

The Virgin Islands Consortium

NetWave, LLC Graduates 25 On St. Croix With Fiber Optics Technician And Installation Certification

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Joseph Bess **May 26, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- As the graduation season begins with the end of the school year approaching quickly, Saturday marked one of the first in the territory as the graduation ceremony for the Netwave, LLC Fiber Optic Technician/Installer program commenced at St. Joseph's Catholic school Saturday evening. Xawntoia Franklin was the master of ceremony and the graduation is the 15th commencement exercise for the program, with 25 students making it to the end of the 80 hours required for each trainee to graduate.

The students worked hard to complete the requirements for the program, which ended with a test that nationally certifies them for jobs within their field as technicians. Netwave runs the program out of St. Joseph's Catholic School with the understanding that their

students will benefit while its housed on their campus.

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Edgar Bengoa, former president of the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce gave the keynote address. He sought to encourage the new graduates by stating that jobs were available in the territory for their field of work, and that more opportunities were coming online. To that end, Mr. Bengoa said St. Croix has the second largest and fastest communication hub in the world. Mr. Bengoa has worked within the field for over 50 years, first with Airs R Us and then his own firm, Bengoa Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration. His remarks spoke to the core of why the program is so important to the island, as its aim is to prepare the local population for jobs in order to decrease the outsourcing of opportunities in fiber optics.

During the evening, students received top awards for their overall scores. Tyler Canegata and Joseph Henry Jr. received first place, Dante Molloy received second place, and Richard Jackson received third place.

Netwave CEO Ana Foster, said, "The whole idea of this program was to stop outsourcing the jobs, especially now with the recovery efforts after the storm still ongoing, we have a graduating class that will go directly into good paying jobs." According to Ms. Foster, the program has alumni working as technicians in the field for various local companies and government agencies.

Director of Operations and Education, Luis R. Torres, spoke on the help that each graduate receives with finding employment, as his office helps with résumé-building, references and interviewing skills. Mr. Torres lamented that some students had decided to leave the territory following their certification for opportunities elsewhere. He said he has been working diligently to find placement locally for all his graduates, but swore he would help those seeking to relocate to the mainland. Mr. Torres added that all graduates should help with recruitment into the program with the goal of keeping jobs local and to help with keeping infrastructure going.

Closing remarks came from Department of Labor (D.O.L.) Commissioner Designee, Gary Molloy, who echoed the thoughts of those who spoke before him, stating that the partnership with Netwave and D.O.L. is exactly what the department is doing to help residents who need training or program placement while looking for work. Mr. Molloy was also in attendance for his son, who graduated from the program as well.

All students graduating from the program who are being case managed through D.O.L. received special gifts for top scores amongst all D.O.L. students. Additionally, all participants were given gifts as a congratulatory token by the department for their work.

Feature Image: Netwave graduates pose for a pic following event (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)