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My Brother's Workshop Honors 2025 Graduates With Diplomas, Awards, and Certifications

Seven students earned high school diplomas while 17 others received awards and certifications in areas from carpentry to culinary arts. Judge Debra Watlington urged graduates to “plan, prepare, and prosper” as MBW celebrated perseverance and achievement.

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Seven students from My Brother's Workshop (MBW) received their high school diplomas on Saturday, September 13, while 17 others were recognized with certifications and awards during a graduation ceremony at the MBW Main Campus Stephenson Family Welcome Center on St. Thomas.

The event opened with “Pomp and Circumstance” performed by The Eljhaie Brathwaite Project. MBW Education and Communication Specialist Kate Barrows served as master of ceremonies, while Julius Jackson and Chef Ashley Allen welcomed attendees. Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett were acknowledged for their letters of support included in the graduation program, with Conrad Francois from Plaskett’s office attending in person. Interim Pastor Nate DeWard of the St. Thomas Reformed Church, also an MBW board member, delivered the invocation before the national anthems.

Keynote remarks were delivered by Judge Debra Watlington, a St. Thomas native and graduate of Ivanna Eudora Kean High School. She most recently served as Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands and now serves as a family court judge in the St. Thomas–St. John District. “This is your time to do good work and good deeds,” Judge Watlington told the graduates. “This is not a time to stop; it’s a time to plan, to prepare, and to prosper. Do whatever it takes to better yourself every day. Be constructive, be kind, and be of service.”

Graduate Isheilla Richards also addressed the audience, sharing her personal journey. “Being a part of this experience made me feel special in this MBW community. Also, I was determined to start over and get my high school diploma so I could pursue my dream of getting a degree in Mortuary Science,” she said.

Program Director Chrystie Payne presented the “Outstanding Academic Award” to Jahkeim Bourgeois, who earned the highest GPA at 3.42. The “Achievement Award” was given to Richards for her persistence and determination. Interim Pastor Nate DeWard presented the St. Thomas Reformed Church “Love Thy Neighbor Award” to Valmon Glasford for exemplary community service.

The graduates and honorees were celebrated for a wide range of accomplishments across programs including Penn Foster High School diplomas, CPR and First Aid training, ServSafe certifications, driver’s licenses, and skills in carpentry, welding, culinary arts, hospitality, sewing, and CNC machining.

The ceremony concluded with Barrows offering closing remarks and inviting attendees to enjoy refreshments provided by the MBW Café and Bakery.

A full list of graduates and honorees included:

- High School Graduates: Zion Battiste, Jahkeim Bourgeois, Shannon Mark, Romell Phillips, Isheilla Richards, Lea-Shell Tonge, Jayante Warner.
- Honorees: Shaquanda Audain, Ta’quanda Audain, Janijah Benjamin, Shawn’Ae Callwood, Bernard Canonier, John Castillo, Ni’Kai Christopher, Valmon Glasford, Makayla Heyliger, Diane Hendrickson, Joel Joseph, Reuben Lettsome, Ramon Ramirez, Sandy Scott, Kerwin Solomon, Shauri Soto, Michael Todman.

To learn more about MBW, visit mybrothersworkshop.org. To donate, go to <https://giving.classy.org/campaign/690658/donate>.

Correction: Sept. 16, 2025 at 5:18 a.m.

A previous version of this article incorrectly referred to Judge Debra Watlington as Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. Her term ended on August 1. The current Presiding Judge is Jessica Gallivan. Judge Watlington now serves as a family court judge in the St. Thomas–St. John District.

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