

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Over 200 Industry Professionals Receive Customer Service Training Sponsored By Dept. Of Tourism

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An international expert in hospitality excellence was impressed by the commitment of the U.S. Virgin Islanders at "the frontline" of tourism to elevating customer service throughout the territory, the Department of Tourism (D.O.T.) said in a release earlier this week.

After conducting three days of training last month for more than 200 tourism industry professionals, Melanie Colpitts, director of Aquila's Center for Cruise Excellence, said the enthusiasm and commitment of the U.S. Virgin Islands will enable the territory to build on its foundation of leadership in the travel and tourism industry.

"While the challenges were not the same on St. Croix and St. Thomas, the commitment to seek ways to improve, to work together with increased communication, and to be proactive in looking for ways to deliver excellence to guests was the same," the Canadian educator said.

Colpitts was further delighted by the feedback she received: "The comments we received from the participants indicated that they were leaving the training inspired to deliver only excellent service to their guests, which is what we love to see."

Offered by Aquila's Center for Cruise Excellence and supported by the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism during National Travel and Tourism Week (May 6 to 12, 2018), Colpitts conducted sessions on "Customer Service and Frontline Training" to help polish the skills of the "meeters and greeters" who are the face of tourism across the Territory.

"The FCCA (Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association) Frontline Customer Service Training that Aquila delivered in both St. Croix and St. Thomas was very well received, and we were delighted by the high level of engagement of the participants on both islands," Colpitts remarked.

She added: "Having well-trained frontline team members in cruise destinations is critical, as they hold the guest experience in their hands. Their actions can make or break a guest experience, and greatly impact the guest satisfaction ratings in a cruise destination - and those ratings are an important factor in a cruise line's decision to call on a port."

Delivering shore excellence was another important component of the training and those workshops, tailored for professionals including retail and shore excursion operators, focused on how to help maintain the U.S. Virgin Islands, among the most popular cruise stops in the Caribbean, as a destination of excellence.

"We were excited by the attendance in both St. Croix and St. Thomas, and the high level of engagement of the participants. They were passionate, spirited groups who were quick to engage in discussion and brainstorming about how to raise the level of excellence with customer service for cruise passengers visiting St. Croix and St. Thomas," said Colpitts.

D.OT. Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty said D.O.T. was committed to offering continuing education opportunities for Virgin Islanders to ensure the territory, especially in the aftermath of last year's storms, remains a sought-after location for today's travelers. "We will not rest on our laurels given the importance of the hospitality sector to our socioeconomic development and to elevating the quality of life for all Virgin Islanders," she said.

In her role as director of Aquila's Center for Cruise Excellence, Colpitts develops and delivers training programs for stakeholders in the cruise industry, designing and leading workshops and consultations with tour operators, ports and destinations around the world. She also leads the delivery of Aquila's International Tour Guide Excellence Certification Program, according to the release.