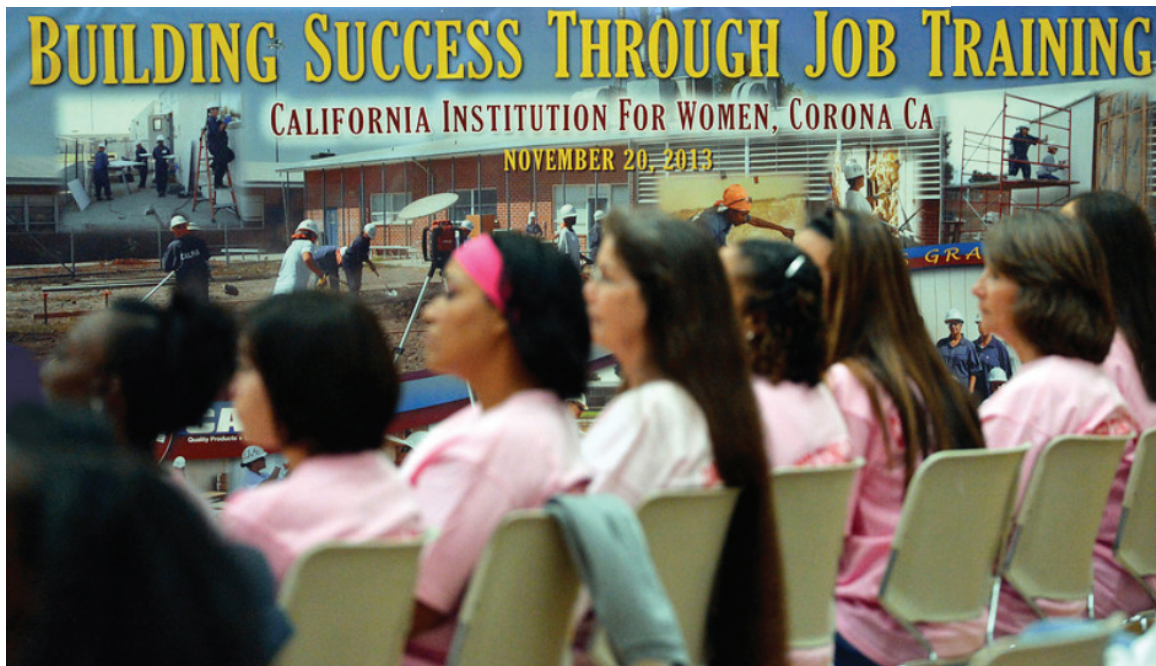


Inmates at CIW receive certificates in construction labor and carpentry



All women are required to complete a general educational development, or GED, degree within two years of beginning the program.

The carpentry program and labor programs can each take up to two years to complete. The women will also receive 1,500 pre-apprentice hours in carpentry and about 1,200 in labor that they can use when they're out of prison.

"This is not for sissies," said Sheila Sabatino, 55, who has both certificates. "It's a physically enduring job - it's a man's job that we do quite well."

By **Canan Tasci**, *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*

POSTED: 11/20/13, 6:41 PM PST

CHINO Vera Salcedo thought a hammer could fix just about anything.

She knows better now.

The 38-year-old was one of 16 offenders at the California Institution for Women who proudly received certificates in construction labor during a graduation ceremony on Wednesday.

Graduates wore pink shirts and upon accepting their diplomas they were all given pink hard hats.

Salcedo said she can officially and properly use every tool in the tool box and has the confidence to create a better life for herself and her family.

"I believe in myself now. I never tried to get myself to do anything because I thought I would fail," said Salcedo, who is expected to be released in 2017. "But this program taught me I can do anything and not just in carpentry, but also life in general."

The women are part of the California Prison Industry Authority, or CALPIA, Career Technical Education program. Six of the women also received carpentry certification.

The program trains offenders in various pre-apprentice construction skills that include welding and ironwork, general labor and finished carpentry. Paroled graduates will also receive a set of tools and a tool belt so they are ready for their first day at their new job with CALPIA paying for the first year of union dues, according to the agency's news release.

"I was afraid of getting on a roof, now I work on them," said graduate Tracy Munson, 52. "A couple of friends on parole got work right away when they got out. That helps me realize that what I'm doing here will help me in my life."

With a recidivism rate of less than 15 percent, CALPIA's CTE programs are the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's most successful vocational training programs. Construction labor participants have a cumulative recidivism rate of 4.88 percent, according to CALPIA news release.

In February CIW Chino inmates in the program finished constructing the one-story campus' drug rehabilitation modular building and in June they completed the mental health building. The two are built next to each other and total about 2,400 square feet.

On Monday the women completed remodeling the 1,300-square-foot educational purpose room. About \$40,000 worth of repair went into the remodel of the room, where 90 percent of the walls had been infested with termites, said Rudy Reyes, CALPIA construction supervisor.

The women are now working on a 1,600-square-foot extension to a classroom.

“This gives offenders something to do so they get into the habit of doing something every day,” said Eric Reslock, CALPIA spokesman. “So when they get out of prison they are doing something productive instead of getting into trouble again.”

CALPIA is a self-financed state entity that provides training and productive work assignments for about 7,000 offenders - men and women - in 25 state institutions with the recidivism rate among participants 80 percent lower than the general prison population, according to the news release.

The program started as a pilot in 2006 and was founded on two principles: reducing offender recidivism and lower construction costs for CALPIA and state Department of Corrections and other state agencies.

After Wednesday’s graduation ceremony the graduates, along with family members and other inmates, showed off their diplomas by posing in a photo booth.

“I couldn’t be more proud of her,” said Cindy Burnette, aunt of Sabatino. “Looking forward to her coming home.”