

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## My Brother's Workshop Students Build First Wooden Boat Set For July 19 Unveiling

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My Brother's Workshop (M.B.W.) launched its marine program in 2018 and on July 19th, the St. Thomas Yacht club will host the launch of *Grace*, the first wooden boat the students, with help from trainers, have built at their workshop facility in Tutu, according to a release issued this week.

*Grace* was reverse engineered by the M.B.W. students from a derelict Optimus Pram shell that trainer Stan Lorbach found in the Bovoni dump 10 years ago, M.B.W. said.

After taking measurements from the mangled fiberglass pram, the students made templates of half the bottom, one side, and both transoms. *Grace* was constructed using

the “stitch & glue” method, which involves tying each piece to one another using 8-inch ‘stitches’ of thin, galvanized wire and “glued” with two-part epoxy. This is generally considered one of the simplest methods of building a small boat, which is why M.B.W. chose it as the method for their first project, according to the release. As the students’ skills develop, increasingly complex construction methods as well as larger, more sophisticated boats will be built.

*Grace’s* overall length is 7’9”, with a beam of 46”, and a 7” draft. The hull is formed from 3/8” marine-grade plywood with all of the other bits and pieces handmade from either white oak, green heart, poplar, or western red cedar. Because the boat will be used as a row boat first, the students also constructed their own 8-foot oars made of white oak and western red cedar.

According to the release, trainees of M.B.W. Marine are taught a variety of skills to prepare them for a job in the marine field including carpentry, welding, wood steaming, designing forms from bending wood, bending steamed lumber, finishing work, fiber glassing and repair, sail making and repair and more.

My Brother's Workshop is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing hope and faith for at-risk and high-risk youth in the U.S. Virgin Islands, ages 16-24. The release said its holistic approach has helped over 1000 young people choose a better path, further their education, and ultimately change their lives.