

# Annual Report to the Community

2010



STRATEGIC ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

**DISABILITY RIGHTS**   
CENTER OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Advancing Justice through Protection and Advocacy



## *Advocating for the rights of persons with traumatic brain injury*

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is caused by a blow or jolt to the head that breaks apart the ability of the brain to function. Motor vehicle crashes result in the greatest number of TBI-related deaths and injuries.

Historically, the Caribbean and Latin America has had the second highest incident rate of death and hospitalization from traumatic brain injury in the world.\*

**Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI)** has provided legal assistance to persons with TBI in cases that involved:

Protecting the legal rights of an employee by securing an accommodation at their job,

Promoting access to post secondary education for an individual with TBI who is incarcerated, and

Advocating for the right of a child with TBI to an appropriate educational program.

\* Murray, C.J.L., Lopez, AD, Global Health Statistics, WHO 1996

## **DRCVI Looks at HealthCare Reform**

DRCVI staff interviewed and produced a video of three health care advocates.

Learn more about their experience and their thoughts for improving the territory's

healthcare services. Check out DRCVI on Youtube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecnR1g8a6-Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecnR1g8a6-Q)

*“Never doubt that a small group  
change the world; it*

# DRCVI in the



## **Teaching Youth the Healing Power of Poetry**

The Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI) teamed up with Gayle Danley, an educator, author, and slam poet champion to train children with disabilities about the healing power of the spoken word as expressed by “slam poetry.” Workshops were presented at the V.I. Behavioral and Youth Rehabilitation Centers.

## **Voter Education Outreach**

In preparation for the 2010 General Election, DRCVI staff surveyed a total of 452 individuals in an effort to learn about their voting experience and provide information about their voting rights. DRCVI also conducted and completed an extensive polling place survey for the Election System of the Virgin Islands.

## **Town Hall Meetings to Begin a Process for Improving the Territory’s Mental Health Care System**

DRCVI in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Justice hosted two town hall meetings to discuss the terms of a proposed settlement agreement in the class action lawsuit of VI Alliance v. Government of the Virgin Islands. Subsequently, DRCVI has hosted and convened several meetings of a mental health commission that is charged with the task of developing a plan to improve the mental health care system in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## **Training Management on the Rights of Workers**

DRCVI staff has made a series of presentations before an audience of middle management personnel and union shop stewards about job discrimination and the rights of workers with disabilities.

## **Anti-Stigma Press Conference and Mental Health Awareness Fair**

In May of 2010, DRCVI hosted a press conference that formally launched the territory’s “Mental Health Anti-Stigma Campaign”. DRCVI also participated and presented informational materials at a Mental Health Awareness Fair in St. Thomas.

## **DRCVI Gets Expert Help from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)**

As a result of an agreement between DRCVI and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), during 2010, five town meetings were held on the islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix, to ask the public their thoughts about the territory’s public transit system (Vitran). The CTAA will review and evaluate the public comments and make recommendations for improving the quality and quantity of mobility services for passengers of the public transit system.

As a result of DRCVI’s class action and the work of local advocates, the territory’s public transportation system has received more buses, provided increased training to its drivers, and developed a more efficient administrative due process procedure for passenger grievances.

*Group of thoughtful committed citizens can  
indeed, it's the only thing that ever does."*

*Margaret Mead*

# e Community



## **Working with Local Disability Rights Advocates**

About every month DRCVI staff meets with disability rights advocates and AARP members to discuss strategies for improving the quality of life for Virgin Islanders with disabilities. DRCVI continues to advocate for the passage of a "Silver Alert" law to protect missing persons and for the passage of a law that will encourage homeowners to make their residences more "visitable" for persons with mobility impairments. The group also advocates for the enforcement of disabled parking laws and against discrimination in the public and private sectors.

## **Protecting All Children in School: DRCVI Drafts Proposed Bullying Prevention Legislation**

In response to a number of tragic reported incidences that arose from bullying behavior, DRCVI legal staff has drafted a proposed bill that will be used as a vehicle to advocate for safer schools and school communities.

## **DRCVI Interviewed on Newsline 340**

DRCVI's Executive Director was interviewed by Newsline 340 and was asked the question, "Is the U.S. Virgin Islands disability friendly?"

Check out the story on Youtube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlj\\_JDKsM5E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlj_JDKsM5E)

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## **2010 DRCVI Board of Directors**

George Anderson  
Hinda Carbon  
Francesca Colianni, Vice-Chairman  
Lelia Felix  
Wendy Garcia, Chairman  
Brenda Gujral  
Cyril Levine, Secretary/Treasurer

## **2010 Advisory Council for Persons with Mental Health Disabilities**

Dina Cruz  
Julia Gabriel de Lopez  
Cyril Levine, Chairman  
Flavia E. Logie, Esq.  
Ramona Moss, Ph.D.  
William Murphy  
Rachel Pakenham

## **DRCVI Staff and Support**

Vincent Anderson, CPA Fiscal Administrator  
Jane Charles, Intake Specialist  
Kishma Creque, Administrative/Legal Assistant  
Amelia Headley LaMont, Esq., Executive Director  
Archie Jennings, Esq., Managing Attorney  
Pamela Prescott, Advocate  
Zulma Turner, Outreach Specialist

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*The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of DRCVI and do not necessarily represent the official view of any of these agencies.*

*DRCVI is an equal opportunity service provider.*

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# *DRCVI Mission Statement*

*Advance the legal rights of people with disabilities  
in the U.S. Virgin Islands.*

## *DRCVI Vision Statement*

*DRCVI's vision is a barrier free, inclusive world that values  
diversity, culture, and each individual.*

In this world all people with disabilities have:  
Equality, Dignity, Power, Freedom of choice, Independence, and  
Freedom from abuse, neglect, and discrimination

They have quality, culturally responsive,  
safe, affordable, and accessible:

Housing, Education, Healthcare, Technology, Transportation, and  
Individual and family supports that they choose and direct:

People with disabilities have the right to family, social, and intimate relationships.  
They can make life choices, and have opportunities for satisfying work, recreation,  
spiritual lives, and community service.

## *DRCVI Advocacy Principles*

Our advocacy will be zealous, dedicated, effective, creative, innovative and daring.

We will take on issues of importance to the disability community.

We will integrate a variety of advocacy approaches in all of our work, including  
self-advocacy, legal, non-legal, media, public policy and investigatory.

We value diversity. Our staff should reflect the ethnic, language, and disability diversity, and  
demographic diversity of the U.S. Virgin Islands: age, sexual orientation, a range of  
different life experiences that reflect the disability community.

Our advocacy efforts will affirmatively address the needs of traditionally under served and  
under-represented communities through partnerships with such communities.

Our advocacy will be of high quality regardless of the type of service, the nature of the  
problem or who the client is. We will be honest, prepared, truthful, and informed.

All staff is expected to contribute and their contributions will be valued and respected.

**When representing individuals:**

**We respect the client's wishes.**

**We are honest about our limitations, values, resources and the likely outcome.**

**The client chooses their service goals and we will work jointly  
with the client to achieve their goals.**

**The client actively participates in every stage of the process.**

***A Total of 86,744 Individuals Accessed the DRCVI Website during fiscal year 2010!***

**Visit us at [drcvi.org](http://drcvi.org)**



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