FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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# VIPCA Announces Applications are Open for Junior Sailing Summer Camp & Programs Leading to U.S. Coast Guard Captain's License for Virgin Islands Young Adults – Programs FREE to Eligible Participants

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Educational programs for 13-17 year-olds and 18-29 year olds offer USVI youth an exciting pathway to harness the power of the territory's surrounding seas to enjoy recreationally and work professionally. The Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA) is pleased to announce that FREE registration is open for its second RapierMed-sponsored Junior Sailing Summer Camp, from July 17-28, for USVI public school students. Camp participation opens the door to enrollment in the year-round IGY Marinas-sponsored after-school sailing program. VIPCA is also currently accepting applications for its sixth annual Marine Apprenticeship, from June 22-July 26, for young adult USVI residents. All training is at no cost to the students. Apprentice graduates can enter the workforce immediately with a paid 12-month apprenticeship supported by the USVI Department of Labor, leading to their OUPV U.S. Coast Guard Captains License.

Enrollment in the Junior Sailing Summer Camp and VIPCA Marine Apprenticeship program "is just the first step on your journey to joining the dynamic marine industry in the Territory," says Commissioner Gary Molloy, of the USVI Department of Labor. "After graduation, you will join over 52 graduates from the senior Marine Apprenticeship program and 22 from the junior program, determined to make their mark in the Virgin Islands with exceptional careers."



*Photo: Junior Sailing Summer Campers getting ready for Hobie Wave sailing. Credit: Haddiyyah Abdul-Kareem.*

## Junior Sailing Summer Camp

The Junior Sailing Camp, held at the St. Thomas Yacht Club near Red Hook, offers teenagers 10 fun-packed days of learning to sail IC24s and Hobie Cats. This year, swim lessons first take place twice weekly at 2 p.m., June 20-July 13 at the St. Thomas Swimming Association pool. The sailing camp is on weekdays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., July 17-July 28. Land and sea instruction includes understanding the

parts of a boat, navigation skills, reading weather and conditions, safety basics, and of course plenty of sailing.

Kassa Bridgewater, 17, one of last year's campers comments: "I really appreciate the VIPCA and the donors that made the sailing camp possible. I only wish I had this opportunity sooner.  I've learned so much already and hope to continue learning. The instructors have been great and made it fun.  I would strongly encourage any student who can do so, to get out on the water and learn more about sailing and the marine industry. C'mon, we live on an island!"

The Camp is free to eligible public school students thanks to the annual $25,000 sponsorship by RapierMed, a USVI financial services, and venture capital firm. To apply, visit vipca.org/junior-sailing-summer-camp/

"We are pleased to support a program that provides an opportunity for the youth of the Virgin Islands to learn vital and valuable boat handling and safety skills in one of the territory's most vital and storied industries. We hope that the early learning program will provide a foundation for a love of boating and the marine industry the youth can carry forward for work and pleasure for many years," says Trey Goldsmith, Chief Operating Officer, and General Counsel for RapierMed, LLC.

Students who participate in the Junior Sailing Camp have an opportunity to continue sailing via the year-round after-school IGY Marinas sailing program.

"Yacht Haven Grande, and our parent company IGY Marinas, are huge supporters of any initiative that helps inspire the love of boating and sailing in our local youth. An obstacle to instilling this love is accessibility: access to sailing dinghies and keelboats, access to high-quality sailing instruction, and an open door to the infrastructure that supports sailing. This is why we have donated $10,000 to the St. Thomas Yacht Club Foundation to enable VIPCA's camp graduates continued access to sailboats and sailing mentorship year-round. We can't wait to see some of these youngsters one day be crew or even the captains of the incredible yachts that visit the USVI and Yacht Haven Grande," says Phil Blake, Marina General Manager.

**VIPCA Marine Apprenticeship**



*Photo: Marine Apprentices taking part in the sail training part of the program. Credit: Oriel Blake*

The five-week Marine Apprenticeship, June 22-July 26, provides intensive captains and STCW (Standards of Training and Certification of Watch-keeping) training including First Aid and CPR certification; Sea Survival, and Fire Fighting. The jam-packed apprenticeship schedule also includes swimming, SCUBA diving, sailing, and power-boating instruction; Boating Safety certification; charter vessel and business

operations; technical skills and proficiency in diesel engines and outboards; and an introduction to marine careers with various Government departments. The Marine Apprenticeship is FREE to participants, sponsored by the Island Foundation, and fiscally managed by the Marine Rebuild Fund within the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands. For more information and to apply, visit vipca.org/youth-training/

**12-month Marine Apprenticeship Work Placement**

Now in its second year, VIPCA, with the Department of Labor as a sponsor, offers this PAID 12-month Marine Apprenticeship Work Placement program for Marine Apprenticeship graduates. This is a mentorship and scholarship program that supports the apprentices in careers as paid crew providing them necessary sea time to obtain their Captain's License. Enrollment is open on a rolling basis and includes the training of VIPCA's Marine Apprenticeship program.

Over half of the graduates of the VIPCA Marine Apprenticeship have successfully entered the workforce locally in marine industry careers. One graduate is Kasheem Sexious, formerly employed by The Market, now enrolled in the 12-month program and employed full-time by the St. Thomas Yacht Club. Sexious is training to become a sailing instructor while gaining sea time in preparation to qualify for his captain's license and is a principal trainer of Junior sailing programs at the St. Thomas Yacht Club.

"My main interest in applying for the marine apprenticeship program was the broad opportunities to go very far, to become successful, more reliable, and able to do more than life on land permits," What I suggest for others who would like to follow in my footsteps is that if you see an opportunity to do great things with help from others to get you there, take it," says Sexious.

There are excellent demand and salary opportunities for Licensed Captains in the USVI.

"In the day charter industry, base pay can range from $150 to $400 per day, plus other significant perks, depending on the size of the vessel and how far you're going, such as staying in the USVI or going to the BVI," says Patrick Herman, a St. Thomas native who holds a 100-ton Master Captain's License, who has worked in the industry for over 15 years and who is one of the instructors in the Marine Apprenticeship Program. "The two most important points I tell the students is humble yourself and be a sponge soaking up information. After that, the sky's the limit."

For more information about VIPCA and its programs, visit: www.VIPCA.org, Email: info@vipca.org, or call 340-642-0656

**ABOUT VIPCA**

VIPCA is the territory's 501(c)(6) non-profit marine association, whose purpose is to preserve, protect and promote the charter yacht sector of the U.S. Virgin Islands marine industry and the businesses that sustain them. VIPCA's focus is multi-faceted and includes offering membership benefits such as access to health and hull P&I insurance; sharing pertinent and timely industry updates and information; producing

a Marine Directory of marine vendors and services; promoting USVI marine charter tourism; liaising with USVI, BVI and PR to assist in cooperative efforts; seeking relevant official rulings from Customs and Border Protection (CBP); developing USVI marine infrastructure, including moorings; providing compliance guidance for mariners and vessels; and providing marine vocational training for USVI youth under VIPCA's charity, the Marine Rebuild Fund, which is fiscally sponsored by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI.net). www.VIPCA.org

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