

- [music playing]

- Good morning, Virgin Islands. I am Archie Jennings from the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands. We bring you Ability Radio, You and Your Health. This program is sponsored by the VI Lottery, Making a Difference program. Our program is to assist in bringing health awareness and promotion patient-centered services and empower healthcare consumers so they can acquire skills and confidence to better navigate our territory's health care system. This morning, we have with us, Ms. Lorraine Baa from The American Cancer Society who's gonna discuss and give us information on certain services available and what can assist persons or patients who have cancer, is that correct, Ms. Baa?

- Yes. Yes.

- And just as a reminder, this is a call-in show. The call-in numbers are 779-1079 and 713-1079. You can call in but we request that there's no use of names other than the caller's names, no personal texts, no unfounded allegations, no product pitches, no profanity, and of course, we don't give medical advice. So we don't want to respond for those questions. But we certainly would, I mean, urge you to call in, ask questions, and take advantage of the information that Ms. Baa is gonna share with us this morning. How are you this morning?

- Oh, I am great. What a wonderful cool morning it is.

- Oh, yes it is.

- And, you know, I'd like to say good morning to the total US Virgin Islands everywhere within the sung of my voice.

- Oh, great.

- I'm here representing The American Cancer Society of the US Virgin Islands. The American Cancer Society, a lot of people don't know, we have been around for 28 years. And we are a force to be reckoned with. Let me just share with you that the American Cancer Society has been a beacon of hope that inspires, you know, others and it's assisting the underserved or the uninsured throughout the territory. So in 1988, The American Cancer Society formed its first chapter on the island of Saint Croix. And then one year later, in 1989, the organization formed another chapter in Saint Thomas. So since then, over the past 28 years, I am proud to say that I'm a part of an organization that is affiliated with the National Worldwide Organization. And we here in the territory have raised millions of dollars in the community especially through our Relays of Life which is our premier fundraiser in the US Virgin Islands. This is where many teams get together, walk around a track for the entire evening helping patients, you know, to realize the importance that cancer never sleeps. Cancer is a very devastating disease. It comes in all forms. It attacks babies, you know, minors, teenagers, mid-year in life, older, and to the very, very old. It does not discriminate, it attacks any area, any race, and we are constantly fighting to find a cure.

- Oh, okay. So it cuts across all social economic backgrounds.

- All social economic backgrounds.

- And basically everyone's subject to might having cancer. I remember growing up when I was in grade school, we went to a catholic grade school but there were certain children in those days that were subject to cancer. I found out later is because I used to perform x-rays on pregnant women. So we revolved from that. But the babies or the children would come out and have a form of cancer that would sort of grow out throughout the years. But a lot of them never made it past the eighth grade.

- Yeah, it's a sad, it's a sad situation. And, you know, unfortunately, now, in the Virgin Islands, what we're seeing these, a lot of younger women, especially, you know, coming into the offices for help being diagnosed with breast cancer. And we can't seem to figure out why. We really can't seem to figure out why. We are a proponent of good healthy eating, rest, lots of water, and exercise, and we try to, you

know, encourage people to do that because we believe that that is a part of, you know, sustaining yourself and keeping you healthy here in the Virgin Islands. Unfortunately, our cultural diet is not one that I would recommend for most, you know. We encourage fruits and vegetables and again, lots of water, and lots of rest, and lots of exercise.

- Well, explain to us some of the ways a person can become eligible for the services under the Cancer Society. And what services are provided.

- Okay. Well, you know, I am proud to say that the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, the only two units throughout the entire nation of The American Cancer Society that will offer someone financial assistance who has no insurance. And checking around, I've learned that it is very, very expensive to find insurance here in the Virgin Islands. So if you are not affiliated with the company that will give you or cover you with insurance. And if you have to go out there and purchase insurance on your own, it's almost as much as, you know, it can cause you, I wanna, I wanna believe over eight to ten thousand dollars a year.

- For personal health insurance.

- For personal health insurance.

- Wow.

- So we are here to help with financial assistance because cancer is a very expensive procedure. When you are diagnosed with cancer, it's more to just treating the disease with, say, chemotherapy and radiation. And, you know, all the other medications that might come into play. But they're, before your, before, once you think you're diagnosed, you know, there are PET scans, and CAT scans, and MRIs, and all those things which are very, very expensive for you to even get to a surgeon who can determine whether or not, you know, he can actually do that procedure. What we find, what we, what we're finding is that in breast cancer especially, you don't necessarily have to remove the entire breast. There are cases where you can have Lumpectomy. But still, even with Lumpectomy, you still have to maybe go through radiation and chemotherapy which again is a very expensive process. So we help you with financial assistance. We help you with your prescriptions, you know, you'll need some sort of medication. We'll, we help with that.

- Correct.

- We help with transportation interisland or stateside. And the reason I say that is because mostly we support people coming from the island of Saint Croix, the island of Saint John, but to get from Saint Croix to Saint Thomas, you have to fly. So we normally support you there because the only cancer center in the US Virgin Islands happens to be the Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute. So therefore, we support people coming from Saint Croix to Saint Thomas for radiation and chemotherapy. The good thing about our cancer center here is that both services, the radiation and the chemotherapy are housed under the same roof. For instance, if you go to Puerto Rico, you might have to do your radiation in one building and then walk down a block or two and go and have your chemotherapy. So the beauty about our cancer center which is, you know, I think state-of-the-art.

- Correct.

- Is that you can have both services done under the same house.

- And you don't have to spend the whole day in Puerto Rico.

- Right. And you don't have to pay to get to Puerto Rico. So, you know, it's, there are some drawbacks. We also assist with equipment such as wheelchairs, respiratory devices, walkers, et cetera, like that. Again, I mentioned medical studies, you know, which includes your CAT scans, your PET scans, your MRIs, your different, your x-rays, and stuff like that. And then we also help you with lodging.

- Okay. Well, we'll take a short break and continue with Ms. Baa on Ability Radio, You and Your Health.

- [music playing]

- And we got to help each man be a better man with the kindness that we give.

- I know we can make it.

- I know that we can.

- I know darn well we can.

- Love one another.

- I know that we can make it. I know that we can. I know darn well. And [inaudible]

- Back to Ability Radio, You and Your health. And this morning, we are here with Ms. Lorraine Baa from The American Cancer Society. And the discussion is about the cancer and the services available here in the Virgin Islands. Ms. Baa, one of the things you've mentioned is to, eligibility for services is that you focus on the uninsured and maybe underinsured?

- Yes, uninsured and underinsured. And we try to concentrate on newly diagnosed and people with cancers within a two-year period. Before we would be, you know, in a situation where we were helping people who had maybe even diagnosed with cancer for 10 years or more, and then they would come in and they would need services. And the, you know, lots of money would go into that. But then we realize that because so much money was being invested in the older diagnosed patients that the newly diagnosed who really needed the help were being left behind. So nationally, they made a decision that we would really just try to concentrate on, you know, newly diagnosed or reoccurring cancers what would be considered new, new, new cancers.

- Okay. New cancers.

- Uh-hmm.

- And who are some of the other agencies or partners that you work with in order to assist persons with cancer or diagnosed with a certain cancer?

- Yeah, I mentioned earlier that I, we do help with lodging. But I need to clarify that. We help with lodging only if it is a Hope Lodge. What we do is we partnered with Charlene Kehoe who is Cancer Support VI. And they are under the umbrella of the International Capital Management Company. And what we do is we work with her closely. Normally, every year, because we are just, kind of, under the radar to follow strict guidelines from The American Cancer Society. What we do is we partner with them and we issue a \$50,000 grant, so that they can help us provide services to the community that we cannot handle. Like, you know, and when I say that not, when I say we cannot handle, it is not in our guidelines to handle. Because remember we are the American Cancer Society and we do have guidelines, we're heavily monitored, heavily audited, and there are certain things that we can do and there are certain things that we can't do. So to circumvent that, what we did was we created from the money is raised. A portion carved out, a portion of money so that we can give to, we give it to the community foundation and the community foundation monitors the act as a fiduciary for the American Cancer and they partner with International Capital Management under the fund called the Cancer Support VI. So what would happen is Charlene would help with things like travel, lodging. She would help with hospice, she would help with hotel stays. Especially for the people coming from the Saint Croix area who need to do chemotherapy for

a week, you know, instead of going back and forth to Saint Croix, what they would do is we, they would stay over and then go back on the weekend.

- I see.

- So they would stay here on the Island of Saint Thomas for a week and then go back, you know, for the weekend and then come back. So if they have like a six-week therapy session then they would do it intermittently, you know, every week going back home on the weekends.

- Okay. I see. And you mentioned Hope Lodging, would you explain that term?

- Okay. The Hope Lodge is an affiliate of the American Cancer Society. Where you can actually go and stay with your family free of charge. We have a beautiful facility in Puerto Rico which was newly built, maybe about three years ago. And people who are diagnosed and who are going to Puerto Rico for treatment and are being treated there, they can stay at the Hope Lodge for no cost.

- Okay. Is there any...

- It's like a home away from home.

- ...home?

- Yeah. It's like a, it's like, it's like a sophisticated college dorm. Where you can go and there's a centralized kitchen. There's a centralized laundry room.

- I see.

- A centralized movie area, you know, so you basically leave the centralized areas and then you go back to your room where it's either a two-bed situation or a one-bed situation, and you can stay there with your entire family.

- I see that's similar...

- And no charge.

- ...similar to, I have granddaughter that goes to Shriners Hospital up in Springfield and they have Ronald McDonalds houses...

- Right, similar. Similar.

- ...which assists them, in which she goes up for surgery for. And the mother and her can stay there for a couple weeks.

- Yes, uh-huh, at no charge.

- And no charge and then, but they can cook their own meals and do everything else, yeah.

- And you can do that, because there is a centralized kitchen, yes.

- Okay. And just to be sure, since a lot of people do travel not only to Puerto Rico but to Florida?

- The Mainland?

- Yeah.

- Uh-hmm

- Is there a similar type of services such as that lodging in Florida?

- Yeah. We have Hope Lodges throughout the United States.

- They're, and they're connected directly with American Cancer Society?

- Connected directly with the American Cancer Society. And what happens is, you know, you will rely on your social worker at the hospital to make that connection for you. And then they will reach out to the American Cancer, and then we'll make it happen.

- Okay. We have a caller?

- Hi, good morning. I'm Iris...

- Good morning.

- Hi, good morning.

- Good morning, Iris. How are you doing this morning?

- I'm fine. Thank you. It's very cloudy here and raining over here at Saint Croix, so I hope [inaudible] is better. And thank you so much for participating in the program. And I really appreciate you giving all this wonderful information about cancer awareness.

- Thank you.

- You're welcome. I have a problem and a question. So Hope Lodge did mention providing services, you'd be uninsured, you'd be insured. I wanted to remind the listening audience for both of you, who don't you have Medicare that there are representatives, services that are not provided as a result of the affordable [inaudible] specifically [inaudible] just please take advantage of it. You heard news about, talk about you know, the effects of not getting here early. Lung cancer screening is also available and there should be [inaudible] physical exam is available. And a retinal cancer screening is available, please take advantage of it. But you've mentioned being a lot of [inaudible] breast cancer that's interesting and I was wondering what if, is there an age, average age will be first [inaudible] and does it fall under the guidelines women who should be receiving or should be having or undergoing [inaudible] screening as a, as a way present it [inaudible] take a mammogram early on.

- Well, you know, that's a very difficult question for me. Because I would not want anyone to say that they heard me, you know, recommend that younger women should get mammograms. That's something that your doctor should maybe alert you on. It's something, it's a, it's a personal thing and it goes back to maybe the history of their family line and if there was a cancer somewhere in the family line, so I just don't wanna be the one to say, you know, you should get a mammogram earlier. Our guidelines are that, you know, at the age of 40, you should maybe look into doing it. And we do have a program every October. In fact we have an all year program on both islands where if someone is suspicious of a lump or something that does not seem normal, they can actually come into our offices both on Saint Thomas and Saint Croix. And I wanna mention that our Saint Croix office is in the Sunny Isle Professional Building on the second floor. And in Saint Thomas, our office is behind the hospital in the Medical Foundation Building. Yes, if you have a suspicious lump or something that does not look right and you go to a doctor, and you bring a prescription to us for a mammogram, we will, we will help you with that. So in addition to the agency that you just mentioned that will allow women to get, you know, free mammograms, et cetera. We do do that and we have a special push in October where we give vouchers for mammograms.

- Okay. This was, well, this is you really really great information and I, like I said we appreciate you [inaudible] topic is very important. Thank you so much and...

- You're welcome.

- Take care.

- And of course Iris is our expert at Medicare and Medicaid services, so her input is very critical so people know that there are agencies that will assist you with regard to getting preventive care paid for as well.

- Iris, I wanted you to clarify something for us, because there was a young lady that came into our office, who had mentioned that she was diagnosed with cancer. But because she was diagnosed she could not be helped, how does that work?

- She had Medicare or Medicaid?

- No. She wanted to apply for Medicare, but she was already diagnosed. And after she was diagnosed she wanted to apply for Medicare, but there was glitch and she said something about having to go to Puerto Rico that I didn't quite understand that I'd maybe like to maybe have you clear up or call you offline and maybe you can help me through this. So that I can educate, you know, patients coming into our offices.

- Okay. I would love to [inaudible] I'm so glad you said that, because this is one of the reasons we're doing this show. So that we can have people, you know, go through that whole health [inaudible]

- Uh-hmm.

- If she, if she, they've already diagnosed her. Well, you know, and I'm starting to understand why. Well, and I know that she's [inaudible]

- I mean she was really, she was frustrated. She had been to the Department of Human Services. She had been to several areas and she was turned, you know, around. And they kept asking for more information and she just was like really broken. So she ended up coming to us and, you know, we helped her. She had since had, you know, she had since had her surgery and now she has to, you know, do her radiation and chemo. But has no insurance and, you know, is trying to seek some sort of aid to help her through this journey. And it was just, it just seem like it was complicated. So I would love to call you offline and maybe, you know, maybe even meet with you and, you know, help me, help, you help me help them to get through this process a little easier.

- I would love to, I would love to. Our number for inquiry is 340-772-1200.

- Okay.

- Okay. I was gonna...

- We're good.

- ...go and hope and make an appointment.

- Okay. Great.

- Okay.

- Thank you.

- And also...

- You're welcome.

- ...this is the number for the Disability Rights in Saint Croix, 772-1200?

- Yes.

- Okay. Great.

- And it seems [inaudible] you brought up the fact that the, whether or not someone should seek preventive healthcare and especially young women, I have daughters both under 30. Well, one under 31, one under 35. But it's just this year their cousin had, who was 27 had major cancer surgery probably was out for work. And they were both advised to go get some sort of DNA testing.

- Yeah, yeah, yeah. You can, you can do that. But again, I can't be the one to say that. A doctor should be the one to, you know, because if a, and you can come into our offices at 18. And if you have a prescription and the doctor is saying, "hey, listen, this is, this is a highly, you know, this person needs some sort of checking" we will assist, but in terms of me saying to you on a one-one, "Hey, I really think you should do this, or I really think you should go to this doctor, and I think you shouldn't go to this doctor", you will never hear that out of my mouth.

- Well, understood, understood. But again, putting the word out there if you have a close relative, which was their first cousin. Then perhaps...

- Right, you should be of your...

- ...you should be aware and maybe just go talk to a doctor and check to see maybe you should take some...

- Yeah, I mean, yeah, we've had, we've had some younger cases, I mean, an 11-year old who thought that he had stomach flu, and had been to several doctors here. And ended up with stomach cancer, had to move off of the island because, you know, there were no treatment centers for children, you know. And no, well, it was a special strength of chemotherapy that he needed to take at that age that he couldn't take. And he had to, the entire family was uprooted. You know, and I'd say \$500,000 later, they had insurance, thank God. But, you know, they had to move relocate off the island because now his diet is completely organic.

- I see. Okay. Okay. And you mentioned the cost of some of the treatments as we knew a story about Jimmy Carter. And he basically had, he underwent cancer surgery for liver tumor and was treated for radiation therapy, and the doses of medication he was receiving costs 12,500 per month.

- I have a better story. I had, I have a patient on the Island of Water Island who came in. You know, they, there's a big boating industry over on the Island of Water Island. This person had skin cancer and came into our offices with a band aid on his face. There are no skin oncologist here in the territory, so we sent him to Puerto Rico. And, you know, because he had no kind of insurance at all, no kind of help, I think his monthly income was, like, less than \$300. Lived on a boat, you know. Fished for lobsters, and that was his only means of support. So I sent him over to Puerto Rico and, you know, went to a doctor there, a skin oncologist. And after the diagnosis and everything, I told her, I said, "Yeah, we would definitely, you know, stand behind him. If, you know, he needs something, medication or whatever, give us a call." She calls me up, she says, "Yes, the medication is at Walgreens." I call up Walgreens and it's an oral chemotherapy pill, \$16,000 a month. And I had to hold my head and what I did was, I went a bit beyond and above the call of duty and called the company, and found out that they had a foundation and that the foundation did help the indigent, and the underserved, and the uninsured, and pursued it for, like, three weeks. You know, faxes, emails, phone calls, et cetera, et cetera. And we have finally gotten him on the drug. And he gets the drug. The drug is sent to us every month, \$16,000 a month for an oral pill that he has to take and he is in recovery.

- Oh, my goodness.

- So it is an expensive journey.

- Great. Great. And I was wondering, it's come up in another area as well. Do we have or is it available to the public those lists of companies that do give assistance for medication on the, to the indigent, underserved.

- Well, see the thing, the thing, I just, kind of, like, you know, you think outside the box, I just, kind of, like, I was so, I was so moved by this whole thing that it was like, he was family. And I said, there has to be a way. I mean, I told him that I would help him, so I, kind of, felt obligated too. So when they called me and they said \$16,000 a month, and I knew that there was no way that we could do that because we work with caps. You can only, we can only spend a certain cap per patient, depending on the situation. So we tried to just help them, I mean, you know, if we didn't, we would run out of money. So basically, you know, I just felt so moved and so, kind of, committed to do that, that I asked the doctor what is the name of the drug. So my first thing was I went online, and I went into Canada. Because I know that the Canada pharmacies are less expensive than the US pharmacies. You know, drugs in the US cost xyz, but you can get a drug out of Canada for almost 80% less.

- Oh, wow.

- You know, so I called and I looked to see if it was online at canadapharmacy.com and it wasn't there. So therefore, I called and I asked the doctor and said, "What the, what's the name of this drug?" And she gave me the name of the drug. So I went up online and I started looking for the name of the drug, and who produces, and it was just a lot of research, but the bottom-line is I ended up finding the name of the drug, finding out that there was a foundation, finding out that there is a foundation that would help, and there are many foundations associated with drugs that would help the indigent, or the people who can't afford.

- Oh, my goodness. Oh, so that's good to know because again, a lot of families dealing with this. And my research reveals this, most of those drugs that go along with the chemo and the radiation are very, very costly.

- Oh, very costly. I mean, extremely costly. [laughs] So I wanted to continue and just share with you some of the organizations that are available, you know, there's the Saint John Community Foundation, you know, um, they assist with mammograms. I think during the month of October, they partner with us. And then there's the Saint John Cancer Fund, if you live on the Island of Saint John, you can contact them, and they will assist you, you know, they just did an event call Light Up the Night which was similar to the Relay for Life, but they are an independent arm from the American, they're not affiliated with us at all. But they do help, you know, people with cancer on the Island of Saint John. And then there's the Saint Croix Foundation, as well as the community foundation of, I think it's the, no, it's not the community, it's the YAC Foundation with Mrs. Gallabear who helps cancer, breast cancer patients. So there are a few people out there, but, you know, I'm proud to say that we are the stronger arm of, you know, the people helping with cancer. And we, I wanna let people know that the moneys that are given to us here in the territory, stays here because we give it back to the people of the Virgin Islands.

- You mentioned Relay for Life, you wanna give a brief description? I used to participate years ago.

- Well, you should come back.

- I should come back. That's true. That's true.

- Right. On Saint Croix, it will be May 21st and 22nd on the Island of Saint Croix at the Educational Complex and you can call Saint Croix at 719-4898 and speak to Tina Beazar who is our community manager. And, you know, she will tell you about Relays on Saint Thomas or on Saint Croix. And in Saint Thomas, you can call 775-5373. Those are our offices and the Saint Croix Relay May 21st and 22nd, the

Saint Thomas Relay June 25th and 26th. They started 4:00 and they go into the night, symbolizing the fact that cancer does not sleep.

- And do you still do the survivors [inaudible]

- Yes, of course, we do, yes, we do the survivor. We have the survivor lap, we have the beautiful survivor dinner, we have the caregivers who support our survivors. We honor both the survivors and the caregivers at a dinner the night of the Relay. And all that happens under our beautiful cancer pavilion that is on both islands. And, you know, we're looking for teams right now, so if you are in this, within the sound of my voice, and you think you wanna, you know, start a team. Just create one, you need 15 people, those 15 people would individually raise \$100 which brings it to a total of \$1500. And then there's a registration fee of 150. So just to be a part of a Relay, you are committing to 1650. And we're looking for fifty teams on Saint Croix, and we're looking for a hundred teams on Saint Thomas.

- One hundred? My goodness.

- One hundred. We're reaching, we are reaching for the sky. If we fall [inaudible] the clouds, we're still on high ground.

- Good. Good. Good.

- Right.

- And it's such an important issue to talk about as well is cancer seems to be evolving. It used to be the big sea, I mean...

- Oh, yeah, the people were not...

- People wouldn't mention it and they would never say the word cancer.

- That's true.

- When I was, when I was coming up, and growing up, and it seemed to evolve to the point now where its people can't get their treatment that extends their life. And it, attack it, you know, reading the story about Jimmy Carter who went for, who had a melanoma that spread to his brain, and certain lesions that had formed, he went under a different therapy. He went beyond or he tried chemo then he went to what's called an immunotherapy drug. Have you heard about this?

- Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

- And that now he's cancer free.

- Yeah. Yeah. And at this age, that is incredible. That is really incredible. But, you know, people always asked me how I got involved in cancer. And I just wanted to share my sister who a lot of people think was my mother, is Enid Baa, who the library is named after. And, you know, Enid was a breast cancer survivor. And, you know, I, at the time when she was diagnosed, you know, the procedure was so horrific. They would really cut into your chests area, and they would, you would actually look deformed. You know, and there were no prosthetics, you know, you would, you know, stuff your bra with tissue, and the tissue would ride up as you move around. And it was just very hard back then, you know. So, cancer has evolved and there're so many different modalities and so many different treatments. And it is not a death sentence if you catch it early.

- So, the preventive approach...

- The preventive is very, very important. That approach is very important.

- Okay. One of the other things you mentioned is that you're connected with the National American Cancer Society. Do they provide any I guess direct information...

- Well, there is a national number that you can call which is 1-800-227-2345. That number is a 24-hour hotline that if you need to speak to somebody, they will connect you with someone who can guide you through, you know, your diagnosis. They are, you know, they partner with physicians and people that we don't partner with, that we too sometimes call that 800 number for information. So, it's a, it's a 1-800 number and I'll repeat it again, 1-800-227-2345. You can call that number anytime and they will be able to assist you and direct you.

- All right, all right. And I'd like to get back to it but I will make a break in here. Are there local resources for people to talk to regarding their insurance and how that comes into play with regard to addressing their diagnosis and addressing prevention and as well as the treatment?

- Well, I know, I mean, I've kind of like looked around just to try to help people in terms of insurance where, who is available, you know. And just really know light at the end of the tunnel for me. What I would like to see is maybe some agencies, some insurance agencies coming together in some sort of town meeting and educating the people on what is available, what can you, what can you afford? But from what I've heard, everything is so expensive, you know. And there is no Obamacare here.

- Well, of course, not on the same level but basically [inaudible]

- There is none though. You can get no Obamacare because apparently, there was a swap for Medicare over Obamacare from what I understand. I mean, they opted to...

- You know, they have--they have the certain things in place and, so Medicare and Medicaid expansion what, is what came about for the Virgin Islands. Yes. All right. We will take a break and we'll get back to Ms. Baa.

- Yes. Welcome back. Yes we can. Back to Ability Radio this morning and again, we're here with Ms. Lorraine Baa from the American Cancer Society Organization for the Virgin Islands. You had mention before about how families may have to travel on certain, it becomes a family affair essentially.

Yes, it does.

- And it's such, it's such a fearful disease, what are some available resources for the emotional support for persons who have cancer and their families here in the Virgin Islands?

- Well, I'm glad you ask that. I think it is an emotional thing and we try to encourage people to stay here in the Virgin Islands because we have the Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute and that you can go there, get your chemotherapy. You could even go to doctors, I mean, there is Dr. Habdi and Dr. DeShawn who offer chemotherapy in their offices.

- Oh, I see.

- And so, your, you can actually go there, sit with your family while you take your chemotherapy and, you know, you do your session and you leave when you go home and that's also important. We have a group of women that were trained called Reach to Recovery and they support our breast cancer survivors. I know that Charlene and her group with Cancer Support VI they do a monthly informational seminar at the Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute in the Bennie and Martha Benjamin Auditorium where there's a lot of information about cancer. I think upcoming is something on nutrition where they're gonna be doing something at Oceana Restaurant. It might be this month in March. So, that's what she does and then there's Caswell Calendar who is a part of the, I wanna call it something regarding men but it's for prostate

cancer. I spoke to the men at that group one evening and gave them information on, you know, how I could help all those who needed help and they were very open and, you know, they embraced me better than I thought, you know, because something about men, they'd, you know...

- Well, we're talking about our health issues [inaudible]

- Yes. And you don't particularly like to listen to us women who say you need to check yourself. If you don't feel right, check yourself. Check out why you don't feel well. Check out why you're tired. Check out why you're not sleeping or just when you don't just feel normal. Just be in tune to your body.

- Correct. That's true.

- You know, so, and then goes for the ladies, too. If you're not feeling like your normal self, you need to go and get yourself checked. You know, I've heard things like people who had a cough and it wouldn't go away and they thought it was a cold and, you know, ended up that this cough was actually a sign of them being, you know, either having lung cancer or some form of rare cancer.

- Oh, I see. Okay.

- You know, so I'm just saying, things that are not normal just, it doesn't hurt.

- Listen to your body in other words [inaudible]

- Yeah. Listen to your body and one of the things that we're going to be trying to, and I heard it was, and Iris had mentioned that there are free colonoscopies through Medicaid or through the Medicaid department. We are going to be, you know, starting a campaign on that.

- Oh, great. Yes, we have a caller?

- Hi, good morning. It's Amelia. How are you?

- Good morning, Amelia. She's the other partner her at the Ability Radio. How are you this morning?

- Good morning.

- Thank you. Very well. Thank you. But I'm learning a lot this morning. My goodness.

- Oh, wonderful.

- [inaudible] well-kept secret so, I'm now, the secret is out.

- Oh, my gosh.

- [inaudible] off.

- One thing that you mentioned, you know, doing research for what is possible for, you know, low-cost or no-cost prescription drugs. Our office had been receiving information from an entity called NeedyMeds. Now, I'm not sure, you know, not having any direct experience with it, whether it is indeed useful but I thought I would at least share that for, you know, general, you know, information and, you know, whether one would like to use it or not, but it's needymeds.org that...

- Okay. NeedyMeds.org. Okay.

- Right. That's a possible resource and another thing that I had found, you know, in preparation trying to get up to speed on cancer which I admittedly was quite ignorant on. There's a site called healthgrove.com and to my amazement, they had some specific information about Virgin Islands with

respect to chronic conditions. And how we fared compared to the nation is. We're kind of neck and neck. Nationally 7.9% of individuals have cancer and VI at 7.1% which I thought was pretty interesting. We're...

- That is pretty interesting.

- Yeah. We're off the charts with respect to diabetes. No surprise there but I encourage you to check healthgrove.com. and I...

- Is that G-R...

- ...was delighted. I know how hard it is to get stats for the territory.

- Is that G-R-O-V-E, health...

- Yes.

- ...grove.com?

- Yes. Healthgrove.com. It shows up where you hit the Virgin Islands it's called condition-prevalent.healthgrove.com.

- Okay. Okay.

- You know, and for Virgin Islands were there and it covers, you know, variety of, you know, conditions and compares our territory to the nation as a whole.

- Okay. Thank you for that.

- Thank you. Thank you. Archie?

- Yes?

- Excellent excellent show.

- All right. Thank you. Thank you for the input. I'm bringing those, that information to the community.

- Okay. Well, have a good morning.

- You, too.

- Okay. Bye now.

- I think we're also talking about the, well, you mentioned some support groups and whether or not, they, people can reach out to them and I'm just wondering if they called your office, would you be able to give a person a number to contact Mr. Calendar or the other support groups that we've mentioned this morning?

- Yeah. I had a number for Mr. Calendar but I don't have it in my head but you can reach out to Charlene at 715-5806 and then you can call if you're a breast cancer survivor and you just wanted someone to talk to. If you're, especially if you're newly diagnosed or you got to make a decision and you don't know where to turn or how to feel or if you're depressed or whatever, we have a group of young ladies both on Saint Thomas and Saint Croix, a, called Reach to Recovery. And, you know, we have their names and numbers. I don't have them with me but we can certainly, if you call the offices on Saint Croix 719-4898 or in Saint Thomas at 775-5373, we can certainly direct you to someone who we can pair you with.

- All right. You've mention a couple of needs this morning. One is maybe perhaps a need for insurance companies to come forward...

- I think...

- ...and sort to explain what's available for, well, especially with Cigna because they are, I assume they are the major coverer for, since they cover the Virgin Islands.

- And they...

- ...employment, people work for the government of Virgin Islands.

- Right, but then for people who are in the private sector or people who just aren't employed in one insurance, the insurance companies are very high. So that might be something for maybe our senators to look into.

- Oh, to cover the gap for those who are not covered?

- Well to try to bring, you know, insurance companies together to try to get some sort of affordable, you know, insurance.

- I see. I see. So, that's a definite need. And with regard to those employers who're also under the Affordable Care Act must cover their employees. There is also that group of...

- That need. Uh-hmm.

- ...that need to come forward with information until people understand. It's kind of a strange situation although we're Disability Rights Center and we cover cross disabilities. I was aware of one organization on California who do the same kind of legal advocacy, all they cover is cancer.

- Oh, okay.

- Like their whole focus is that. And then I would, I'd meant to visit them when I was there, in the last week, in this past year just to see what kind of legal strategies they are taking with regard to it. But it's amazing that's a one whole legal organization just dedicated to...

- To just cancer.

- ...just cancer.

- Interesting. Interesting. Hmm.

- But again, the information that you've given us just this morning. Is there any kind of follow up that, beside these support groups. And that you think our needs in the community that could be fulfilled by people coming forward informed...

- Well, I, you know, I mean, I really think if a group just wanted to get together and say, "Hey, you know, let's just get together for just information, just information or maybe just a health group, you know." This is to me, the Virgin Island is just a wonderful playground to be healthy. You know, we have great weather. We can walk. We can do things, you know, to [inaudible] longer and healthier. And we could decide. We could make the decision that from today, I'm going to eat healthy, you know. And eating healthy is so simple compared to, you know, doing red meats and, you know, fatty foods. And all the different cultural things that you eat, you know, that I don't eat, because I'm not a proponent of that. But I just think that a group could come together easily, you know, and just decide to decide that, you know, we want to do this.

- And some of this information this morning are very critical so that they understand what they're facing or what they could face in case [inaudible] measures.

- Yeah. And they don't have to, you know, they don't have to do no legal papers to just meet. I mean, you could just meet, you could meet in the park, you could meet on the beach, you could meet just to just share, you know. And I've kind of like always really...

- Would you be available to go to the beach as to explain what American Cancer Society is like...

- Oh, yeah, yeah. I've done...

- ...and give more information, yeah?

- ...yeah, I've done that, I've done that a lot, you know. And it's my pleasure to do that and to share with people, you know, and to advocate even when like I said even things that we don't normally do because, you know, typically the American Cancer Society will not go on websites looking for drugs to help somebody. You know, but then, and like I said I felt so connected to this person. Because I was just so adamant about, we will help you. I said "Trust me, don't worry, we will help you." And then it just back to hit me in my face, you know, when the doctor called me from Puerto Rico. First of all, I thought I said, "You know, you, do you mean \$1,600?" You know, because she was speaking, you know, broken Spanish and everything and I was just like, "yeah, yeah". I said, "Hold on, hold on. Let me just comeback". I had to put her on hold, take a deep breath and then comeback on the line to make sure that it was \$16,000 a month. And this company that I reached out to, it was, I will tell you it was no easy, it was no easy experience. I sent them, first of all when they sent me the application, I had this person come in and fill it out. I faxed it in. They said they never got it. I faxed it in again, I must have faxed it in like eight times. Send, then they told me there was something wrong with my fax machine from the Virgin Island. So then I said, "Well, could I write a letter? Can I send you by mail? I mean, could I call?" And then I was calling and I kept calling the number. And I mean I would religiously come in every day. I said, "Okay. Today is five minutes to just do this and I would do it like religiously, you know, every day." And I'm telling you collaboratively, I think I maybe I sent twelve faxes, five letters and I might, I might have called sixteen times before I got through to the organization.

- My goodness.

- So it was just, it was just a commitment on my part. But some people say, "You know what? I don't need this, I was, they don't pay me enough." that kind of thing but I just felt the need to continue.

- And those kinds of organizations, well, I mean, like the companies that are out there. I've look into it on behalf of the [inaudible] and it's a same thing. And then I was sort of suggesting there need to be a not profit group who just does reach out or...

- Advocate.

- ...form something, advocating to get the free drugs available out there to the Virgin Islands.

- And another thing I'd like to see personally is, I'd like to see more trials. Trials are very hard and I don't know why for Virgin Islanders to get into. You have to kind of know somebody, to know somebody, to know somebody to get into trials. - And I really, really wish that there is some way that maybe our delegates could advocate for us to be able let us be a part of trails, because there are trails going on everywhere in the country. And, you know, we have a young lady here from the Virgin Islands who is, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And I will tell you this, when you're diagnose with pancreatic cancer, you could almost kiss that person goodbye. But she's on a trial and a trial is normally like \$60,000 a month.

- I see.

- And she is doing very well, you know. So...

- Great, great. Well, that, oh, essentially that's what Jimmy Carter got was a drug that just had come out on, off from trial and had been just recently approved. And he took it and now he's cancer free.

- Exactly.

- So the trails that are taking place, again, you're right Virgin Islands.

- And I love that man, because I had an opportunity to meet him personally when I was Ms. Virgin Islands in 1976. I was his personal guest. So, I really, I have a connection with him.

- All right. All right. So what, again, there's, the needs are out there. We're talking about it some groups and or people should come forward together and follow up on some of these issues. I'm, I applaud the government of Virgin Islands through their personal department pushing for preventive care. - Then, you know, do more exercise and they give us incentives under the Cigna program to get healthier. And that cuts across the board for everyone in regard to addressing this issue because cancer is a very debilitating disease, it's still prevalent, yeah.

- All the disease out there. All the diseases out there.

- Prevalent, yeah. Very prevalent. But it's no longer a death sentence. I think that's the most important thing to tell people. It's no longer a death sentence.

- Yes, I mean especially if you catch it in the early stage.

- In preventive care.

- Uh- hmm. Uh- hmm.

- Well again, thank you this morning Virgin Islands. I hope we gave you a lot of good information. We're gonna be back next week. And what we would like to encourage is those who have questions to call in. And Ability Radio's here for you to come up to speed on your health. And what you can do about it as a patient center and a patient advocate for yourself. Take care. Enjoy the rest of the weekend. That's it for Ability Radio.

- [music playing]