

DVSAC — Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council — voted Best Non-Profit Organization

Congratulations to Khnuma Simmonds-Esannason, Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council. Thanks to this forward-thinking leader and the hardworking staff, DVSAC has been recognized by the community for its many invaluable services.

Stated mission of the organization is: "To coordinate education, prevention, and response efforts in order to reduce the incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence to make these crimes socially and culturally unacceptable in the USVI."

For 2017, readers of the Virgin Islands Daily News voted DVSAC the Best Non-Profit Organization on all three islands: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix. Additionally, DVSAC was selected to receive the Blue Ribbon plaque for Best Social Service Outreach on St. John.

Established initially in 1987, DVSAC was formed by the Women's Coalition of St. Croix. Articles of Incorporation were signed in 1997 by founding members on St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix and in 2013, DVSAC became an independent territorial organization.

Since accepting her challenging post four years ago, significant

strides have been made at DVSAC, in part, because Khnuma has taken a decidedly positive approach to important issues. By promoting fresh ideas such as the 'Healthy Relationships' pledge campaign, the language of communication is upbeat, focused and crystal clear.

In November of 2016, DVSAC took another significant step, opening the doors to a dedicated St. Thomas office. Staffed by two DVSAC Outreach Specialists — Lynette Magras and Jeanette John-Baptiste — a third member, Simone Wheatley, works with the organization's People's Court Watch Program on St. Thomas.

"Khnuma is based on St. Croix but visits our St. Thomas office regularly," commented Lynette, explaining that open house events are ongoing forms of community interaction. Lynette further emphasized, "Whatever you tell us, everything is completely confidential," she said, adding "We know how to listen."

Lynette first became familiar with DVSAC in 2004. "My sister works at Human Services. Through a friend of hers, I realized the relevance of this organization. I knew I wanted to help others." Joining DVSAC was a perfect fit for the caring professional. Deflecting the spotlight, Lynette gave high



Lynette Magras is the DVSAC Community Outreach Specialist for St. John and also works in the new St. Thomas office at Fortress Mall.

From supporting and promoting programs that empower victims to conducting educational efforts, DVSAC is committed to seeking solid solutions to multi-faceted issues

education presentations, DVSAC also provides training to the Family Resource Center, the V.I. Police Dept., Legal Services of the U.S.V.I., the Criminal Justice System, the Law Enforcement Planning Commission and others. Plus, DVSAC provides training courses for nurses and nursing students to become officially certified as a sexual assault nurse.

Community members from all walks of life are urged to give support to DVSAC. Individual memberships are just \$25 annually. Family memberships are \$50 and corporate sponsorship is \$500. Logo T-shirts also are available for sale.

The DVSAC office on St. Thomas is located in Fortress Storage Mall, Bldg. K. Doors are open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday from noon to 6 p.m.

For additional information, go to www.dvsac.org. On St. Thomas and St. John call 774-0144. On St. Croix call 719-0144

praise to her co-worker, Jeanette, for her energy and dedication.

When not in the St. Thomas office, Lynette spends her time on St. John, frequently engaging school students, including youngsters in the Head Start program. "We only go to places where we are invited," she said. "We are available to make presentations at any school, organization or business."

In addition to serving the community with free prevention

Informative materials on a number of vital subjects from sexual peer pressure to stalking and bullying are available — free of charge — at the St. Thomas DVSAC office.

