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Saipan's Da'ok Academy teaches maritime studies



The Western Pacific Maritime Academy is training students across the CNMI's public schools. KUAM News has a series of reports on the Maritime Studies Program and begins at Saipan's Da'ok Academy.

Michael Bacher is a retired navy captain and captain in the merchant marine. He's now sharing his passion for the water after a career that started at 18 years old.

Captain Michael W. Bacher, Western Pacific Maritime Academy, Executive Director, said, "I can only share with all the students the best things about a maritime career. And that is that it is very satisfying, you are part of world commerce, it pays very very well...and for me, it has been very satisfying."

It's those lessons he hopes to teach at the maritime studies program at Da'ok Academy under the Western Pacific Maritime Academy on Saipan. Da'ok is an alternative high school for at-risk students-- some earn a merchant marine credential.

Bacher added, "You have to be drug-free, it is a requirement. That is the beginning of the path of having a good life."

Da'ok principal Christine Tudela said, "I am all about taking these chances for our kids and having them explore their future and giving them this opportunity is one of my biggest dream for them."

And students are chasing those dreams. "It is a really good opportunity," shared 19-year-old Simkap Wabol. "It is going to give you a better future."

And some shared the lessons they learned, as Senline Kaipat, 15, said, "One thing that I learned is what you should not do on the ship and what you should do. What you should not do is be drinking, smoking, or going somewhere you are not supposed to. And the things you're supposed to be doing is being in your position where you are supposed to be."

Others say it is the pathway to a new career. Alfonso Camacho, a sophomore, told KUAM News, "It is just my motivation and drive to help my family. Because where we are from, it is like, you know we are pretty like in the lower class. But, no matter, once I start making that money."

[Back to Home](#)

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