

The Folsom Telegraph

Prison inmates turn incarceration to opportunity



By Laura Newell, Reporter

FOLSOM, CA - Many inmates from Folsom State Prison graduated last week at the California Prison Industry Authority's Career Technical Education program at the Green Valley Training Center on prison grounds.

"A lot of times when people come to prison, they don't think of opportunity," said Charles Pattillo, general manager of California Prison Industry Authority. "But this is a place of opportunity. ... These guys have worked hard out here and I want to thank them."

The program is a first-of-its-kind in the nation to partner with trade unions for an offender rehabilitation program. It trains offenders in construction skills such as welding, ironwork, general labor and finished carpentry.

Participants are eligible to be union pre-apprentices upon parole. California Prison Industry Authority provides paroled graduates with a set of tools, a tool belt and pays union dues for the first year.

"What's good about this program is I know I've made a difference in someone's life," said Roy Borgersen, program instructor with Laborers Local 185. "I've proved to (the inmates) that they can do something with their lives."

Doyle Radford, with Laborers Local 185, is also proud to watch this graduation ceremony.

"Our instructors (with the union) worked hard and gave them the opportunity that they need in the world," Radford said. "We are optimistic about this group of graduates. We hope they will be able to turn a new leaf and be productive members of society."

Pete Galvan was also an instructor for inmates in the program.

"These inmates are all for this program," Galvan said. "They want to try hard, change their lives and be a part of the tax paying society again."

At the graduation celebration on Wednesday, April 24, Folsom State Prison Warden Rick Hill said, "today is a day of celebration."

"The partnership between Folsom State Prison and California Prison Industry Authority is outstanding and has grown through the years," Hill said to graduating inmates. "I am pleased to see this accomplishment and glad to see that you've made your families proud."

Kathleen Allison, Division of Adult Institutions deputy director, said this is a unique opportunity for inmates.

"I believe in rehabilitation and this program," Allison said to inmates at the ceremony. "As graduates, you have done your part, you have done this for yourselves and for your families. ... They have given you a tool for your toolbox of life. What you do with it from here on out is up to you."

With a three-year recidivism rate of less than 15 percent, California Prison Industry Authority's Career Technical Education programs are CDCR's most successful vocational training programs, said California Prison Industry Authority officials.

Program graduates have a cumulative recidivism rate of less than 7.6 percent. To increase the chance of employment, all California Prison Industry Authority offender employees are required to obtain a high school diploma, or complete a GED, within two years of beginning the program.

The graduation takes place adjacent to the newest CTE-constructed prototype Emergency Operations Center Building that will be officially unveiled at a separate event on May 23.

