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Press Release

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**2021 NATIONAL KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK PAINTS COMPELLING
PICTURE ON THE CONDITIONS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) released its 32nd edition of the KIDS COUNT® Data Book, which highlights indicators of child well-being in four (4) areas. Supported by a national network of non-profits, foundations and consortia, KIDS COUNT includes members from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Launched in 1990, the Data Book is widely used as a means of sharing critical data about the welfare of children at the federal, state and local levels and is aimed at increasing public advocacy and informing policy and decision-making in states, the districts and the territories.

KIDS COUNT Network partners collect local data related to child well-being and are tasked with disseminating their findings publicly through a local Data Book and other communication formats that promote local engagement and action. In January 2020, St. Croix Foundation for Community Development (SCF) was invited to lead the KIDS COUNT initiative for the U.S. Virgin Islands. Geared toward the needs of local Virgin Islands communities, St. Croix Foundation is designing tools and strategies to tell the story about children in the Virgin Islands to answer the overarching questions: Where are our children and how are they faring? On May 1, 2021 the Foundation published its 2020 Kids Count USVI Snapshot entitled "Building Level Pathways for Our Children," which frames SCF's Vision for Kids Count to activate the data related to child well-being and highlights the current status of data systems in the Territory. The Snapshot also outlines the Foundation's plans to hone in on an older youth population by prioritizing the Territory's 'Opportunity Youth'— young people ages 16 through 24.

A striking indicator presented in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2021 Data Book focuses on American children's access to health insurance: 6% of the nation's children, 4.4 million, lacked health insurance in 2019. As reported by AECF in its June 21, 2021 press statement, "This was the first rate increase in a decade and that was before the pandemic hit" and outlined several recommendations, urging policymakers to "use this moment to repair the damage the pandemic has caused – and to address long-standing inequities it has exacerbated." Recommendations included:

- Congress should make the expansion of the child tax credit permanent.
- State and local governments should prioritize the recovery of hard-hit communities of color.
- States should expand income support that helps families care for their children.
- States that have not done so should expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.
- Strengthen public schools and pathways to postsecondary education and training.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), a community whose families and children have experienced back-to-back crises with the devastating twin Hurricanes of 2017, compounded by the current Covid-19 pandemic, answering the question, how are children in the USVI faring, is critical. Currently, SCF is working in concert with a wide spectrum of civic and government

stakeholders to collect real-time data and to help build community engagement and advocacy for its Kids Count USVI work. Toward that end, the Foundation is looping its social impact organizations (i.e., nonprofits) more intentionally into the circle, and in closer linkage with public sector partners, in order to construct a knitted and cohesive system of safety nets, especially for the most at-risk youth.

According to SCF's President Deanna James, "Recognizing that data by itself is insufficient to move the needle on the welfare of our children, the Foundation remains committed to moving policy, encouraging community advocacy and cultivating 'systems thinking.' Leaning on our civic, public and private sector partnerships, our long-range goal is to identify the pressure points that will activate the data, reduce vulnerabilities, build reinforced safety nets and improve overall outcomes for all children." St. Croix Foundation projects the release of the KIDS COUNT USVI DATA BOOK in the Fall of 2021. For more information on Kids Count, please phone the Foundation's office at 340.773.9898.

Release Information

The 2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the Data Book can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About St. Croix Foundation

St. Croix Foundation for Community Development is a place-based operating foundation in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Founded over 30 years ago in the wake of Hurricane Hugo, SCF has been dedicated to the issues of equity and holistic, community-rooted development, and has directed laser focus and resources on highly strategic grantmaking, direct services, and community building. To date, the Foundation has been a conduit of \$43 million charitable dollars into the Virgin Islands Community. For more information on Kids Count, visit St. Croix Foundation website: www.stxfoundation.org

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.