

PRESS RELEASE

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Minister for Education Commends RiteWay for Championing Inclusive Employment

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Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Honourable Sharie B. deCastro, has commended RiteWay Food Markets for their meaningful and ongoing partnership with the Eslyn Henley Richiez Learning Centre (EHRLC).

Speaking at the 2025 Graduation Ceremony of the learning centre, the minister expressed heartfelt appreciation to RiteWay which she says continues to set a shining example of inclusive employment and corporate responsibility in the Virgin Islands.

Honourable deCastro said, “This moment is not just a milestone for the students, their families, and the school — it is a beacon of what partnership and inclusion look like in action,” the minister said. “We are proud to recognise RiteWay’s commitment to providing a pathway to independence for students with special needs.”

The learning centre’s apprenticeship programme was officially launched in 2024 as a strategic initiative spearheaded by Principal Magdalene Alister and her dedicated staff to provide hands-on, real-world learning opportunities for students with special education needs, allowing them to gain meaningful work experience in supportive business environments.

Its objectives include promoting independence and life skills for students; fostering social inclusion by enabling students to interact in professional settings and strengthening confidence, responsibility, and employability through structured workplace training.

The programme aims to create bridges between the education system and the private sector to support post-school transitions for students with special needs and change perceptions about the capabilities of persons with special needs by highlighting their meaningful contributions to the workforce.

Community and Culture Assistant at RiteWay Karen Ward extended congratulations to the graduating class and proudly announced that two graduates who participated in the school's apprenticeship programme from October 2024 to June 2025 have been offered employment with RiteWay.

The success of the students at RiteWay is a testament to the power of collaboration and the limitless potential of inclusive education. It also exemplifies the ministry's broader vision for education transformation under the theme, **"Full STEAM Ahead."**

While STEAM is traditionally associated with **Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics**, this initiative demonstrates how **STEAM education can be expanded to include practical, hands-on applications that support workforce readiness and personal development for all learners.**

Through this apprenticeship programme, students engaged in real-world problem-solving, followed structured routines, practiced communication and interpersonal skills, and cultivated the discipline and creativity that are foundational to success in any STEAM-related field. This initiative shows that **STEAM is not just for the classroom—it is a mindset that embraces innovation, adaptability, and inclusion.**

The Ministry of Education extends its heartfelt appreciation to RiteWay for their unwavering partnership with the Eslyn Henley Richez Learning Centre and for demonstrating what true corporate citizenship looks like.

As the ministry prepares to roll out a comprehensive apprenticeship programme for school leavers, other members of the business community are being urged to follow RiteWay's inspiring example, as it is by opening their doors through work-based learning opportunities that businesses have the power to transform lives, empower young people, and shape a more inclusive, skilled, and resilient Virgin Islands workforce.

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