



ids

## Media Release

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## **Kids First! and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands partner to improve early learning on St. John**

Kids First! and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands have announced an initiative designed to improve early learning opportunities on St. John. The program, called “**Planning for Success—a community conversation about early learning on St. John,**” will consist of a series of forums with members of the St. John community who have an interest in enhancing the quality and availability of early learning experiences for all children on St. John. These meetings, conducted by experts in early learning and child development, will allow parents, educators, day care providers, and community leaders to discuss “best practices” that can be applied to St. John and will prioritize actions that can enhance St. John’s capability to provide a quality learning environment for our younger children and prepare them for success. The desired **outcome** of these meetings will be consensus around a prioritized set of actions the St. John community can take to enhance the education opportunity for our youngest children.

Commenting on this project, Bruce Claflin, President of Kids First! said, “The years from birth through age 5 are critically important in the development of our children. If our community can enhance the quality of early learning and make it more affordable and available, we will profoundly improve the likelihood of success for our children in school and beyond”

Dee Baecher-Brown, President of CFVI said, “We are thrilled to have this opportunity to partner with Kids First! to enhance the quality of early child care on the island of St. John. We expect that the “Planning for Success” initiative will help to create a model to continue community conversations on early child care throughout the Territory.”

**Planning for Success—a community conversation about early learning on St. John** will consist of a series of focus groups during the month of October. These discussions will be targeted to specific groups who have an interest in early learning initiatives including parents, teachers, administrators, community organizers and religious leaders. The sessions will be conducted by Elizabeth Jaeger, Ph.D, a professor from Saint Joseph's University, PA, and Eleanor Hirsh, M.Ed. director of the Community Foundation's early learning initiative, The Family Connection. Jaeger and Hirsh have direct experience in community based programs that have enhanced early learning both in the Virgin Islands and beyond. Based upon a rich dialogue with each interested group, a prioritized set of proposals will be developed around which parents, early childhood teachers and care providers, schools and other community-based organizations can provide support. The goal is to substantially enhance the quality and availability of early learning opportunities for our youngest children so that they can be better prepared for success in school and life. It is expected that the final recommendations will be available by the end of November. For more information about the project, please contact the Community Foundation at 340-774-6031

#### About Kids First!

The mission of Kids First! is to support quality education for all the children of St. John in a safe and nurturing environment. Kids First! believes that supporting quality education is the single most important contribution we can make to keep St. John the special place it is today. By providing a quality education for our children, they will mature into responsible citizens, enjoying the fruits of a happy and productive life while providing St. John the leadership it needs for the future. Learn more by visiting our web site at [www.kidsfirststj.org](http://www.kidsfirststj.org).

#### About CFVI

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands was established in 1990 to provide resources and opportunities for donors and non-profits to enhance the lives of children youth and families in the U. S. Virgin Islands. The collaboration with Kids First is an initiative of The Family Connection (TFC), which is the Community Foundation's program to enhance the early childhood environment in the USVI. The Family Connection has an ambitious agenda including strategies to strengthen the community child care and early education infrastructure in the U.S. Virgin Islands. With assets in excess of \$6 million, CFVI has more than 90 named funds which provide scholarships, grants and supporting programs in the USVI. CFVI also produces the annual KIDS COUNT report on the status of children and families in the USVI. Individuals or businesses wishing to know more about CFVI should call 774-6031, or visit our website at [www.cfvi.net](http://www.cfvi.net).

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