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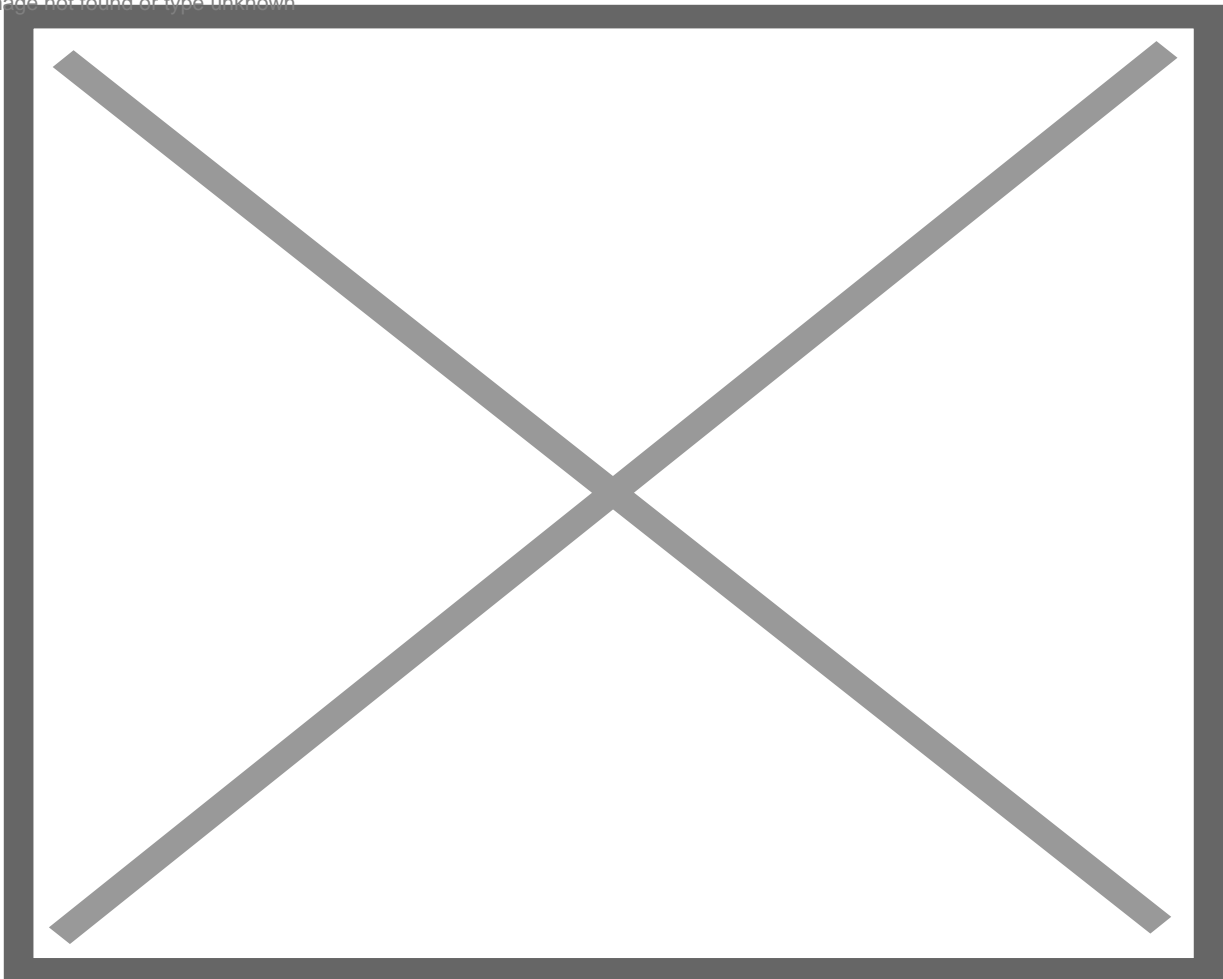
## St. Croix Technical and Adult Education Centers Honor Graduates' Dedication and Success

**With 170 technical and 34 adult education graduates, St. Croix showcases the unwavering spirit of its students and the potential for local impact**

Education / **Published On May 24, 2024 05:59 AM /**

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**Graduating students of the St. Croix Adult Education Center walk across the Complex auditorium stage to receive their diplomas. By. TSEHAI ALFRED, V.I. CONSORTIUM**

Families and well-wishers gathered at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School auditorium twice on Thursday for the St. Croix Career and Technical Center and the St. Croix Adult Education Center's annual graduation ceremonies, which both spotlighted the unique dedication and resilience shown by adult learners.

Approximately 170 students graduated from the St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center, while the Adult Education Center celebrated the graduation of 34 students, 33 of whom received high school diplomas, while the 34th obtained their GED.?

Several elected officials attended the ceremonies, with Senators Marise James and Diane Capeheart pulling double duty at both events.

During his address to the graduating students of the Adult Education Center, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach urged them to remain in the USVI despite the current trend of outmigration. “We need human capital now more than ever, and our free tuition program at the university has now been extended to part time students,” Mr. Roach said, in a bid to entice graduates to consider furthering their academic career right here at home.

Using the Adult Education Center theme of “overcoming barriers” as a guide, many speakers, including Mr. Roach, highlighted the sacrifices made by the graduating students.

“This is not an ordinary graduation. It’s a celebration of determination, resilience, and an unwavering belief in the power of education at any stage of your life,” said Education Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington in her opening remarks.

Although the Career and Technical Education Center’s graduating class was not solely composed of adult learners, as it included teenage students from the two local public high schools, speakers at CTEC’s graduation ceremony also highlighted the unique achievements of the adult students in the crowd.

“Thanks for making the sacrifice, thanks for being an example, thanks for being a beacon of hope and a role model for our youngsters,” said CTEC Principal Yves Abraham to the adults amongst the 2024 graduating class.

Chantal Browne, a local businesswoman and alumna of the CTEC cosmetology program, embodied “the beacon of hope” that Principal Abraham spoke of during her keynote address. “I took the skills learned in the cosmetology program and cultivated my life’s work,” Browne said to the students.

Both ceremonies further celebrated the honors of students of the graduating classes. For CTEC, Ishmeal Greenidge and Jenifer Martinez-Rondon were the first and second honors students from St. Croix Central High School, while Meckayra Bruce and Ajhiba Williams were the first and second honors students from the St. Croix Educational Complex High School. Additionally, four post-secondary students were celebrated as first and second honors students because the individuals shared the same grade point average. Andrew Adams and Victor Barnes received first honors, while Charles Baptiste and David Defour received second honors.?

At the Adult Education Center ceremony, Shinah R. A. Herbert was selected as the valedictorian, while Ta’Sha T. Bannis was selected as the salutatorian.?

While both ceremonies honored the non-traditional educational paths of the graduating students, CTEC’s Assistant Principal Betina Jules-Larocque also sought to debunk a common stereotype of the program. “There’s a misconception that at CTEC we welcome only a certain type of student: students who may have behavioral problems, students who may be struggling academically. But that is not the case. At CTEC we welcome all students— the best of the best and they excel throughout the workforce,” she declared, eliciting loud applause as an echo of air horn blasted throughout the audience.

Across both ceremonies on Thursday, participants celebrated the achievement – and potential future success – of those who have just completed one stage of their technical- and career-oriented educational journey.

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