

The fourth annual **Work-Able Summer Health Institute**, in collaboration with the Regional Health Equity Council for Region II (RHEC II), hosted at the Charles Wesley Turnbull Regional Public Library on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, was held July 25 – August 12, 2016. The three-week *life skills, employability skills* and *career exploration* program encouraged the youth, 14 and 15 year olds, to explore health and health careers (personally, professionally and as a community member), and to develop a close relationship with the Library.

With the theme “**In a Healthy Community: The Library Matters**” the 2016 Institute’s expectations were that each youth would take-away: 1) A Resume’ & Cover Letter; 2) Get a Library Membership Card; 3) Research and checkout a Library Book, and 4) Give a PowerPoint oral Book Report. Optionally, youth were challenged to have a job shadow experience.

This year’s Institute consisted of eight ‘transitioning students’, three boys and five girls, along with the assistance of three college student interns. The intense three-week enrichment program began with orientation about the Institute’s expectations. Youth were then given an extensive (exclusive) tour of the Turnbull Library by the assistant director of the DPNR Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums, Kim Blackett. Turnbull’s Librarian, Symra Chinnery, gave them an orientation and demonstration on how to use the Library’s Computerized (Dewey Decimal) System to research, locate and checkout books from the Library. After which, everyone used what they had learned to find a book and check it out, using their new library cards.

Guest speakers included Speech Therapist, Kathleen Valentine, who shared with them about Speech-Hearing careers; Dr. Gloria Callwood of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) Caribbean Exploratory Research Center (CERC), who showed the “Unnatural Causes – Place Matters” video and told them about social determinants of health, health disparities, and inequities, and the leading preventable diseases in the Virgin Islands. She also discussed with them their personal responsibilities for their own health & well-being, and for the health & well-being of the Virgin Islands as a whole.

Also, Dr. Karen Brown of the UVI University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), gave insight into “How the Brain Works”, with her presentation stressing the value of critical thinking. And, as a special feature during weeks 1 & 2, youth were treated to an “Introduction to Tai Chi” by Tai Chi Master, Calvin Dallas.

As usual, there was a field trip each week. The first trip was to The University of the Virgin Islands, where the youth participated in a Youth Health Forum, hosted by the local members of the RHEC II Youth and Outreach Committee (Former Labor Commissioner, Albert Bryan, Dr. Gloria Callwood and Gwendolyn Powell). The Forum, facilitated by Taetia Phillips of the Virgin Islands Department of Health, was eye-opening. Lunch was provided at the UVI Cafeteria.

The week 2 trip was a tour of the Fort Christian Museum. Curator Levi Ferrell made the tour an exciting adventure. He brought to light much information about the Fort and its many different uses over the past years. Along with having been the Fort, it was at one time the Governor's Mansion, the Governor's Office, the Jail, and the Fredericks Lutheran Evangelical Church, to mention a few. Now, it is a Museum in Restoration. We are looking forward to going to the Fort Christian Museum again, when the restoration is complete and the artifacts are back in place, in 2017.

Week 3, August 7th – 13th was celebrated as “National Public Health Clinic Week”. The Co-Chair of RHEC II, Moletto Smith, the executive director of the St. Thomas East End Medical Center, hosted the group at the Medical Center. Director Smith, his management and staff, along with the Medical Director, Doctors and Nurses took time to speak with the youth and answer their questions about their careers in the health care professions. Several of the youth remarked that although they had been to the Center before, “they didn't know that it has so much to offer”.

In the beginning only one of the youth had a Library Membership Card. We are now happy to report that all of the youth participants of the 2016 Summer Health Institute have their library cards. Additionally, everyone checked out a book, and made an oral presentation in front of family and friends at the closing ceremony on August 12th.

For the job shadow experience, once their resume was complete, youth were instructed to select a business or organization where they would like to work, or a person whom they were interested in learning from; and to conduct online research for information about the intended job shadow mentor. They were assisted in drafting their cover letter addressed to the appropriate person, requesting an opportunity to have a *job shadow* experience with them. The finished letter was then sent, along with their resume, to the addressee. With a follow-up call from the Institute Coordinator, the job shadow appointment was consummated.

Of the eight youth, five took the challenge, and earned 6 community service hours for their efforts. Between August 12th and September 9th, a jeweler, Mr. Gleason Thompson; a pediatrician, Dr. Anthony Francis; a veterinarian, Dr. Jane Reynolds; a family physician, Dr. Elizabeth Flower; and sports broadcaster, Mr. Sherman Thomas all permitted one of our youth to shadow them.

The Work-Able Summer Health Institute is funded and supported by the Virgin Islands Department of Labor Summer Youth Program. RHEC II is a National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities initiative, encompassing Federal Region II – New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.