

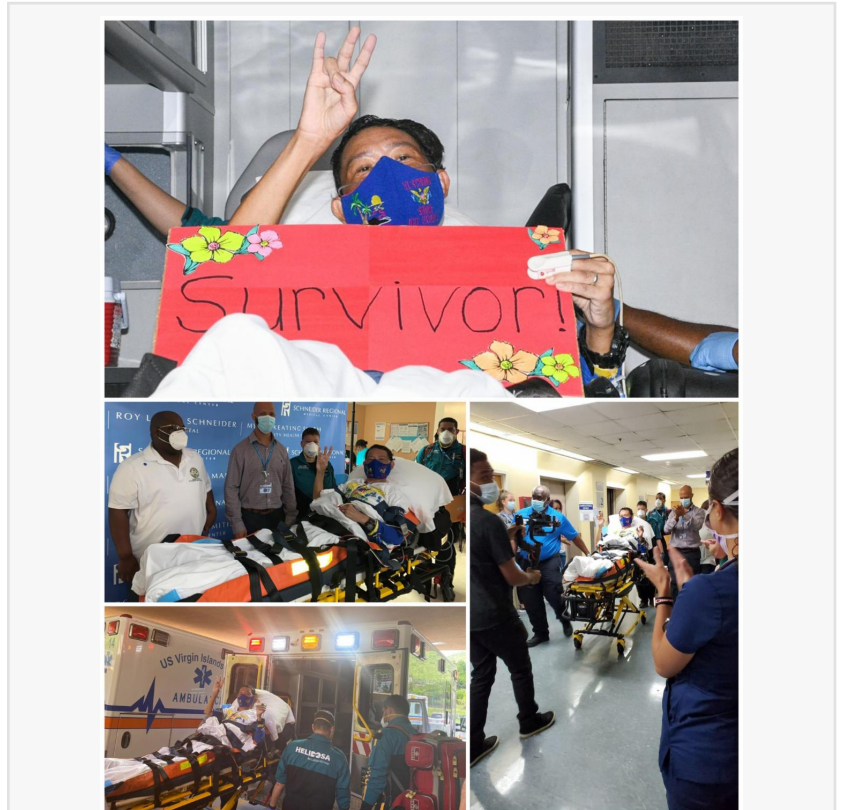
COVID-19 PATIENT HEADS HOME AFTER MIRACULOUS RECOVERY IN THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, August 4, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) is reporting the miraculous recovery of a Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) patient, who was sick and stranded at sea while working aboard a cargo ship.

Citing concerns for the health and safety of their own residents, many destinations have seemingly turned a blind eye to ships full of people amid the pandemic, but not the U.S. territory.

In May, when neighbors refused a safe haven to Rolly Tolentino, a 47-year-old Filipino sailor who fell gravely ill, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. rose to the occasion and welcomed Tolentino to St. Thomas for treatment. Referred to by Governor Bryan as "Sam the Sailor" initially to protect his privacy in media reports, Tolentino has successfully recovered and last week received a warm U.S. Virgin Islands sendoff to his native Philippines.

The sailor, who spent five weeks in a medically-induced coma, underwent 12 weeks of treatment at the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital's COVID-19 unit.



Rolly Tolentino was greeted with cheers and tears from U.S. Virgin Islanders as he left Schneider Regional Medical Center on Friday.



“It is great to see our tradition of holding out a welcome to one and all was not in vain,” Governor Bryan said on Friday, as he bid a bittersweet farewell to the now-recovered seafarer. “We wish Sam the Sailor Godspeed and hope he knows he will always have a home in the U.S. Virgin Islands.”

Tolentino said it was his faith and daily prayers after contracting COVID-19 that brought him to the USVI. “Thank God for SRMC (Schneider Regional Medical Center) and the Governor, they accepted me and healed me. I am blessed that the U.S. Virgin Islands did not turn their backs on me.”

Tolentino’s recovery not only highlights the efficacy of the Virgin Islands medical system, but also offers a much-needed morale boost for the Territory amid the trying times of the pandemic, underscoring the values upon which Virgin Islanders have always prided themselves: kindness and hospitality toward others.

At a time when nations and individuals alike are struggling to find a balance between economic survival, self-preservation and community care, the USVI has demonstrated it is possible to respond both effectively and compassionately to those in need.

When Tolentino’s freighter was discovered in the area, the administration was well aware of the risks in accepting a visitor with COVID-19, but believed there was a way to help him while also keeping the Territory safe. Governor Bryan temporarily relaxed the strict entry ban to allow Tolentino into St. Thomas for urgent treatment. With its extensive pandemic protocols in place, the island was well prepared.

The USVI, whose economy is heavily dependent on tourism, has worked tirelessly to implement COVID-19 protocols that will keep the virus in check and allow for the continued return of travelers. The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism and the Department of Health have pioneered detailed and responsive health precautions for tourists, supplying travelers arriving on its shores with personal protective equipment (PPE), and working closely with the hospitality industry to mitigate the spread of infection. The authorities have also developed robust public health and medical capacity, with well-staffed and well-stocked hospitals and treatment centers, should the need arise.

Tolentino’s successful recovery comes at a time of great confusion and fear around the world. While most of the United States has suffered gravely from the coronavirus, the USVI acted quickly to quell the spread by immediately locking down leisure travel to the Territory on March 25 and implementing clear COVID-19 prevention measures across all three islands. Governor Bryan saw how the lack of timely, accurate information could spread infection, fear and confusion, so he began hosting regular news conferences featuring health and security officials and other experts.

As the USVI welcomes visitors back to the Territory, the government continues to thoroughly evaluate health processes to keep guests and residents safe amid the evolving situation of the pandemic.

One recent example of the ongoing management of the virus in the Territory is the swift response to an outbreak at a local refinery. Upon hearing the news, a meeting between government and management was held immediately and testing of all employees began in a matter of days.

About the U.S. Virgin Islands

For more information about the United States Virgin Islands, go to VisitUSVI.com, follow us on Instagram (@visitusvi) and Twitter (@usvitourism), and become a fan on Facebook (www.facebook.com/VisitUSVI). When traveling to the U.S. Virgin Islands, U.S. citizens enjoy all the conveniences of domestic travel - including on-line check-in - making travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands easier than ever. As a United States Territory, travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands does not require a passport from U.S. citizens arriving from Puerto Rico or the U.S. mainland. Entry requirements for non-U.S. citizens are the same as for entering the United States from any foreign destination. Upon departure, a passport is required for all but U.S. citizens.

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