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Ada visits Kagman High's maritime program

By Press Release

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Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred Ada recently made a surprise visit to Kagman High School to observe its maritime studies program, which is being conducted by the Western Pacific Maritime Academy.

During Ada's visit, Kenshiro Yanai, one of the school's maritime students—known as "midshipmen"—presented his newly-earned Merchant Marine Credential, which is the credential one earns through this program, allowing one to work as professional mariners on large merchant marine ships.

WPMA, a nonprofit corporation on Saipan and with maritime offices and classrooms located at Northern Marianas Technical Institute in Lower Base, is offering its U.S. Coast Guard-approved Basic Training Personal Survival Techniques, or BT-PST, course to Kagman High School students in a pilot program.

BT-PST is one of five basic training courses that qualify candidates to work on large merchant marine ships similar to those anchored off the beaches of Saipan.

Captain Dave Johansen is teaching the BT-PST course, which is a 14-hour course that teaches students the foundational knowledge and skills on how to survive disaster at sea through both written exam and practical exercises.

Knowledge includes shipboard emergency response, types of shipboard emergencies, principles of survival at sea, understanding survival craft and equipment and techniques for abandoning ship. Practical exercises are conducted to prove skills in donning a life jacket, cold weather immersion suites, treading water, turning their clothing into flotation devices and boarding a life raft.

To date seven maritime students, including Yanai, have received their Merchant Marine Credential, or MMC.

WPMA is running pilot programs to a total of 24 midshipmen both at KHS and Da'ok Academy. By the 2023-2024 school year, WPMA expects to be expanding to all high schools in the CNMI, including Tinian and Rota. The Academy will be offering a full suite of USCG-approved maritime courses and services to the seafaring public.

WPMA's PSS maritime workforce development program steers candidates into high paying jobs in the maritime sector as entry level credentialed professional mariners as deck seamen, engineers or members of the catering department. An entry level seaman in the U.S. Merchant Marine can earn upwards of \$5,000 to \$7,000 per month through one of a number of maritime unions or military sealift command. In the wake of COVID-19, the maritime sector is experiencing a huge demand for credentialed mariners.

For further information about the PSS programs, contact your principal and raise the subject at your PTSA meetings. For additional information on how to apply for an MMC, contact Selina Taitano at staitano@wpma.net. ***(Saipan Tribune/PR)***