

logo not found or type unknown

## 85 Percent Job Offer Rate: Wheatley Skill Center's Commencement Celebrates Outstanding Graduate Success

Education / **Published On May 19, 2023 05:13 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 19, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



**Raphael O. Wheatley Skill Center students celebrate at their 2023 Commencement Ceremony on Thursday, May 18, 2023. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE**

The Raphael O. Wheatley Skill Center Post-Secondary Career & Technical Education Institute celebrated its 2023 Commencement Ceremony on Thursday, honoring the academic achievement of nearly 100 students across a variety of professional disciplines.

The Skill Center, known for providing industry-recognized credentials and certifications to individuals looking to enhance existing careers or delve into new professional avenues, held a vibrant ceremony reflecting the diverse career paths of its graduates.

Principal Mario Francis delivered a stirring address, applauding the students' resilience and determination despite various obstacles. He proudly announced that a staggering 85 percent of the graduates have already secured job offers, a testament to their impressive performances during their studies.

"You've worked hard," Francis commended, adding, "You persevered, demonstrating that resilience is both our backbone and our brain. You've made it. You are here today."

Adding to the roster of motivational speakers, Dr. Renee Charleswell, the Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction, and District Superintendent Dr. Stephen Jorgen, addressed the graduates. Charleswell challenged them to "pay it forward" and inspire others in their community to seek greatness.

Superintendent Jorgen was visibly proud, reflecting on the unique and varied paths each student took to reach graduation. He spoke of career changes, of students being parents themselves, and of those who had faced personal setbacks. Yet each story was testament to the transformative power of perseverance and growth.

Salutatorian Cheryl Pickering, a mother of two, captivated the audience with her powerful narrative. She detailed her return to school, a decision marked by determination and ambition. Despite her successful career as a Superior Court Deputy Marshal, Pickering pursued her passion for healthcare, leading to her certification as a phlebotomist and EKG technician, with her medical assistant certification on the horizon.

Valedictorian Akayah Rodriguez discovered her calling in healthcare while caring for her ailing grandfather. She used her address to urge the V.I. Department of Education to continue supporting programs like the one at the Wheatley Skill Center, which enabled her and many others to realize their career aspirations.

Keynote speaker Jahoda Benjamin, a former student of the Wheatley Skill Center, advised the graduates to focus on the present and take life's challenges step by step. He urged them to avoid being consumed by past failures or future worries, instead celebrating their current achievements.

The graduation ceremony saw a diverse group of professionals receiving their certifications, including those in cosmetology, hair braiding, certified medical and nursing assistance, and even newly certified nail technicians and estheticians. Firefighters, police officers, and corrections officers were also amongst the proud graduates.

The triumphant ceremony underscored the core message delivered by all speakers: each graduate, armed with hard-earned credentials, should confidently step into the workforce knowing that they are equipped to excel, one day at a time.