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Jones Family Keeps Corrections Tradition Going During MDOC's latest Graduation

PEARL – Three members of the Jones family soon could be working for the Mississippi Department of Corrections – all within a year's time.

If that happens, they will be following in the footsteps of their parents as corrections professionals.

Londynn Jones took the oath of office Aug. 4, as his two younger sisters, both trainees, and mother watched. He was one of 16 trainees of the Class of 2017-5M to graduate at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Rankin County.

Jones, a native of Clarksdale, started in the profession in his hometown area.

“I worked at a prison in Tutwiler and I just had a passion for it. I have known since an early age that I had a passion for criminal justice and this was a great way to be a part of it and gain experience,” Jones said.

Sisters Tolernisha and Shanquella Jones are scheduled to graduate with the 2017-6M class.

“I was a little skeptical at first when they said they wanted to do this, too. I wasn't completely sure they could do it, but they did. I am very proud of them,” Londynn said.

Shanquella is a former program assistant, and Tolernisha was an office assistant. “I felt like it would be good experience for me,” Shanquella said, with Tolernisha nodding in agreement.

Their father was a corrections officer and their mother, Dianne Jones was a unit manager for 13 years for Corrections Corps of America, now Core Civics.

“I had a lot of challenges, but it was a wonderful experience,” Dianne said. “I was surprised when my children showed interest. They chose their own careers, and I am proud of them.”

The Aug. 4 graduation stood out not only because of the Jones' family but also because of other graduates like Class Leader Halima Marion, a native of Highland Falls, N.Y. and because of guest speaker Michael Guest, district attorney for Madison and Rankin counties.

Marion came to her new career after having worked at a daycare in Jackson. She is pursuing a degree in criminal justice through Jackson State University. Marion won a Top Gun Award for her skills with the Glock 22. She also received a Leadership Award.

"I decided to join MDOC because it would give me valuable experience in my field," Marion said. "I really enjoyed the training phase and I was honored when my classmates elected me as their class leader. I enjoyed that experience. I am excited and ready to start serving."

During his remarks, Guest, district attorney since 2008, noted the word "honor" in the class' motto, "Live with Honor, Serve with Pride."

"I want to thank you for your hard work. I want to thank you for your dedication and I want to thank you for your commitment. By completing your training, you have become members of the thin blue line. It is a symbol of law enforcement that originated in England and has become prevalent in the United States. It symbolizes the relationship between law enforcement and the community as protectors of fellow citizens from those who would commit crimes," Guest said.

As an example of honor, Guest told the story of Desmond Doss, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor for saving more than 75 soldiers in the battle of Hacksaw Ridge in Okinawa during World War II.

Clayton Wilson, CMCF training instructor, presented Qualimazaria Willis and Janos Horvath each with the Honor Award. Horvath also received a Leadership Award.

Katrina Harris, instructor, presented the Leadership Award also Willie McGee, Shane Savannah, assistant class leader, and Marion.

Ulysses Cates, instructor, presented the Top Gun Awards for AR-15 and shotgun both to Krista Patrick.

The 2017-5M class is the seventh to complete the 10-week MDOC Basic Correctional Officer Academy since Jan. 1. The class of six men and 10 women brings the total number of graduates this year to 68.

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