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Walk-Thru and Done: 140 CTEC Students Receive Completion Certificates at In-And-Out Affair

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Governor Albert Bryan elbows CTEC graduate Garvin Douglas — also a St. Croix Central High School student — in lieu of a handshake during CTEC's graduation walk-thru event on Monday, May 17, 2021 By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) on Monday rewarded 140 students with certificates of completion in a variety of disciplines, with this year's cohort including members from the St. Croix Educational Complex, the St. Croix Central High School and post-graduate students.

The event took place in an open area at the CTEC facility located at the St. Croix Educational Complex, and saw parents and loved ones accompanying graduates in a walk-thru affair that was

over in under an hour. This year the Dept. of Education is foregoing in-person, seated graduation ceremonies, pointing to Covid-19 as the reason. The stance has frustrated seniors from the territory's public high schools, and has evolved into a crisis for the Bryan administration, though Mr. Bryan on Monday vowed to stick with his administration's current plans.

For the CTEC walk-thru, parents/guardians walked with the respective graduates for about 25ft, then separated so the students could collect their certificate and be elbowed by dignitaries in lieu of handshakes. Meanwhile, parents continued walking a straight path to meet students at the end. They paused to take pictures while the students received their certificate. Thereafter, students and parents were led out of the area immediately at which point they were to exit the facility.



CTEC students divert to receive certificate while parents continue on a straight path to meet students at the end of the walk, then to be escorted out the area. (Ernice Gilbert, VI Consortium)

Parents and guardians along with loved ones of graduates cheered when names were called, and students appeared joyful in having completed certification. Certificates of completion were earned in the categories of hair braiding, nail technology, cosmetology, esthetics, auto body technology, agriculture technology, automobile technology, childcare management services, food management production and services, academy of hospitality and tourism, and academy of business and

finance, business administration management.

Neither Governor Bryan nor Ms. Berry-Benjamin spoke at the event. Mr. Bryan during his Monday press briefing explained that comments were already provided in a recorded video that the students could consume anytime.

"All of the speeches and everything are already virtual; all they're going to do is stick in the graduation part of it and the graduates will have an entire ceremony that they can have forever and ever," Mr. Bryan said. He said this will allow the students to see "all the remarks from the Senate president, myself, the Delegate to Congress — everybody. We just wanted to make sure that we get people in and out of a situation."



A parent snaps a picture of a young man during CTEC's graduation event on Monday, May 17, 2021. (Ernice Gilbert, VI Consortium)

The governor also added remarks in support of his decision to host drive-thru and walk-thru graduation events. "You saw today [140] graduates how many people were in that place, and St. Thomas doesn't have the type of room that we have at CTEC. Imagine what 250 graduates would look like," Mr. Bryan said.

Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas planned on hosting multiple ceremonies to accommodate for its large graduating class in the age of Covid-19.

The next graduation ceremony is set for Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. on St. Croix, when Central High School students are scheduled to drive-in, step out of a vehicle to receive the high school diploma as loved ones snap pictures. The graduate then hops back into the vehicle and leaves. The event will be held at Central High School's main parking lot.

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