What is a healthy relationship? This is a question that the St. Thomas, Community Outreach Specialist, Jeanette John-Baptiste is challenging teenagers to understand during the month of February which is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. Many people, young and not so young, are unable to define a healthy relationship because most of us have not experienced one or have never been exposed to healthy relationships. Unfortunately, many of us did not see healthy relationships exemplified in our homes or surroundings. During the month of February DVSAC will be talking about the problem of teen dating abuse and highlighting what is a healthy relationship. In addition to directly working with youth in the schools, DVSAC is planning some community awareness initiatives to increase awareness. The first outreach project is a series of engaging and thoughtful public service announcements directed toward young people and their families. The second initiative is a motorcade on St. Thomas on Sunday, February 28 at XXXX beginning at XXXX. This motorcade is to bring awareness to both Teen Dating Violence and Child Abuse which February is awareness month for both issues. If you would information regarding DVSAC providing a presentation or information on participating in the upcoming events, please contact Jeanette John-Baptiste at 340-774-0144
Per the CDC, teen dating violence (TDV), also referred to as “dating violence,” affects millions of teens in the U.S. each year. It occurs between two people in a close relationship and includes:

- Physical violence
  Examples: Hitting, kicking, pushing

- Sexual violence
  Examples: Forcing a partner to take part in a sex act

- Psychological abuse
  Examples: Name-calling, insulting, Threatening

- Stalking
  Examples: Repeated unwanted or threatening phone calls or messages, showing up unwanted

TDV can happen in person or electronically including repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner online without their permission. Teens often think some behaviors like teasing and name-calling are a “normal” part of a relationship, but these behaviors can become abusive and develop into serious forms of violence.

Nearly 1 in 11 female and about 1 in 15 male high school students report having experienced physical dating violence in the last year.

About 1 in 9 female and 1 in 36 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.

Unhealthy or violent relationships can have severe short and long-term effects on a developing teen. For example, youth who are victims of TDV are more likely to:

- Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs, and alcohol.
- Think about suicide

Teen dating violence is preventable. Supporting the development of healthy, respectful, and non-violent relationships can help reduce the occurrence of TDV and prevent its harmful effects. During the pre-teen and teen years, it is important for youth to begin learning the skills needed to create and maintain healthy relationships. These skills include things like how to manage feelings and how to communicate in a healthy way. Contact the VI Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council for additional information and trainings and activities for your organization at www.VIDVSAC.org; or call office:340-719-0144 or 340-473-5277.

Jeanette Jon-Baptiste, Community Outreach Specialist, St Thomas
On Monday, January 11th the VI Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council hosted a discussion panel on zoom. The day celebrated human trafficking awareness and the proclamation made in its honor. The distinguished panel of guests included representatives from legal, law enforcement, education, direct support service providers and so many more. We were pleased with the high turnout and spirited discussions and plan to continue the momentum forward. Our deepest thanks to our panel guests and participants.

DVSAC Faith Based Committee supports initiatives to end domestic and sexual violence within faith based communities.

The purpose of DVSAC’s Faith Based Committee is to collaborate with the Faith Based community to create awareness, initiatives and events to support the goal of ending domestic and sexual violence in the territory.

We are currently seeking Faith Based Leaders, Faith Based Department heads, Auxiliary leaders and other members of the Faith Based Community to participate in one monthly meeting which will be held for one hour each third Tuesday of each month at either 10:00 am or 6:00 pm. Contact Kalyn at 340-774-0144 or Kalyn@VIDVSAC.net.
Join us at the Park!!        Hey St John....
Find us at our table every two weeks, the second and fourth
Thursdays 10am to 2pm ... weather permitting at
The Frank Powell Park
Join us for education and free stuff!!!

January was National Stalking Awareness Month and Human Trafficking Awareness Month. I can re-
member when we used to refer to “that crazy boyfriend or girlfriend” that obsessively followed the
object of their “love” around and showed up unexpectantly and uninvited, sometimes making a scene
and declaring their undying love. We now have a name for it...stalking. And it is against the law.
We assume we do not have a problem with human trafficking but not surprisingly, there have been
instances of human trafficking. Yohanna Gonzalez-McFarlane, 39, of the Dominican Republic, entered
an agreement with prosecutors and pleaded guilty to four counts of bringing undocumented individu-
als into the United States for financial gain, and transportation for prostitution. McFarlane “recruited
women from impoverished countries and arranged to have them smuggled to St. Thomas. She forced
them to engage in commercial sex at the nite club, she owned in St. Thomas called the Underground.
One of her victims was 17 years old.

Human trafficking is the modern day version of human slave trade that so many of our ancestors ex-
perienced. The use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act con-
stitutes human trafficking.

So we find ourselves under siege, living in the midst of two pandemics, COVID19 and the pandemic of
violence. We know that social distancing, masking, sanitizing and vaccines are the key to controlling
COVID19. Unfortunately, we are not as clear on how to stem the rising tide of violence on St. Croix
and in the VI. Whether you are in the habit of making new years resolutions or not, 2021 might be a
good year to start. What do you have to lose? In 2021, resolve to:
get help if you feel you want to hurt someone
call 911 if you have been hurt or afraid you will be hurt
support the services and programs that help victims and perpetrators of violence

Some of the local organizations working to eliminate violence are:
DVSAC      340-719-0144      Women’s Coalition of St. Croix      340-773-9272
Qiyamah Rahman, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, VI DVSAC