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NEW OFFICERS CHALLENGED TO FIND GOLD NUGGETS

PEARL – Ridgeland City Prosecutor Boty McDonald challenged MDOC’s new correctional officers to find gold nuggets while performing their job.

Stressing to the 17 new officers that their job won’t be easy, McDonald said, “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. I want you to look for those nuggets of gold because they will sustain you.”

McDonald, guest speaker for Class 2017-4M Graduation Friday at Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Rankin County, shared examples of his gold nuggets, including a man who is sober now after McDonald gave him a break.

“There are people out there who survived because you treated them well and with respect,” McDonald said.

Corrections is no longer about incarceration alone, but also rehabilitation and that is MDOC’s focus, said Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall, whose goal is to ensure that Mississippi inmates have meaningful rehabilitation programs.

“It’s about changing people’s lives and you are going to be part of that success,” Hall said. “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 all to be my golden nuggets.”

Hall also cautioned the officers to not let a moment of temptation cause them to bring in contraband for quick money. “You are bigger than that,” she said. “Your integrity is larger than that.”

The class of five men and 12 women included people like 26-year-old Paul Medders of Rosedale, 48-year-old Bobby Conner of Jackson, who served as class leader, and 23-year-old

George Anderson Jr. of Forest. Medders has relatives and a church member who work for MDOC. He wants to eventually become a probation and parole officer.

Formerly of Memphis, Conner came to corrections with more than 24 years of experience in automotive retail, in which he managed an auto parts store.

Anderson has worked a variety of jobs, including at the Walnut Grove Correctional Facility before it closed in September.

Like Medders, Conner and Anderson want to stay in law enforcement, though Anderson said his goal is to move to enforcement.

Medders, Conner and Anderson all said the 12-week academy training was an experience that taught them a lot.

“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.”

Anderson said, “I embraced the training.”

The awards and recipients were:

Award of Honor, Shannon Doyle and Rikeedra Booker, who had the highest grade. Doyle also was recognized for leadership.

Leadership, Leundria Newson, Kawanie Thomas, Tafili Carter, Conner, and Doyle. Carter, assistant class leader, also received a Top Gun Award.

Top Gun, Mitchell Baldwin for proficiency with the AR-15; Krystil Ferguson for the 12-gaugeshotgun; and Carter for the Glock22.

The 2017-4M class is the sixth to complete the 10-week MDOC Basic Correctional Officer Academy since Jan. 1. The class brings the total number of graduates this year to 54.