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MEDIA ADVISORY

Hats Off To Anchorage Mariners For Their Career Achievements

ANCHORAGE, AK- The Alaska Tanker Company (ATC) and the Seafarers International Union (SIU) are hosting a luncheon reception to congratulate Jerry Maya, Allan Oyao, Fernando Oyao, and Deocadio Romney, all of Anchorage, upon their successful completion of training at the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education in Piney Point, Maryland. The Paul Hall Center is a union and employer-financed training school. Congressman Don Young, representatives of BP, the honorees, and the Alaska Department of Labor are expected to attend the noon luncheon at the Anchorage Sheraton on Friday, May 31, 2002.

The honorees are resident Alaskans who began their seagoing careers as "riding-gang" maintenance workers aboard Alaska Tanker Company vessels. Created to satisfy a need for ongoing maintenance at sea, the riding-gang provides routine upkeep and repairs of vessels to reduce time in dry dock. As a riding-gang worker it is difficult to earn the sea-time credit necessary to pursue further training. However, the U.S. Coast Guard granted the required sea-time credit to upgrade their skills. These former riding-gang members are now U.S. Coast Guard-certified able-bodied seafarers employed by Alaska Tanker Company. SIU representative Harold Holten stated, "We are particularly pleased with the cooperation received from the Coast Guard and the Alaska State Department of Labor in assuring these folks had the opportunity to pursue their training and career goals."

Graduates of the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education are eligible to seek a career aboard U.S.-flag Jones Act merchant ships serving Alaska, other domestic U.S. markets, or in our nation's international trade. Each riding-gang member was required to pass USCG examinations in lifeboat and water survival and safety, marine firefighting, first aid, oil spill response, and able-seaman training in order to obtain regular employment as an able-bodied seafarer.

This program is a nearly five-year-old effort to train Alaskans for employment aboard U.S. commercial vessels. According to Bill Cole, Alaska Tanker Company's Labor Relations Director, "We are delighted to have Alaskans as seagoing employees of ATC and are proud to further Congressman Young's vision of expanding local hire opportunities for Alaskans aboard U.S.-flag vessels. This is a true public/private/labor partnership that continues to achieve and surpass its goals of providing quality maritime jobs for Alaskans."

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