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# Courage, Determination, and the Power of Education: St. Croix Adult Education Graduates Shine Bright

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**A family celebrates at the St. Croix Adult Education Class of 2023 commencement ceremony on May 16, 2023. By. D.E.A.R. PRODUCTIONS/V.I. CONSORTIUM**

The St. Croix Adult Education Class of 2023 celebrated their graduation on May 16, a triumphant event paying tribute to the accomplishments, resilience, and diversity embodied by its students.

The evening began with a heartfelt address by the program's principal, Christa Ann Molloy, who highlighted the distinct paths taken by the 18 graduates, 13 of whom received their high school diplomas, while five were awarded their GEDs.

According to Molloy, the strength of these students lies not just in their academic achievements, but in their courage and determination to balance their work and studies, embodying the program's

motto, "Moving Ahead." The principal drew inspiration from the late Maya Angelou's belief that courage is the most important virtue, stating that it was this courage that enabled these graduates to overcome adversities.

The evening's accolades were not only for the students. Molloy commended the faculty and staff's unwavering commitment to the students' success, describing them as a 'dynamic' group. Furthermore, she underlined the importance of literacy in everyday life, drawing from a personal anecdote about her young niece's struggle with reading a menu.

Emphasizing the Adult Education Program's mission, Molloy said, "We want our students to be comfortable and competent in all aspects of life." She also lauded the program's local business partnerships, which provided valuable work-study opportunities for students, and commended the first graduates from the job-shadowing program.

In a final call to action, Molloy urged those needing a high school diploma, its equivalent, or computer literacy skills to join the program. She extended her gratitude towards key stakeholders, including Dr. Dionne Well-Hedrington, the commissioner of Education, and her supervisor, Dr. Carla Bastion.

Addressing the graduates and their families, she said, "On behalf of the faculty and staff of the St. Croix Adult Education, congratulations to our resilient class of 2023. I wish you the best on your quality journey. Enjoy this moment."

Silva Herman, the Insular Superintendent for the District of St. Croix, also congratulated the graduates on their immense commitment to their self-improvement and their lives. Particularly, she acknowledged the exceptional achievements of two young men who emerged as valedictorian and salutatorian.

Their personal stories struck a chord with the audience. Salutatorian Sarwankwimar Flavius credited night school as a game-changer, allowing him to work in his mother's cleaning business during the day. Valedictorian Elton Clarke, who arrived from Saint Lucia over a decade ago, shared how he had postponed his education to work until his wife encouraged him to focus on his studies.

The keynote speaker, Alicia Belardo, a part-time adult education tutor and valedictorian from the class of 2015, emphasized the significance of continuous learning. "Do not let this graduation be your last," she urged. "Always be the overachiever, a person who is willing to take risks. Continue to move forward in life and make remarkable things happen."

The ceremony served as a testament to the transformative power of education and the individual journeys of these students, reinforcing that graduation is not an end but a beginning to a life full of potential and possibilities.