



**St. Croix Foundation for Community Development**  
January 2024 CARE Impact Report

**Caribbean Assistance and Resilience Effort (CARE) Fund**  
**“Emergent Models of Holistic Community Resilience”**

In 2017, when Hurricanes Maria and Irma struck the U.S. Virgin Islands with devastating Cat 5 winds, St. Croix Foundation’s absolute priority was immediate relief for residents. But even as we coordinated a distribution channel for supplies and launched comprehensive grant programs for nonprofits to rebuild, we were keenly aware that natural disasters often exacerbate existing inequities for People who are unseen or dismissed.

Indeed, in the 6 years since the hurricanes, the cumulative effects of these inequities coupled with crippled infrastructure have brought our community to a pivotal tipping point, wherein nearly every aspect of life for our People is compromised. In addition to St. Croix’s school infrastructure still being crippled from the 2017 hurricanes, recent water and soil tests have found high levels of lead and heavy metals. Most challenging of all, our community’s primary healthcare infrastructure (in the form of the only public hospital on island) has been condemned and has been replaced by a modular medical facility.

And so it is that 2024 feels *consequential*. Because, while the issues we confront are multi-layered and complex, St. Croix Foundation’s work, collectively with our nonprofits and with support from Global Giving, is gaining traction.

Since we last reported, our team has been developing a program that empowers residents to understand the quality of their water and air. And, we’ve expanded our Healing Humanities Initiative even further with new partnerships, bringing new opportunities for holistic development rooted in and for our community. We also released our 2023 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book, providing critical data on the condition of our children and their families which intersects with the territory’s future resilience on every front – from climate change to shifts in our population’s demographics.

### **Clear Minds and Clean Water**

Today, although our community continues to face all of the same entrenched socio-economic challenges facing BIPOC communities around the nation - poverty, crumbling infrastructure, crime, and failing healthcare and education systems - over the past five years, these preexisting social vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by a succession of crises: two Category 5 Hurricanes (2017); COVID-19 (2020-Present), and the reopening of a polluting oil refinery (2021). New threats on our horizon now include a new finding of significant amounts of Lead and Copper in our public water supply.

The level of distress that so many residents have dealt with, (particularly those who don’t know how far reaching this crisis is), has been tough to witness. Also, knowing that the territory didn’t see the same level of national philanthropic engagement as somewhere like Flint, makes this all the more isolating and complicated to navigate. Fortunately, one national partner, Panta Rhea Foundation, awarded a grant to our CARE Fund with which SCF and several of our Nonprofit Consortium partners are working together to expand lead testing efforts for vulnerable populations including at an independent living community.



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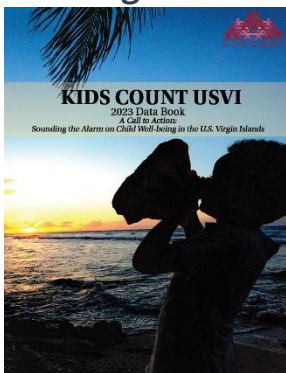
## **New Partnerships and the Evolution of Holistic Community Development.**

*According to the former VI Humanities Council, “The humanities are a way of thinking about and responding to the world - as tools we use to examine and make sense of the human experience in general and our individual experiences in particular. The humanities enable us to reflect upon our lives and ask fundamental questions of value, purpose, and meaning in a rigorous and systemic way.”*

St. Croix Foundation’s comprehensive community development activities are rooted by that tenet and over the past quarter several new national partners have deepened their commitment to and investment in SCF’s holistic community place-keeping agenda. One of those partners, the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York has not only invested in our project but has expanded their support to several of our Nonprofit Consortium Partners.

In the next quarter, we will be engaging a broad cross-section of our cultural arts community to help frame the conceptual design and utility of the space. Our Grand Vision for the project is to begin to reclaim a more complete story of our Place, to not only preserve the role that enslaved African bodies and minds played in the construction of edifices but, more intentionally, to discover what new narratives can be unearthed about who they were; and what skills and stories they possessed prior to enslavement. SCF also seeks to explore who the existing People of our Place can be in the future envisioned through the lens of the African Freeman and not the European Colonizer. Making those connections and building the bridges between the past and the future through the design and purposing of the properties in SMS is the exciting endeavor before us as we challenge all of our project partners to remain open to joining us on an exploratory journey of Ancestral remembrance, revolution, and **renaissance**.

## **Creating a Case for Data and Our Community’s Children: Kids Count:**



The Foundation’s KIDS COUNT Team released our 3rd KIDS COUNT Databook, during a well-attended virtual presentation. While the initial media coverage was limited as the release coincided with Holiday festivities, in the past two weeks, there has been substantial coverage and conversation about the Kids Count Report.

- [St. Croix Foundation releases 2023 Kids Count USVI data | Island Life | virginislandsdailynews.com](https://www.islandlife.com/news/st-croix-foundation-releases-2023-kids-count-usvi-data)
- [Kids Count Even More as Their Numbers Drop | St. Thomas Source \(stthomassource.com\)](https://www.stthomassource.com/news/kids-count-even-more-as-their-numbers-drop)
- [Crisis in the USVI: Soaring Youth Violence, Educational Decline, and an Aging Population, According to Report \(viconsortium.com\)](https://www.viconsortium.com/news/crisis-in-the-usvi-soaring-youth-violence-educational-decline-and-an-aging-population-according-to-report)

## **Resilience and the Future...**

Our CARE Fund was initially established in response to the 2017 hurricanes, but when COVID-19 gripped the world in the midst of our recovery from the storms, we made the CARE Fund a permanent fund that would support community-rooted resilience through grantmaking and targeted programming no matter what kind of storm. Today, as we work with our local nonprofits, government partners, and corporate citizens, we are mindful that resilience is directly proportional to the depth of relationships and connectivity across sectors that exists. Sustaining and evolving these relationships requires a central force of core support like our CARE Fund.

*For more information on any of St. Croix Foundation’s CARE Fund programming and grantmaking, please contact us directly.*