

The Virgin Islands Consortium

35 Operators Graduate at Limetree Bay Terminals; Ceremony Deemed Historic

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ST. CROIX -- After six weeks of intense training, Limetree Bay Terminals on Monday evening graduated 35 certified basic operators, its first cohort since becoming the owners of the oil storage terminal and soon-to-be refinery.

Flanked by family members, friends, local dignitaries, Limetree Bay officials and staff, the graduates collected their certificates with a sense of pride and accomplishment, some expressing the intensity of the training.

According to Erica Williams, senior Human Resources generalist at Limetree Bay, before choosing the 35 students, HR went through 500 applicants and performed 150 interviews.



Senator Allison DeGazon and Limetree Bay executives (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

Robert Weldzuis, Limetree Bay senior vice president and general manager, deemed the ceremony a historic moment as the graduating class was the company's first since Hovensa. "This is a historic event because it is Limtree Bay's first basic operating class since Hovensa days," he said proudly.

Guest speaker and Limetree Bay shift superintendent, Naief Salamah, gave the graduates important advice that sought to inform them on paths taken as employees and the potential outcomes thereof. He said they can either choose to become the "walking dead", "foot soldiers" or those who excel at what they do.

As a walking dead employee, Mr. Salamah said, "You forget why you're here, you do the mundane, you do the routine and you go nowhere."

Foot soldiers, he asserted, are "some of the best operators. They come in, they punch the clock, they do their job excellent, they punch out and they go home, and that's fine."

LIMETREE B



Graduate Raevah Matthew

"However, you have the option to excel, which is not easy. You have to separate yourself from the herd. You have to apply, apply, apply, which requires the right attitude," Mr. Salamah advised.

Class speaker Altoglacio Straun, 19, the youngest of the B.O.T. class, was selected by his fellow classmates. He described the six weeks as intense. Mr. Straun's parents in 2017 sent him to Florida following Hurricanes Irma and Maria to complete high school. Following his graduation, Mr. Straun decided to return home in search of opportunities. He then applied for the B.O.T. training and successfully completed the course and became the youngest among the graduates to do so.

Graduate Raevah Matthew, 26, said of her journey, "It was a very rigorous six weeks. It was a lot of information to grasp, we did a total of 16 exams in the course of six weeks. What I'm looking forward to is the hands-on portion which will start now that we've graduated."

Ms. Matthew's mother worked in the refinery as an operator and the new graduate expressed her desire to follow in mom's footsteps. "I hope to make this a career, long-term, something that I get to do for a while; something that I will enjoy doing. It's a wonderful opportunity. I originally did it because my mom was a process operator with Hovensa and I remember her coming home with her workbooks and I used to think this looks so difficult, this just looks so challenging. I like a challenge, so I was like, well, let me give it a try to see what I can do, and here I am."

Speaking to The Consortium, Senator Allison DeGazon offered congratulatory remarks to the graduates and their families. "We have so many great young men and women to celebrate amidst the few who fall off course. Congratulations to every one of the graduates and their families for investing in themselves and our community by finishing this class. These graduates represent the positive, the powerful and the hope of our dynamic and growing workforce. I applaud them all," she said.

The 35 Graduates who received their certificates of completion were: Altoglacio Straun, Andre Barthlett, Bryan Peterson, Calvin Hypolite, Carlyle Maynard, Cedric Patton Che Smith, dana Pascal, Darnell Rutherford, DeShaun Garvey, D'Zuane Chamacho, Dylisha Peter, Earl Dawson Jr, Everett Henry, Gregory Bodley, Jelani Prince, Jeremiah Daurand, Joeanne Christopher, John Peter, Joseph Daniel, Judy James, Kareem Loctar, Kellita Frederick, Ketron Springette, Khari Hopkins, Luis Frontal Jr, Mathu Mutidi, Priscilla Laurent, Raevah Matthew, Regina Evans, Richie Sookoo, Shaquilla Thomas, Stephen Clarke and Troy Jack.

Cruselda Roberts and Ernice Gilbert contributed to this story.

All pictures courtesy Cruselda Roberts for VI Consortium