

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS (CFVI)
RELEASES USVI KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK 2006
'OUR CHILDREN NOW! PROSPERITY IN THE FUTURE'

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands released the US Virgin Islands KIDS COUNT Data Book 2006, "Our Children Now! Prosperity in the Future," at a press conference earlier today. This year's Report provides current data on children and families, as well as data trends in the USVI for the past ten to fifteen years.

"Seven years ago when CFVI produced the first KIDS COUNT Data Book for the USVI, we did so recognizing that if the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands was to really contribute to improving the lives of children and families in our community, we would have to find a way to make the public and policy makers far more aware of who our children are, where they are, and the true circumstances of their lives," said CFVI's Chairman of the Board, Ricardo J. Charaf.

This year's Report shows that in the US Virgin Islands, poverty affects a disproportionately large number of children. The rate of child poverty in the US Virgin Islands has grown to 35.1%, an increase of almost 3% from the previous year.

CFVI's President, Dee Baecher-Brown, added that "Poverty is the single greatest common denominator to all the risk indicators that we measure in KIDS COUNT. Moving children out of poverty improves each measure of child well-being: health and safety, likelihood of success in school, and non-involvement in crime. Moving children out of poverty also positively affects their futures as wage-earning, family-building, and neighborhood-strengthening adults. Included in this year's Data Book are recommendations made by community experts on ways the USVI can address our current rate of child and family poverty.

The strategies discussed include researching models that work successfully, focusing on improving the quality of public education, creating a body of statistical knowledge, talking about the benefits of reducing poverty, educating

the business sector, encouraging influential leaders to speak out on the issue and raising the minimum wage.

“We know what works. We must be committed to providing comprehensive services, strengthening support to all families, strengthening programs promoting skills for youth, and improving programs designed to break the cycle of teenage pregnancy and parenthood and juvenile delinquency. In addition, we need to provide high-quality, comprehensive early child care, better remedial systems to keep students from dropping out of school, increase the availability of health insurance for all children and speak up on behalf of children and families in the Territory,” said Judith Richardson, CFVI’s KIDS COUNT director.

The KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book provides information on child well-being in the US Virgin Islands. Its purpose is to promote dialogue on children’s issues, and community response and action to improve the health, safety and economic status of VI children, from birth to age eighteen.

This KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book is part of a nationwide initiative, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to create a detailed community-by-community picture of the condition of children nationwide. There are now KIDS COUNT projects in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. The Annie E. Casey Foundation annually produces a summary document reporting state-level data and national trends.

Since 2000, the KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book has been compiled and published each year by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization serving the needs of the territory’s children, youth and families.

For more information about the 2006 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book or to obtain a copy of this year’s publication call CFVI at 774-6031 or visit their website, www.cfvi.net.

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