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ONLINE RESOURCES FOR THE COMMERCIAL MARINE INDUSTRY

E-newsletter

## More mates

By Bruce Buls, Technical Editor



Two weeks ago, the Pacific Maritime Institute in Seattle threw a party for the 2009 graduates from its Workboat Academy. This is the second "class" to complete the program that was first offered in 2006.

After spending two intense years studying in the classroom and working on their sponsors' boats, 10 more cadets (out of the 13 who started in this class) have become Coast Guard-certified mates. Most of them are now working full time on coastal tugs. One is employed on a research vessel.

PMI launched the Workboat Academy as another way to help fill the ongoing need for officers on towing vessels, OSVs and other workboats. Working with the Coast Guard and its industry partners, PMI developed a two-year curriculum that includes alternating classroom and onboard segments. The basic idea was to provide an officer career path in between the hawsepipe and maritime academy routes.

One of the speakers at the graduation ceremony was Sean Connaughton, the head of the Maritime Administration during the Bush administration. A 1983 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Connaughton said he sees more immediate opportunities for maritime employment now than when he received his third-mate license in 1983.

The companies behind the latest graduating class are Crowley Marine Services, K-Sea Transportation, Harley Marine Services, Western Towboat, Dunlap Towing, Foss Maritime, Sause Bros., and NOAA.

Gregg Trunnell, the founder of the Workboat Academy and director of business development at PMI, said they want to start working more closely with Gulf of Mexico OSV operators to help supply them with qualified personnel. To help meet their needs, the two-year program will be set up with a regular two-months-sea/two-months-classroom rotation. "This way our cadets will relieve each other on the vessel," said Trunnell. "So for the offshore supply industry, we will be able to meet all their entry level requirements and then after one year of the program — and six months of sea time — they can go to the Coast Guard and get their AB OSV. So now PMI and the Workboat Academy can meet their AB requirements and after two years they're mates."

PMI, MITAGS (the partner school in Maryland) and all the industry sponsors are to be congratulated for successfully creating a much-needed program. Congrats also to the 10 new mates now standing

watch.

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Diversified Business Communications, 121 Free Street P.O. Box 7437 Portland, ME 04112-7437.