



Believe...

St. Croix Foundation

A Message from Our President



Like so many residents in the Caribbean, all of us at St. Croix Foundation took a deep breath and sighed with relief on November 30 as we marked the end of another hurricane season. Luckily for the Virgin Islands, we came out of this season relatively unscathed! That was not the case for our neighbors in the Bahamas.

While we are hypersensitive about the threats afoot in this new normal of stronger, more destructive weather systems, we believe our Territory has an unprecedented opportunity to transform so many systems that are on the brink.

On a very personal note, I can't recall being so optimistic about the future of this island than I do now. For over 16 years, I have witnessed hurricanes (and hope) come and go without any radical changes in the Territory's underlying systems. I should not be optimistic. But over the past year, our entire Team at St. Croix Foundation has been in awe of progress being made by our Partners in Service. We are also deeply grateful for the generosity of our growing cadre of local and national champions!

Of course, our hope is buttressed by where the Foundation sits in this Community today. Every day we are surrounded by social service warriors; by humanitarians and by visionaries. We get to be a part of so much of what's working in our Community. We get to see grace every day and we get to see REAL progress being made.

There are so many secrets being revealed about our Territory since the Hurricanes: that poverty is equally juxtaposed against abundant natural beauty and deep social networks, and that crisis and despair can be undermined by unbridled fortitude and resilience. While we encourage everyone in our Community to never stop challenging dysfunctional old systems, we want to urge residents to dedicate more focus on helping to build fortified new ones.

Through our newsletter, we hope to encourage more people to take a chance and join us in our optimism about the future. Things are not so daunting if we lead with Love; if we make a commitment to rebuild differently—not just new infrastructure but new *systems*. Most importantly, we invite everyone to just BELIEVE that we can make a difference - a positive, sustained difference - if we do it *Together!*

Deanna J. ...

Since September 2017 when Category 5 Hurricanes Irma and Maria hit the Virgin Islands, our Community continues to face challenges that require the collective investments of every sector (public, private and civic) to overcome. True to progressive place-based philanthropy, St. Croix Foundation for Community Development is nurturing sustainable resilience by utilizing data to inform our investments and cultivating cross-sector collaborations as the cornerstone of social impact. We are pleased to report that our work continues to gain traction. Join us in active philanthropy!

The Old New Alexander Theater!

St. Croix Foundation is excited to report that we have been officially approved for Phase 1 of a Hazard Mitigation Reimbursable Grant through FEMA to renovate and retrofit the Old Alexander Theater in historic Sunday Market Square!

The *New* Alexander Theater will become St. Croix's first state-of-the-art, indoor performing arts center and conference convening space serving as critical economic stimulus in downtown Christiansted. It will also serve as the only downtown Christiansted Community Disaster Shelter capable of sheltering upwards of 300 people.

Beginning with the comprehensive renovation of the Square's roadway and several other properties over the past 20 years, the theater has been a central component of St. Croix Foundation's overarching Vision for the Square. As a 12,000 square foot historic landmark, perched in the heart of Christiansted town, Alexander Theater was once a thriving movie theater and the center of economic activity from the mid 1950's to late-1900s. The restoration of the Theater will be one of the single most transformative Community Development initiatives that we have undertaken to date and will impact the economic vitality and social fabric of our historic downtown.

The Foundation is establishing a coalition of donors to invest in our Theater Revolving Fund which will enable us to fully execute Phase I and II of this Legacy Project. Contact the Foundation today to learn more about this project and about how you can help make this vision a reality!



Workforce Development & Community Resilience Hubs

As St. Croix Foundation moves into the long-term phase of our hurricane recovery efforts, two fundamental principles have governed our planning and programming- *equity* and *sustainability*. In 2018, when we first conceived our solar and workforce development initiative, those principles informed every facet of programming.

Today, our Solar-Supported Community Center Project is on the move! Serving 9 students aged 18-28, our 5-month National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) course is offering intense classroom instruction in Core Construction, Electrical Levels 1-4 and Solar PV Installation. When the curriculum component of the program is complete in November, **these students will become the first formal class of certified solar installers in the Territory.** The students will then go on to solarize 4 community centers on St. Croix including the Caribbean Center for Boys & Girls in Frederiksted and Flamboyant Garden Seniors Independent Living Community Center. These centers will in turn become resiliency hubs for vulnerable communities, providing energy independence and greater operational capacity to serve residents.

Thanks to generous Philanthropic Partners, SCF has secured the necessary funding to solarize 3 of the 4 community centers. We invite additional funders to **please contact the Foundation to become partners on this high impact resiliency project!**

To date, this initiative is made possible through funding support from the VI Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Board, GlobalGiving, and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy among other generous local and national partners. For more information call 340.773.9898.



Farm Tiendas for Small Business Development & Food Security

Underscoring the need for economic resilience for small businesses and having assessed St. Croix's most pressing needs immediately following the storms, the Foundation quickly identified St. Croix's agricultural industry as a priority. As a fundamental component of island resilience, our Territory's *food security* cannot be overstated. Working in conjunction with VI Good Food Coalition, St. Croix Foundation (with lead funding from Coca-Cola Foundation) is spearheading a radical approach to sustainable farming.

Modeled after Coca-Cola's "Pop-Tiendas" for small mom & pop shops in Puerto Rico, our customized Farm Tienda Project is awarding 7 local farmers an 8x16 foot, eco-friendly steel container farm stand or "Farm Tienda" to help bring our farmers' businesses back online after the 2017 hurricanes. Criteria for awards prioritized a farmer's capacity to grow food, proximity to vulnerable and underserved neighborhoods, and commitment to capturing data on the benefits, usage, and impact of Tiendas over the course of the first pilot year.

SCF's Farm Tiendas will also be outfitted with solar panels, Wi-Fi, and potable water to allow farmers to stabilize and expand their businesses while also providing community resilience hubs for residents in neighboring communities in the aftermath of future disasters. And, in demonstration of our holistic approach to community development, Farm Tienda solar systems will be installed by our first class of students in our Solar-Supported Community Center Project! **The Foundation invites residents to be on the lookout for our Farm Tiendas around the island, to shop local, and to BELIEVE IN LOCAL FARMS!**

This project is funded by Coca Cola, GlobalGiving and Cruzan Rum.



Strengthening Nonprofits

As a place-based community philanthropy, St. Croix Foundation is mindful that to achieve sustainable growth and real resilience, strategic investments must be directed at the cadre of nonprofit organizations that are providing stable social services and are filling critical service gaps that our government alone cannot. We firmly believe that the Territory's Civic Sector represents a viable pathway to healthier social systems in the Virgin Islands. Having assessed the impact of the 2017 hurricanes on nonprofits within the first 60 days after the storms through our Nonprofit Disaster Recovery & Capacity Assessment, the data reflected that more was being demanded of nonprofits to meet urgent social service needs even as funding support contracted. In response, the Foundation has expanded our civic support efforts to nurture an even stronger nonprofit sector for the future.

The Nonprofit Consortium

In 2014, St. Croix Foundation began convening nonprofits on St. Croix in response to the closure of HOVENSA, which left the Big Island reeling with expanded social needs and dwindling resources to support those needs. Recognizing that our nonprofits must be strong for our Community to be healthy, we launched our Nonprofit Consortium in 2016 with the Vision of both streamlining and amassing our civic sector's collective efforts.

With many critical government systems in the Virgin Islands on the verge of collapse before the storms and completely broken afterwards, the Consortium became key to serving residents and building resilience. Today, after just 3 years, our Consortium now has an official membership of 27 nonprofits with another 40-plus who regularly sit at the table. The Foundation has invested over \$180,000 into the Consortium, providing trainings, developing collateral, hosting professional development convenings, and providing access to grants and national funders.

Our Consortium has taught us a lot. We have learned that, in our community, many of our social service organizations (particularly those on the frontlines) are fulfilling the role of municipal government; but they get little respect and are often regarded as *needy charities*. **In reality, many nonprofits are stabilizing forces in our community. They hold Vision steady; they advocate for public policy; they save lives; and they drive social change.** Ultimately, nonprofits play a central role in not just the ECOLOGY of our community, but in the ECONOMY of our community. As such, SCF is committed to supporting our nonprofits holistically, and we invite you to learn more about the work of the Consortium by contacting us at 340.773.9898 or visiting us at www.stxfoundation.com.

We thank GlobalGiving, TEAM, Denali, and our growing roster of local and national partners who recognize the impact of investing in a strong civic sector!

Fiscal Sponsorship

In times of crisis, nonprofit work is often key to ensuring the wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents. For nearly 30 years, St. Croix Foundation has supported nonprofit efforts by serving as a fiscal sponsor. Far different from grantmaking, fiscal sponsorship allows charitable projects to move forward under the Foundation's 501(c)3 status while still maintaining their identity and mission.

In total, the Foundation has served over 200 organizations and, since 2018, has provided sound fiscal management and grant compliance to the St. Croix Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG). When all other government services have been exhausted but a resident is still without a roof, it is the LTRG that is stepping in to ensure our most at-risk and underserved populations have basic needs met. This makes our LTRG a critical piece of the long-term recovery pipeline for all of our People.

Recognizing the importance of the LTRG, the Foundation waived all management fees for the first year of the LTRG's operations, allowing them to build their infrastructure. To date, under the Foundation's 501(c)3 status, the LTRG has rebuilt over 60 homes and served over 400 critical disaster cases. *That's impact.*

Grantmaking

To date, our CARE Grant, funded in part by a generous grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has provided over \$800,000 in strategic grants to over 40 St. Croix based nonprofit organizations and charitable initiatives that offer programs and direct services and which target the most vulnerable and underserved populations affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Grants were awarded for reconstruction, vital programming, and capacity building to strengthen our nonprofits.

One grantee, the Men's Coalition, was awarded funds for its Rites of Passage Program, which engaged 11 of our young boys, ages 7-12, in nearly 150 hours of one-on-one individualized counseling sessions. Students were given the tools for anger management, conflict resolution, healing from trauma, and developing resilience. The program also provided academic enrichment in math, reading, and presentation and communication skills.

Just one example of our strategic grantmaking, our grant awards are specifically designed to collect data and fill immediate needs while also building capacity for the long run.

St. Croix Foundation Welcomes 15-Member AmeriCorps VISTA Team!

This summer, after approximately 400 staff hours of coordination and development of our application, the Foundation was approved for a 15-member VISTA Team to come to St. Croix! Established in 1964, AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) is a program that brings passion and perseverance where the need is greatest. This delegation represents the first VISTA team in the Territory in over 20 years, when the Foundation last hosted VISTAs, and will assist eight Nonprofit Consortium members (including the Foundation).



Our VISTA project was yet another outcome of our Nonprofit Capacity Survey, which revealed that the majority of nonprofits that participated in our assessment reported an increased demand for their services while grappling with few resources post hurricanes. This project will serve to (re)build capacity for local nonprofits as we collectively work toward recovery. With detailed scopes of work and objectives for each organization, this project is being led by St. Croix Foundation, who is also serving as VISTA Team Lead for 7 organizations:

1. Caribbean Centers for Boys & Girls of the Virgin Islands
2. Clean Sweep Frederiksted
3. St. Croix Long-Term Recovery Group
4. St. Croix Montessori
5. Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition
6. St. Croix Landmarks Society
7. Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission

Meet one of our first VISTA team members to arrive on St. Croix! Sinead is a graduate of St. Mary's College with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and has served in the Peace Corps. Sinead is already getting settled at the Caribbean Center for Boys and Girls and we couldn't be more pleased to welcome her!

All the Foundation's VISTAs will assist organizations in developing collateral, conducting outreach, and building internal organizational capacity. In total, this project is expected to impact 8 organizations and over 300 children and families.

For the love of humankind...

How do we do it all? That's a question we are continually asked at St. Croix Foundation. Without an endowment, with a full-time staff of 8, annually we accomplish more than organizations 10 times our size. The secret to our impact is simple: 1) Lead with data; 2) Lean into partnerships; and 3) Leverage every dollar for more than one benefit. Then, of course there are the other competencies we have honed over the years, like staying nimble, learning from our mistakes, and nurturing a culture of innovation. Our philanthropic format isn't easy! But with a devoted Team who believes deeply in philanthropy – in the love of humankind – we make the impossible possible every day. And with each passing year, we are building a growing network of Partners who believe in us, and with us, and who are making deeper investments in the Foundation, in our Consortium of nonprofits, and in our Community.

Today, we pause to say *thank you!* While we still have a long way to go to achieve our Vision of a Sustainable and Healthy Community, it's a journey filled with innovation, optimism, and an unwavering commitment to Equity. And... there are so many ways you can join us! *Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can (and do) make it better!*

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WITH A GIVING HEART

