seniors throughout the temporary closure of the Senior Centers during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic and has now successfully and safely opened all Centers. They are our heroes!" stated D.H.S. Commissioner Causey-Gomez stated.

D.H.S. said there is more excitement to come as the DHS Division of Senior Citizens Affairs gears up for observance of Older Americans Month (OAM) in May in coordination with the Bryan administration, other governmental departments, churches, and private agencies.

Every May, the federal U.S. Department of Health, and Human Services Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads the nation's observance of OAM. In 2022, ACL will be focusing on aging in place – how older adults can plan to stay in their homes and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. The 2022 OAM theme is Age My Way, and it is an opportunity for all of us to explore the many ways older adults can remain in and be actively involved with their communities.

St. Croix:

- Mr. Alvin Milligan, Assistant Administrator, SCA
- E-Mail: Alvin.Milligan@dhs.vi.gov
- Phone: (340) 725-5756

St. Thomas/Water Island:

- Ms. Shereese Jurgen, Director of Therapeutic Recreation
- E-Mail: Shereese.Jurgen@dhs.vi.gov
- Phone: (340) 643-1014 or (340) 774-0930 Ext. 4248/4251

St. John:

- Ms. Abigail Hendricks, Adrian Center Project Director
- E-Mail: Abigail.Hendricks@dhs.vi.gov
- Phone: (340) 776-6144