

Heroes Soar to New Heights Through CALPIA's Healthcare Facilities Maintenance Program

By: **Michele Kane**, CALPIA, Assistant
General Manager, External Affairs



When you think of heroes you may conjure up images of **Superman** or **Wonder Woman**. Someone wearing a cape and showing incredible strength and speed. Heroes are admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities, and many of those unsung heroes you can find inside prisons working in Correctional Industries. These heroes may find it difficult to leap tall buildings in a single bound or hold up their magic bracelets to deflect weapons, but they do know how to change lives for the better.



◀ Frances Venegas (right) congratulates an HFM graduate

▶ CALPIA General Manager Bill Davidson speaks to HFM graduates



Frances Venegas works as a Custodian Supervisor II for the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA). She was part of the successful inception of CALPIA's Healthcare Facilities Maintenance (HFM) program in 2014, which is now offered to more than a thousand incarcerated individuals at all California prisons.

"The HFM program for me is assisting others with tools and training so incarcerated individuals can be successful when they get out," said Venegas. "We are not just people who are cleaning toilets and dumping trash, we actually provide training

on how to clean up bodily fluids in hospital settings along with providing customer service and communications training. We are preparing them for careers working in hospitals, dental offices, and other medical settings."

Venegas oversees the HFM program at eight prisons and is just one of the many heroes you will find working for Correctional Industries.

CALPIA's General Manager **Bill Davidson** emphasizes it is the hard work and dedication of staff that needs to be recognized.

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“We have too many heroes to count, which is a good thing for CALPIA,” said Davidson. “When I walk through the prisons, talk with our staff and learn how they are transforming lives, that is when I am encouraged and inspired. Our employees are working with the incarcerated, teaching them, training them, and providing them the tools to be successful when they return to their communities.”

“ During the onset of this pandemic and the stress of not knowing much about COVID, our staff had to put in a lot of time training and learning the best techniques for cleaning, sanitizing, and more importantly keeping people safe...”

—**Bill Davidson**
CALPIA’s General Manager

Nicole Collins who is the Assistant General Manager of CALPIA’s Operations agrees. She along with her team ensures enterprises and programs run efficiently, with the overall goal of teaching the incarcerated those meaningful job skills.



HFM Graduate Alexander Mendoza receives his certification in Healthcare Facilities Maintenance



HFM Graduation at Salinas Valley State Prison

"I have been part of CALPIA for 23 years and it is our mission that excites me to come to work every day," said Collins. "We are providing incarcerated individuals with life-changing training opportunities so they can find not just jobs, but careers when they leave prison."

The past three years of working through COVID-19 has seen many challenges not only for the world, but for Correctional Industries.

"Healthcare Facilities Maintenance staff and all the incarcerated individuals working for the

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HFM Graduate Alexander Mendoza with his mother at graduation

program had to ensure all health and safety protocols were met through COVID,” added Venegas. “We made sure our essential workers were able to continue to clean and sanitize in these high-risk environments.”

According to Davidson it is through those unprecedented times, heroes emerge.

“During the onset of this pandemic and the stress of not knowing much about COVID, our staff had to put in a lot of time training and learning the best techniques for cleaning, sanitizing, and more importantly keeping people safe,” added Davidson. “That is when we saw unbelievable greatness from our CALPIA staff and incarcerated individuals.”

At a recent graduation at Salinas Valley State Prison, an HFM graduate **Alexander Mendoza** spoke in front of family, friends, and staff. He talked about the importance of the program and those who oversee it.

“First, I would like to thank Ms. Venegas for seeing the potential in me to become the leadman and

putting those challenges in front of me to become a successful worker with great life skills that are beneficial to my future,” said Mendoza. “This opportunity allowed me to understand myself and my work ethic and build onto my commitment of responsibility, living amends, and becoming a positive role model for others and an example for what this HFM program has to offer.”

Vanegas is quick not to take all the credit, she emphasizes it takes a team, “I love my job, this is my passion, and there are unsung heroes in prison every day.”

Finishing his graduation speech, Mendoza summed it up this way, “I once thought I was not worthy of any kind of success, but now I believe if one works hard in all aspects of life, great rewards will come to light such as today, a graduation with the accomplishment of an apprenticeship in Healthcare Facilities Maintenance ... I am proud to be part of this program.” •