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10 midshipmen graduate from Western Pacific Marine Academy

Text & photos by Andrew Roberto
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Front row, from left: Leanalyn Reyes and Marvin Reyes Back row: Michael Tomokane, Landon Delos Reyes, Canfrancia Fitial, Anita Perez, Tristan Manglona and Capt. Michael Bacher of the Western Pacific Marine Academy. Not pictured: William Priest, Jonathan Riugnel, and Simkap Wabol.



From left, Marvin Reyes of Kagman High School, Michael Tomokane, also of KHS, Landon Delos Reyes of Da'ok Academy and Capt. Michael Bacher of the Western Pacific Marine Academy. Back row, from left, Tristan Manglona and Anita Perez of Da'ok Academy.



Leanalyn Reyes receives her Western Pacific Marine Academy graduation certificate from Capt. Michael Bacher.

THE Western Pacific Marine Academy graduated its first cohort of 10 midshipmen on Saturday, June 17, at the Northern Marianas Technical Institute campus.

Capt. Michael Bacher, who organizes training at WPMA, said entry-level mariners hold a Merchant Marine Credential and basic certifications in various tasks on a ship such as personal survival techniques, first aid, designated security duties and more.

The 10 midshipmen are Leanalyn Reyes, Marvin Reyes, Michael Tomakane, William Priest, Landon Delos Reyes, Canfrancia Fitial, Tristan Manglona, Anita Perez, Jonathan Ringuel, and Simkap Wabol.

In his remarks, Bacher said the return on investment in a maritime education is “off the charts.”

He said that it costs approximately \$3,600 to educate an entry level maritime industry employee, but a mariner can “double that in the first month at sea.”

“Ten mariners cost \$40,000. Those mariners will bring about half a million into the CNMI economy in the first year alone,” he added.

Da’ok Academy Principal Christine Tudela said her students have enthusiastically taken to their trades education.

“Not everyone is into books, not everyone is into tests and...all those different requirements in high school,” Tudela said. “This kind of pathway really gives a new life and opportunity for our students and their families.”

Six of the 10 midshipmen are from Da’ok Academy.

Leanalyn Reyes, a graduating midshipmen from Kagman High School, said a job in the maritime industry is an opportunity for her to “explore the world and help my family.”

“The program has benefited me in expanding my knowledge of swimming survival techniques and dealing with safety in the ocean,” Reyes added.

Through WPMA, Reyes was able to obtain a Certificate in Basic Training, Personal Safety, and Social Responsibilities; a Certificate in Basic Training First Aid, CPR, AED; and a Certificate in Vessel Personnel with Designated Security Duties — all before she turned 18.

She will receive her Merchant Marine Credential or MMC when she turns 18, and plans to go to the Military Sealift Command to continue her education prior to going to work at sea.

Reyes was not the only student to receive such certificates and credentials.

Her schoolmates from KHS — Marvin Reyes and Michael Tomokane — likewise hold certificates through the marine academy, in addition to their MMC.

Andrew Roberto

Reporter

Andrew Roberto was raised his whole life on Saipan. He graduated from Saipan Southern High School, holds a degree from Northern Marianas College, and a BA in English from the University of Guam. He once worked for KUAM, UNO Magazine, and the Guam Daily Post.

