This summer has been such a busy time for us here at the STAR Center. Tanya and I just completed two amazing trips to two beautiful islands. We are blessed to get to work with some amazing people and our trips this early summer really left us in awe.

**HERE’S WHY:**
The US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are nestled in the idyllic Caribbean—a tropical stop for cruise ships and sun-soaked vacationers. However, our journey consisted of hospitals, peer support groups and meetings at the Governor’s office to discuss the possibilities of peer support. Our conversations were heavy, but productive as the STAR Center came together with other technical assistance centers and SAMHSA representatives in reaction to a dire need for behavioral health services in this tourist hub. The STAR Center was excited to share our stories of how peer support has impacted our lives. During a presentation to youth organization leaders in St. Thomas, we shared the power of youth peer support in mental health and discussed how it can be a great way to start the discussion of mental health or to supplement mental health care. We finished our trip encouraged and in awe of the empowerment seen in a community that had to lift themselves up after the disastrous hurricanes of 2017. We also left with a deep respect for Puerto Rico and USVI as we saw first-hand how they have not let the hurricanes define them. Instead, they have taken those events as symbols of clearing out the old to make room for the new. We are proud to be part of this new growth and are encouraged by the tenacity and power of the peers of the Caribbean. Check out our recommended resources and some pictures from our trip. As always, please share with us your stories of the power of peer support.

Be Well,

**Elise Padilla**
STAR Center Director
Recommended RESOURCES

Images below are active links to the resources on SAMHSA’s website.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PEER WORKERS IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Value of Peers, 2017

- Peer Support
- Peers Supporting Recovery from Substance Use Disorders
- Peers Supporting Recovery from Mental Health Conditions
- Family, Parent and Caregiver Peer Support in Behavioral Health
Puerto Rico Territory Site Visit Team: Dennis Romero, Regional Administrator, SAMHSA/DHHS Region 2; Northeast & Caribbean Technology Transfer Centers: Addiction, Mental Health Prevention; STAR Center

US Virgin Islands Territory Site Visit Team: Dennis Romero, Regional Administrator, SAMHSA/DHHS Region 2; Northeast & Caribbean Technology Transfer Centers: Addiction, Mental Health Prevention; STAR Center; Office of the Governor, Karl Knight, Chief of Staff; Colette Conroy Monroe, Policy Advisor
Funding for this publication was made possible by grant SM062551 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services. The views expressed within do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.