

21 December 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHRISTMAS BOX PROGRAM FOR OUR UNSUNG HEROS

WISTA Bermuda, the local chapter of the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA) joined with the three shipping lines to celebrate the unsung hero's of our global economy.

This marks the third successive year that WISTA Bermuda have thoughtfully filled boxes with curated items to both celebrate and inspire vulnerable segments of our community.

WISTA Bermuda started hosting the annual 'shoebox gift wrap social' in 2019 with seniors on the hardship list being the initial beneficiaries.

Fittingly, this year WISTA members and friends gathered, networked and socialised at Bermuda Sailors Home to prepare festive boxes for the seafarers that visit our Hamilton ports.

"While each link in Bermuda's supply chain is critical, these three dedicated cargo carriers provide the lifeline between our local and global economy" noted Cheryl Hayward-Chew, "Therefore it was ironic and meaningful to present gifts of toiletries to the crew, items that we in Bermuda take for granted and brought to our shores by their labour"

Butterfield and Vallis, BGA, Janice Gutteridge and other WISTA members generously donated items and that were assembled by President Angelique Burgess; Directors Cheryl Hayward-Chew, Heather Cooper, Carmen Tucker, Donnelle Swan; Secretary Jennie Kelly; Members Laura Blee-DeFrais, Chamaigne Dill, Wendy Percy and Linnell Williams.

Following WISTA Bermuda's inaugural dialogue on "seafarer's welfare in the age of Covid-19 and keeping the global economy moving" - the idea was born to provide gift packages to seafarers who call at Bermuda. The webinar, in which guest speaker Dr. Jason Zuidema Executive Director of the North American Maritime Ministry Association presented, enriched our understanding and sharpened our focus on the important role of seafarers.

"This is particularly true in Bermuda" acknowledged Tammy L Richardson-Augustus Press Officer of WISTA Bermuda "given over 98% of Bermuda's imported goods passes through the City of Hamilton docks."

Seafaring is synonymous with extreme weather, long contracts, limited crew changes, restricted shore leave, absence of creature comforts, minimal medical care, confinement, difficulty repatriating, lack of connectivity and extended isolation from loved ones. Many of the hallmarks of the profession predispose seafarers to heightened stress and anxiety – which were only magnified during the pandemic. These boxes will hopefully help the recipient seafarers, who play an integral role in our global economy, to weather the long days at sea.

The gift boxes brimming with personal care items and seasonal treats were hand delivered to the crew onboard the MV Somers Isle, MV Bermuda Islander and MV Oleander by WISTA members and representatives of each of the three lines.

As Angelique Burgess, WISTA President remarked "given the pandemic and the challenges faced by seafarers in being unable to disembark when in port due to strict covid19 restrictions, it was agreed to gear the Christmas gift bags to the crew on board the three cargo lines that service Bermuda as an appreciation for their service"

The management of Bermuda Container Line, Bermuda International Shipping Ltd and Somers Isles Shipping Ltd, expressed their appreciation to WISTA Bermuda for their recognition of the crews of Bermuda's three cargo lines, stating that in particular during the Christmas Season when we in Bermuda are enjoying time with friends and family, the crew on all three ships will spend their Christmas Day crossing the Atlantic.

WISTA Bermuda was delighted to be supported in this initiative by Bermuda's three cargo lines. Their willing participation underscored that industry players are concerned to promote crew wellbeing and to take action to celebrate the unique contributions made by seafarers to international seaborne trade and civil society.

The wellbeing of seafarers has a far-reaching resonance. WISTA Bermuda is pleased to have played a small part in the "conversation" among individuals, organizations, industry players that seafaring is a vital support mechanism for the world economy.

About WISTA

WISTA Bermuda is one of 54 national chapters of Women's International Shipping & Trading Association [WISTA International] a global organisation formed in 1974, as a connector for its network of more than 3,800 female professionals at the management level, in the maritime, trading and logistics sectors. On a global scale, WISTA members have access to an incredibly diverse network of decision makers in the maritime field on whom they can call for referrals, advice or business collaborations.

WISTA Bermuda works toward minimizing the existing gender leadership gap in the maritime industry by skill building opportunities, corporate visibility, facilitating in country and regional business relationships and fostering a community amount its members.

Are you in a senior management position in the maritime industry? If so, contact us at Jennie Kelly [jkelly@consolidated.bm] to join our bright, collective and strong community of maritime professionals.