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KHS graduates first maritime students

DAILY POST STAFF

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MARITIME GRADS: Kagman High School midshipmen, from left, Michael Tomokane, Stanley Delia, Raymond Borden, Frances Borja, Roby, Leanalyn Reyes, Kenshiro Yanai, Marvin Reyes, William Priest and Vynna Tudela. Flanking the midshipmen are Principal Ben Jones and Captain Mike Bacher. Photo courtesy of WPMA

The Western Pacific Maritime Academy has graduated its first maritime course in a pilot program at Kagman High School in Saipan, WPMA announced in a press release.

The maritime academy announced Dec. 17 it graduated 9 Kagman High School students in the Basic Training Personal Safety and Social Responsibility, or PSSR, course. WPMA is teaching maritime courses in a pilot program at KHS and Da'ok High School and will eventually expand to the rest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands high schools. The first course of instruction for training the next generation of professional mariners is applying for a Merchant Mariner Credential, or MMC.

Students in the Maritime Program are called midshipmen.

The PSSR course is one of several courses that are required for working offshore on ships. PSSR includes topics such as emergency procedures, safe working practices, marine pollution prevention, shipboard communications and human relations. PSSR is an 8-hour course that was instructed over several sessions, WPMA said in the release.

At KHS, 7 of 15 students have completed the MMC application process. The MMC application process consists of getting a Transportation Worker Identification Credential, or TWIC card, a U.S. Coast Guard medical examination, a Department of Transportation drug test and other required documents. The MMC application and all maritime courses are generously funded by WPMA, the academy said in the release.

WPMA's 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 per month through one of a number of Maritime Unions or the Military Sealift Command. In the wake of COVID-19, the maritime sector is experiencing a huge demand for credentialed mariners.

WPMA is a nonprofit corporation located on Saipan with maritime offices and classrooms located at Northern Marianas Technical Institute, or NMTEch, in Lower Base. The Academy will be offering a full suite of U.S. Coast Guard-approved maritime courses and services to the seafaring public, WPMA said.

For further information about the programs, interested people can contact school principal and raise questions at school meetings. For additional information about WPMA programs to the general public or information on how to apply for an MMC, please contact Selina Taitano at staitano@wpma.net.