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Contact: Office of Communications
Phone: (601) 359-5608
E-mail: MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

Graduation Ceremony Held for New Class of MDOC Correctional Officers

PEARL – A new class of 17 correctional officers heard words of inspiration and support before being sworn into service today and embarking on a life changing career for the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Class 2017-4M marked the completion of MDOC Correctional Officer Basic Academy training during a graduation ceremony held at 11 a.m. on Friday, July 21, at Central Mississippi Correctional Facility. The graduates, who chose “Preparing Today for Our Tomorrow” as their class motto, heard a message by Boty McDonald, prosecutor for the City of Ridgeland, who served as the guest speaker. McDonald’s address was followed by recognition of top graduates through class awards and the administration of the oath of office.

McDonald said he was “very humbled” to be invited to speak to the graduates because they “will be on the front lines.” McDonald said he hopes the new officers can make a positive difference in the lives of inmates.

“Your job is not going to be easy. I want to challenge you to look for the nuggets of gold. You will come across people who for them it is just another day, but you will spot some of them who will stand out and be the reason you come to work each day,” McDonald said “I want you to look for those nuggets of gold because they will sustain you.”

McDonald said helping the inmates by being respectful toward them can change lives. “You want people to come up to you and tell you that you’re the reason they made it,” McDonald said. “There are people out there who are going to survive because you treated them well and with respect.”

Bobby Conner of Jackson was recognized as the class leader and led the graduates through the ceremony. Formerly of Memphis, Conner came to the corrections profession after serving as a manager of an auto parts store and desired an opportunity to be a part of a leadership team.

“The class taught a lot about discipline and I learned a lot about leadership and a lot of great skills. I am ready to go to work now,” Conner said. “The whole process was a great experience.”

Several class members received recognition for excellence during their training. The Leadership Award for Highest Honor with grades above 95 percent went to Rikeedra Booker. Shannon Doyle also received an Honor Award for her grade of above 90 percent. Doyle was also recognized as

leader for the Alpha Squad; Kawanie Thomas, Bravo Squad; and Leundria Newson, Charlie Squad.

The Top Gun Award recipient for AR-15 was Mitchell Baldwin; 12 gauge shotgun, Krystil Ferguson; and Glock, Tafili Carter, who was also assistant class leader.

MDOC Commissioner Pelicia Hall provided closing remarks for the graduates under her charge. Hall noted that rehabilitation is an important part of corrections which is not only about just locking people up.

“I commend you on taking these first steps in your career in corrections. I hope that you will see it as a career and not just a job,” Hall said. “It’s about changing people’s lives and you are going to be part of that success. If you treat the inmates that you supervise with respect then they will also treat you with respect. I have full faith and confidence in you. While you are looking for those golden nuggets, I expect you to be my golden nugget.”

The 2017-4M class was the sixth to successfully complete the 10-week MDOC Basic Correctional Officer Academy since January 1. The 17 class members brings the total number of graduates this year to 52.

For more information about career opportunities with the Mississippi Department of Corrections, visit the following Internet sites:

<http://www.mdoc.ms.gov/Misc/Pages/Jobs.aspx>

Or visit the State Personnel Board website <http://www.mspb.ms.gov/>

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