

STATEMENT

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Statement by Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley - Senior Citizens' Month 2026 Opening and Declaration Ceremony

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REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE VINCENT O. WHEATLEY

MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

SENIOR CITIZEN'S MONTH

1st MAY, 2026

Pleasant Virgin Islands morning to everyone. I am Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, Minister for Health and Social Development. It's truly a pleasure to be here with you today.

I have to say, standing in front of a group with this much life experience is a little intimidating. After all, you've seen trends come and go... and come back again! Some of you probably look at what's "new" today and think, "We already did that... just with better music." Jokes aside, what I see in this room is something incredibly special. I see strength, I see resilience, I see people who have lived through moments that shaped the world—and still found ways to laugh, love, and keep going.

I extend a warm and heartfelt **welcome** to our golden gems who have joined us from communities across our beautiful Virgin Islands today. This year's observance of Senior Citizen's Month marks the 37th anniversary of our Territory's proud tradition of celebrating and recognising the invaluable contributions of our golden gems throughout the month of May.

Our theme this year, "**Champion Your Health**," reminds us that health is not only something we receive care for, but something we actively protect, nurture, and **advocate** for throughout our lives.

Championing your health begins with **prevention**. It means choosing your meals wisely, maintaining regular health screenings, and staying active. It also means understanding your body, recognising changes, and seeking care early.

Preventative health is one of the most effective tools for improving quality of life and reducing the burden of disease. Equally important is the ability to take ownership of your health. I encourage you, regardless of age, to remain actively

engaged in your healthcare — ask questions, seek clarity, and take an active role in decisions about your care. Your voice matters. Your experiences matter, and advocating for your health is a powerful step toward living a healthier, more fulfilling life.

As a Ministry, we are committed to advancing evidence-based approaches that ensure our programmes and services are grounded in what works. Through data, research, and best practices, we aim to deliver care that is both effective and responsive to the needs of our ageing population.

As we honour you, our golden gems, we also reaffirm our collective responsibility to ensure that you are empowered, supported, and equipped to live healthy, fulfilling lives. We also recognise that this work cannot be done in isolation. Strong community partnerships are essential. From healthcare providers and social services to non-governmental organisations, families, and caregivers, it is through collaboration that we create environments where our seniors are supported, respected, and empowered.

As we look ahead to the month's activities, we look forward to a calendar filled with opportunities to bring this theme to life. From this Opening and Declaration Service to Intergenerational Day, from the Virgin Gorda Seniors' Luncheon to the Carrot Bay engagement programme, each event has been designed to encourage participation, connection, and enjoyment.

Throughout the month, we will gather for Seniors' Sports Day, promoting movement and physical activity, and host open houses that create spaces for fellowship and care. There will be moments of fun and friendly competition, including Family Feud: Seniors' Edition, as well as opportunities to come together across the islands for luncheons and social gatherings that strengthen our bonds as a community. The month will culminate in the Champion Your Health Parade and Wellness Fair, a powerful symbol of our collective commitment to healthy living and community wellbeing. I encourage each of you to participate, to show up, to engage, and to enjoy every moment that has been planned with you in mind.

Additionally, if you are not already doing so, I encourage you to incorporate some form of art into your daily activities, whether it be music, painting, drawing, or

another creative outlet that supports your mental and emotional well-being.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Social Development Department and all partners, volunteers, and stakeholders who have worked diligently to organise this month of activities. Your dedication ensures that our seniors are not only recognised, but truly celebrated.

To our golden gems, I want you to know that you are appreciated more than words can express. You are the foundation of our communities, the keepers of our traditions, and the guiding voices for future generations. Your resilience, wisdom, and contributions continue to shape The Virgin Islands in meaningful ways.

Sometimes society has this quiet way of making people feel like their most important days are behind them. Let me be clear—that couldn't be further from the truth, because purpose doesn't retire. Joy doesn't have an age limit and making a difference doesn't have one either. In fact, your role is more important than ever. You are the storytellers, the teachers, the ones who can say, "I've been there, and here's what I learned." Trust me, the world needs that wisdom now more than ever. Younger generations might have all the latest technology, but they're still trying to figure out life—and that's where you come in.

Life doesn't stop offering purpose, meaning, and joy at any age. In fact, some of the most meaningful moments come when we embrace where we are right now. Your experiences give you a unique ability to guide, to teach, to inspire. Whether it's through sharing a story, offering advice, or simply being present for someone. You continue to make a difference every single day. As we celebrate this month, let us all recommit to supporting our seniors in championing their health and well-being.

It is now my pleasure, on behalf of the Government of The Virgin Islands, to officially declare Senior Citizen's Month 2026 open in The Virgin Islands.

I wish you a meaningful and inspiring month of activities.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless these beautiful Virgin Islands.

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Additional Documents or Media

- [remarks by honourable vincent wheatley senior citizen's month 2026 final.pdf](#)