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## **Incarcerated Individuals at CIM and CIW Receive Job Certifications and Apprenticeships through the California Prison Industry Authority** *Former Graduates Share Their Stories of Success*

Nearly one hundred men and women at the California Institution for Men and at the California Institution for Women received industry accredited job certifications and/or apprenticeships during back-to-back graduation ceremonies on August 24 and August 25.

In partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Correctional Health Care Services, graduates were honored for their completion of job training programs provided by the California Prison Industry Authority or CALPIA.

“Congratulations to each of you and thank you for your commitment and contribution to CALPIA as this is a program near and dear to my heart,” said CALPIA’s General Manager Bill Davidson. “I love what we do as an organization, and it is you that makes it what we are. You have shown what it takes to succeed and the job skills you have mastered will only help you gain careers when returning to your communities.”

At CIM, graduates were honored from the following CALPIA programs: Healthcare Facilities Maintenance, Pre-Apprentice Construction Labor, Commercial Diving, and Laundry. Seven of the graduates received Apprenticeship completion certificates through a partnership with the California Department of Industrial Relations.

Former CALPIA graduates came back to prison and shared their stories of success including Timothy Jackson. Jackson is the CEO and Founder of Quality Touch Cleaning Systems in Southern California. He learned his job skills while incarcerated through CALPIA’s Healthcare Facilities Maintenance program.

Jackson now operates a successful cleaning company that services bio-tech companies, law firms, and other businesses.

“The more I became certified through CALPIA’s program, the more confident I became on what I could do post-release,” said Jackson. “I want to encourage you. Don’t let your environments slow your imagination or prevent you from dreaming.”

At the ceremony, Jackson was joined by several CALPIA success stories including: Kenyatta Kalisana who paroled in 2008 and started working as an offshore diver in California and in the Gulf of Mexico, Billy Pham who owns Phamarine Commercial Diving Service in Long Beach and employs 20 including three formerly incarcerated, and Ruben Minjarez who returned home in 2009 and now works for American Marine Corporation in Los Angeles.

CIM's Warden James Hill also spoke at the ceremony.

"When visitors come to CIM, we take them to CALPIA laundry, the dive school, the juice operation, we show them what's going on," said Warden Hill. "When we get there, I am thinking it is going to be the instructors that explain the programs, but it is actually you who let us know how proud you are. It's evident that you are proud of what you have done."

At CIW, graduates were honored for completing CALPIA programs in Healthcare Facilities Maintenance, Pre-Apprentice Carpentry, Pre-Apprentice Construction Labor, Fabric Products, and Computer Coding. For coding, CALPIA partners with The Last Mile, a non-profit that prepares incarcerated individuals for successful reentry through business and technology training.

"Congratulations on your accomplishments, this is a day worth celebrating," said CIW Acting Warden Jennifer Core. "We want you to take advantage of all the opportunities before you here at CIW whether it is through job training programs, education, self-help groups, we want you to succeed."

At CIW's ceremony, mother-of-six Vera Salcedo shared her story of success to the graduates. Salcedo is now a Foreman working for Neff Construction building schools in the Inland Empire. Six years ago, Salcedo graduated from CALPIA's Pre-Apprentice Carpentry program at the prison. Once she returned home, she worked for the Southwest Carpenters Union with numerous employment opportunities.

"I sat in those chairs, and I sat in those cells," said Salcedo. "I thought a lot of the same thoughts you may think. I felt a lot of the same things you may be feeling. Shake it off. Don't let the time here determine your future. You determine your future and what you want. Life is not easy out there. But you have the right tools to get through it."

According to a November 2021 University of California, Irvine study CALPIA graduates had lower rates of rearrests, reconvictions, and reincarcerations compared to those who were qualified to, but did not, participate in CALPIA. By three years after release, only 15.4 percent of CALPIA participants had been returned to custody.

"We are only as good as our success stories and I am overjoyed when I see former graduates providing that inspiration to the incarcerated population," added Davidson. "This is a team effort; thanks to our staff, and our employer and union partnerships, people who graduate from our programs have an incredible chance of staying out of prison."