



CERC-SON-UVI

# A RICH VI NEWSLETTER

## HSRP-VI Year II Highlights—Part I

Noreen Michael, PhD

### Notable Tidbits:

- The Human Services Research Partnership: Virgin Islands (HSRP-VI) has a Memorandum of Cooperative Agreement with the V.I. Department of Human Services.
- The Partnership roster has included current and former Head Start and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families clients.
- Members of the Core Research Team will be sharing best practice about utilizing the CBPR framework for the Environmental Scan Report at the National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC) in Washington DC in June 2018.

**THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP:** Year II of the Human Services Research Partnership: US Virgin Islands (HSRP-VI) was an eventful one! In the first half of Year II, the Research Partnership continued to be engaged. First, the Partnership took a significant step, with the help of our CBPR consultant, Dr. Janine Jurkowski, with the development of Guiding Principles for the Partnership. Partners also attended quarterly meetings, and during the second quarter meeting, Partners were actively engaged in the determination of the focus for a research project for the TANF program.



**RESEARCH ACTIVITY:** The HSRP-VI completed substantial data collection activities in sup-

port of the an environmental scan study. Additionally, work on the *Catalog of Secondary Sources* was finalized.

**COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT, & DISSEMINATION:** There was significant activity in this area in the first half of Year II. First, seven Partnership members, along with the project’s CBPR consultant presented a panel entitled ‘*An Application of the CBPR Approach to Social Determinants of Health in the USVI: An Interactive Dialogue*’ at CERC’s Eighth Annual Health Disparities Institute in October 2015. Additionally, members of the Research Team participated in an information session on WGOD, to provide updates on the environmental scan study and the overall project. Finally, the project’s microsite was updated with a release highlighting Year I activities; a Fact Sheet on a research project, and the Catalog of Secondary Sources.

### SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERSHIP MEMBER



**MOLETO A. SMITH, JR.** [EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ST. THOMAS EAST END MEDICAL CENTER CORPORATION]— *The St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation (STEEMCC), a federally qualified health center (FQHC), partners with many agencies, and this partnership being especially significant. STEEMCC is tasked with providing cost effective, efficient and comprehensive health care services aimed at improving the well-being of all patients. As the executive director, it is especially gratifying to collaborate with the VI Human Services Research Partnership and we remain committed to this project.*

### SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECT ASSISTANT



**Tatiana Green** [Student- Project Assistant]— *I am delighted to be a part of the HSRP-VI Team, because I am given the opportunity to help make a difference to in the lives of Head Start/Early Head Start clients. Working for the past year as the project assistant for the ongoing projects undertaken by the Human Service Research Partnership, I have gotten the opportunity to provide support to the core team by assisting with the planning of partnership meetings, and management and organization of instruments and data related to the projects. Additionally, I have gained knowledge and awareness of the different ongoing research projects for the US Virgin Islands, which is done in an effort to improve the well-being for Virgin Islanders who are part of the Head/Early Head Start clientele. As a result of my experience with the HSRP-VI, I have enhanced my skill set, my professionalism as an individual building up my career skills, and increasing my level of readiness as a young individual venturing into the world of work.*

### Inside this issue:

- Highlights of Year II: HSRP-VI [Part I] 1
- Spotlight on Partnership Members 1
- Notable Tidbits 1
- Reflection on HSRP-VI Post-hurricanes Irma and Maria 2
- Images of the UVI Post-hurricanes 2

## REFLECTION: WHAT HAPPENS TO RESEARCH AFTER TWO CATEGORY FIVE HURRICANES MAKE LANDFALL? E. ARACELIS FRANCIS, PHD

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On Thursday, September 4, 2017 at the regular meeting of the HSRP core team, our agenda included restarting the TANF research project with a focus on St Croix due to staff shortages and changes on St. Thomas. Additionally, the team was excited about getting the Head Start (HS) Parent Engagement project off the ground. One week later, by Wednesday, September 10, 2017 we thanked God for sparing our lives and began surveying the damage from Hurricane Irma. UVI was wrecked, our office in Quarters B had lost its roof and there water was everywhere.

There was little left to salvage as we surveyed the destruction of CERC, our research home. Hurricane Irma had left damage and destruction in its wake. Before we could fully accept the impact of that storm and pick ourselves up to plan next steps, Hurricane Maria struck St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix, leaving more people homeless and in shelters and more destruction in its path.

Our DHS partners, who suffered similar damage as the research team, were nonetheless assuming the major responsibility to care for the storms' survivors. How could we even think about our research projects amid this destruction? We were without telephones, electricity, office space, equipment, internet and our islands were devastated. Travel was difficult due to blocked roads. Long lines for food, fuel, cash, ice, water etc made it difficult to satisfy basic needs. Life as we knew it before Hurricanes Irma and Maria was over!

Well, not quite, because the research needs were still there and may even be greater in the aftermath of the hurricanes. So the team had a new mission and a new task. In consultation with our project officer, we brainstormed about how we would move forward with our research agenda given our new reality.

We quickly refocused and settled on two immediate aims: holding our scheduled partnership meeting and connecting with our stakeholders and reaching out to those who were able to communicate by cell phone. Coming out of these meetings, we had a new focus for our research. One would be another environmental scan to determine the post hurricane world; second, we would assess the impact of the devastation on clients and staff and lessons learned that could be used for the next disaster, be it hurricanes, tsunamis or flooding. Now more than ever it is time to focus on a RICH-VI.

We're on the Web!  
<http://uvi.edu/academics/nursing/cerc/default.aspx>

### STAFF OF THE HSRP-VI

Lead PI: Noreen Michael, PhD  
 Co-PI: Gloria B. Callwood, PhD, RN, FAAN  
 Co-Investigator: Janis M. Valmond, MS, DrPH  
 Post-Doctoral Research Fellow: Deborah E. Brown, PhD  
 Project Coordinator, Asha DeGannes, PhD  
 Research Associate: E. Aracelis Francis, PhD  
 Student Assistant/Researcher: Tatiana Green, AA

### Scenes from UVI St. Thomas Campus Post-Hurricanes Irma and Maria



Images Left -Right: Quarters B, former home of HSRP-VI Project. The main office of CERC; View of the 2nd floor; Tree uprooted near the Library (STT); an area at the ACC strewn with debris.