

Press Release

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Inmate Divers Graduate To Deep Sea Construction Careers

Program leads to high wages and low recidivism

Chino.....The Prison Industry Authority today celebrated the graduation of 13 inmates from its Marine Technology Training Center in Chino, after they completed a grueling year long course preparing them for lucrative careers in the underwater construction industry.

“This is one of the most unique rehabilitation programs for inmates in the country,” said Charles Pattillo, general manager of the Prison Industry Authority. “It gives inmates a real job skill that is in high demand around the world. More important, it gives inmates the confidence, life skills, and a very lucrative paycheck, all that help them succeed in their transition back to the community and increases the chances they will lead a constructive life and not come back to prison.”

Graduating inmates were required to master a wide range of classes in general education, physics, diving medicine, blueprint reading and seamanship, all of which are taught in the deep water training facility built by inmates at the California Institution for Men. The inmates also are certified in vocational skills, such as underwater welding used in offshore construction in oil drilling and bridge building, and in other marine industries, such as operation and repair of diesel engines.

In addition to the vocational skills, the 1,800 hour course gives inmates the physical stamina needed to work in harsh and often unforgiving conditions in deep sea construction, where they weld by feel in complete darkness, in isolated work sites and under barometric pressure. Among the graduation requirements; divers must be strong enough to swim five miles, an indication of the survival skills needed to succeed in the industry.

All of the graduates are certified by the American Academy of Underwater Sciences, which governs all diving instruction in U.S. colleges and universities.

The PIA program trains about 100 inmates per year and there is a waiting list for inmates looking to get into the program, and for good reason. Graduates have the opportunity to earn six figure salaries in a demanding field, a rare opportunity for former inmates looking to change their lives. “All of the research shows that a job greatly reduces the chances of an inmate coming back to prison and we are very proud of the lower recidivism rates among graduates of all the PIA programs,” said Pattillo.

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Recent research shows that graduates of PIA programs have at least an 11 percent less chance of returning to prison than the general inmate population, saving taxpayers an estimated \$23 million a year. Among graduates of the diving program in its earlier phase, the recidivism rate has been as low as six percent. .

The commercial diving program was initially established at CIM in 1970, under the guidance of Leonard Greenstone, a former U.S. Navy salvage diver and now retired diving contractor from Southern California.

After being operated by the California Department of Corrections, the program was shuttered due to budget constraints in 2003. In December, 2006, The Prison Industry Authority resurrected the facility, now named in honor of the 84 year old Greenstone, who spoke to today's graduates.

The Prison Industry Authority is a financially self-supporting state government agency that operates manufacturing and agricultural facilities within the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to provide rehabilitation opportunities for inmates.

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