

The Virgin Islands Consortium

22 Teenagers Graduate from VIPCA Junior Sailing Program

Sports / **Published On July 29, 2023 08:20 AM /**

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VIPCA Junior Sailing Program students graduate at St. Thomas Yacht Club. By. VIPCA

The V.I. Professional Charter Association (VIPCA) on Friday witnessed 22 students aged between 13 and 18 set sail towards their dreams as they graduated from the VIPCA Junior Sailing Program. The graduation ceremony, held at the St. Thomas Yacht Club (STYC) near Red Hook, celebrated a month-long journey of learning that mixed swimming, sailing, navigation, safety basics, and an understanding of the marine environment.

The Junior Sailing Program is an initiative designed to empower young Virgin Islanders with crucial maritime skills, with the hope of seeding the territory's future generation of marine tourism professionals. "RapierMed is pleased to support VIPCA in its continuing efforts to educate Virgin Islands' youth to play a major role in the territory's marine tourism sector," commented Trey Goldsmith, chief operating officer and general counsel for RapierMed, LLC, the main sponsor of the program.

The course, which featured 10 days of intensive sailing lessons onboard IC24s and Hobie Cats, saw students' families, including parents, siblings, cousins and even grandparents, join them for their final sail this Friday. The instruction provided by the St. Thomas Sailing Center not only cultivated technical skills but also ignited a passion for life and work on the water.

As a further commitment to the marine future of the young sailors, all the graduates have been invited to participate in a year-round after-school sailing program at STYC. This program, sponsored by IGY Marinas, aims to consolidate the sailing skills of the students, further preparing them for a successful career in the marine industry.

Since the inception of the VIPCA Junior Sailing Program, a total of 44 juniors have graduated, with the overall count of VIPCA trained sailors reaching an impressive 109. This includes twelve 18-29-year-old's recently graduated senior students from the four-week VIPCA Marine Apprenticeship, which concluded on July 14th.



VIPCA extends its support beyond graduation, offering mentorship and scholarship programs to guide these young sailors to their dream careers as captains and crew. The organization also assists with job placement in the marine industry and sponsors their USCG OUPV Captains certifications. To date, over ten past apprentice graduates have received their captain's licenses thanks to the funding support from IGY Marinas and the Island Foundation.

Executive Director of VIPCA, Oriel Blake, expressed her enthusiasm about the success of the program, stating, "I look forward to continuing our work supporting and furthering the career prospects of Virgin Islanders in the marine industry."

The VIPCA is the territory's 501(c)(6) non-profit marine association, dedicated to promoting and enhancing the capabilities of charter yachts and the marine businesses that support them. The organization also champions marine vocational training for V.I. youth through its charity, sponsored by the Community Foundation Virgin Islands (CFVI.net), the Marine Rebuild Fund.