



**For Immediate Release**

***Event Release and Photos***

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**THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) CELEBRATES NATIONAL CAREGIVERS DAY WITH DONATION FROM ROTARY HARBORSIDE**



*(From Left to Right)* Nicole Polydore (DHS), Jennifer Logie (DHS), Sherleen Illidge (DHS), Arleen Evans-O'Reilly (DHS), Marcellino Ventura (Rotary), Lionel Downer (Rotary), Alvin Milligan (DHS), Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez (DHS), Kristina Vanderberg (Rotary), Ben Mshila (Rotary), Sandra Gerard-Leung (Rotary)

**(US VIRGIN ISLANDS)** – The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (DHS) celebrated National Caregivers Day with a gracious donation of 50 hand-stitched bags and sanitary supplies from The Rotary Club of St. Croix – Harborside.



Rotary Harborside President Lionel Downer presented the donation to the DHS Family Caregivers Program staff at the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged on St. Croix alongside other members of the club.

“It is our pleasure at the Rotary Club of St. Croix - Harborside to present these bags, lovingly hand-stitched by club Vice-President Sandra Gerard- Leung, for the caregivers at the Department of Human Services,” Downer said.

Downer, recalling from personal experience, said he now recognizes the vital role caregivers provide after his mother underwent triple bypass surgery. He described the essential daily activities that seniors often need help with that often go overlooked. “Who’s going to help with the shopping and personal care? Those are the kinds of things we don’t always think about,” Downer said.

Sandra Gerard-Leung, vice-president of Rotary-Harborside, spent several weeks hand-stitching the home-made bags with a variety of fabrics such as canvas, denim, burlap and other eco-friendly materials. Gerard-Leung, who was a caregiver herself, knew she wanted to do something for the Caregivers at DHS months into the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This gift is for the caregivers and the homemakers who go out every day to help someone else without thinking of themselves. It is a thank you to those caregivers and homemakers who still go out to help others during these COVID-19 times,” Gerard-Leung said.

Members of Rotary-Harborside also partnered with The Market STX and Rotary International - District 7020 to stock the caregivers with cleaning supplies such as bleach, paper towels, hand sanitizer, and dozens of other sanitation products.

“As a Rotarian and as Commissioner for DHS, Rotary’s motto, *Service above self*, is what we live by at DHS. I know for a fact that my staff goes above and beyond their job descriptions to provide care to our most vulnerable. They go into situations on a daily basis where they see things that most people don’t want to see. There are so many people that are alone now who are not able to care for themselves and have no family or friends. From the Department of Human Services, I’m extremely thankful from the bottom of my heart for the thoughtful gifts from Rotary Harborside,” DHS Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez said.

The Family Caregivers Support Program (FCSP) is housed under the DHS Senior Citizens Affairs Division (SCA) and offers support for individuals who care for family members aged 60 and above, as well as assistance for seniors aged 55 and above who care for grandchildren or other custodial family members in their care.

The DHS FCSP program aims to empower family caregivers by providing information on gaining access to services; offering support groups to provide emotional support and education about caregiving; respite care assistance; and supplemental goods and services to care for their loved



ones. Family Caregiver Support Programs play an important role in helping to reduce caregiver depression, anxiety, and stress as well as enable caregivers to provide care longer, thereby avoiding or delaying the need for costly institutional care.

To learn more about the DHS Family Caregiver Support program, please contact (340) 774-0930 ext. 4484 (St. Thomas/ St. John District) or (340) 772-7100 ext. 7056 (St. Croix District).

*The Department of Human Services (VIDHS) exists to provide social services to members in our community with diverse needs. In times of national uncertainty and hardship we act as a safety-net and exist to inspire hope and empower change through non-judgmental, quality delivery of needed services and resources. Please visit the Department of Human Services website, [www.dhs.gov.vi](http://www.dhs.gov.vi) for more information.*

For more information on COVID-19, please visit our website, [covid19usvi.com](http://covid19usvi.com), or text COVID19USVI to 888777. To report a suspected COVID-19 case, call (340) 712-6299 or (340) 776-1519.

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