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Female Inmates Graduate with Construction Skills

Graduates Significantly Less Likely to Return to Prison

Chowchilla - Today, 21 inmate workers at Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW) graduated from California Prison Industry Authority's (CALPIA) Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship program.

Graduates from CALPIA's Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship program return to prison at a rate of approximately 18 percent. This is an impressive number given the return rate of prisoners in the general population is 55 percent.

"Months ago these women made the responsible decision to change the direction of their lives," said Kathy Jett, Undersecretary of Programs for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. "That commitment to change, along with their newly learned skills, will help them find employment and lead to a more productive life upon parole."

The students in the program receive training from journeymen craftsman in various construction skills, including concrete work, finished carpentry, site grading and the installation of lighting fixtures. CALPIA and trade unions representing industry workers, act as partners in the program. Once released from prison, ex-offenders are eligible for placement in apprenticeship jobs.

In addition to the valuable training from expert instructors, CALPIA provides each paroled graduate with a set of tools, a tool belt and pays union fees for one year so that they are ready the first day of their new job.

"These graduates have received first-class construction training and are prepared to be valuable employees," said Chuck Pattillo, General Manager, California Prison Industry Authority. "They have achieved a lot during their time in our program and now have the rest of their lives to achieve even more."

Recently, the Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship students finished the installation of a 6800 square foot building at VSPW for the CDCR Division of Addiction and Recovery Services (DARS). Among other things, the DARS building will provide in-prison substance abuse treatment and counseling.

All CALPIA inmate employees are required to obtain a high school diploma or complete a GED within two-years of beginning the program.

CALPIA's primary function is to facilitate inmate job skill training in a business environment. CALPIA is a self-financed state agency that receives all of its revenue from the sale of products it manufactures. The recidivism rate among CALPIA inmates is 25 percent lower than the general prison population, a success attributed to the job skills that they receive by working in CALPIA business enterprises.

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For more information on CALPIA visit: www.pia.ca.gov