VIHFA to host Housing Expo

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ST. CROIX — The third annual Housing Expo sponsored by the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority will be held in June on St. Croix and St. Thomas in conjunction with National Home Ownership Month.

The expo will be held on June 1 at the Sunshine Mall on St. Croix and on June 22, at the University of the Virgin Islands Sports and Fitness Arena on St. Thomas. Both events will be open between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. This year’s theme is “Cultivating the Dream.”

The Housing Expo will have information for the public on the various aspects of buying and maintaining a home. Contractors, construction product vendors and utility providers will be on site to answer questions and provide information. The expo will also feature workshops on finding and financing a home, do-it-yourself home maintenance, foreclosure prevention and energy conservation.

There will be prizes and giveaways for the first 50 attendees.

This year, the VIHFA has partnered with the VI Department of Agriculture to help attendees not only with the basics of home ownership but also for the cultivation of food for harvest. Children and adults alike will have the opportunity to gain knowledge on soil preparation, planting, cultivating and yields by participating in box garden workshops with DOA and a “Kids Workshop” with the Home Depot.

“Our hope is that this simple lesson on the art of cultivation will transpire into an understanding that the dream of home ownership is just as easy to achieve with proper planning and preparation,” Adrienne Williams, VIHFA executive director, said in a news release.

Last year, there were almost 40 vendors, including banks, insurance companies, real estate agents, landscapers, utility companies, green produce vendors, home improvement consultants, contractors and building material suppliers. There were hourly workshops and presenters educating the crowds on everything from handling finances, foreclosure prevention, loss mitigation, financing and refinancing home loans.

This year, the expo will feature many of the same vendors and presenters.

To become a vendor, an exhibitor or for other information, call 772-4432 on St. Croix or 777-4432 on St. Thomas.

"It looks a little bit more like St. Croix. They made it their own," she said.

Above the horizon, an island surrounded by dive boats, sail boats and a cruise ship. Below the surface, the students painted divers, local fish, turtles and littered the bottom with cans, fish traps and tires.

“The point (of the project) is what we do on land is connected to the ocean and what we do to the ocean is connected to the land — it impacts the reef,” Roberts said.

VI receives $2M disaster relief grant to aid businesses

ST. CROIX — The Virgin Islands has received a $2 million federal disaster relief grant for local businesses, according to Percival Clouden, chief executive officer of the VI Economic Development Authority.

The disaster relief project is funded through the FY 2012 Disaster Relief Opportunity, administered by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to help the territory’s small and medium-sized businesses that have been affected by natural disasters.

The fund will provide loan services and help business people create or retain their business, maintain jobs and address the impact of natural disasters on the local economy. The project is for small and mid-sized VI businesses in the commercial, manufacturing, retail, construction and business services industries. The VIEDA will create and administer the fund.

“The VIEDA grant is part of a $87 million support for disaster recovery in Connecticut, Illinois, Missouri, New York and U.S. Virgin Islands. With this grant, the VIEDA can assist our local small to medium-sized businesses, which have suffered economically from natural disasters and impeded the normal operation of their business and dislocated their employees,” Clouden said.

In Nov. 2010, President Barack Obama declared the Virgin Islands a major disaster area in response to Gov. John de Jongh Jr.’s disaster declaration when the territory sustained severe damage from Tropical Storm Otto in late October 2010. As a result, the territory was eligible to receive this grant.

“De Jongh/Francis administration is duly committed to assisting our small to medium-sized business enterprises impacted by natural disasters to rebuild a stronger community. This grant from the U.S. EDA will enhance their ability to respond to future disasters, retain and create more jobs and revenues for the territory,” de Jongh said.

For more information about the relief fund, contact the VIEDA at 714-1700.