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## **CALPIA Graduates Recognized with Job Certifications at Mule Creek State Prison**

Forty-five incarcerated individuals received their job certifications and/or apprenticeships from the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) at Mule Creek State Prison on September 12, 2024.

In partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, California Correctional Health Care Services, and the California Department of Industrial Relations, CALPIA recognized the graduates for their hard work and accomplishments.

“These jobs that you do on a day-to-day basis are important,” said CALPIA’s General Manager Bill Davidson. “I hope you do this not just as a job while you are here at Mule Creek, but as the beginning of your career.”

Family, friends and staff attended the afternoon ceremony.

Graduates received industry accredited certifications in Data Entry, Clothing and Fabric, Food and Beverage Packaging, Commercial Laundry, and Healthcare Facilities Maintenance. Some graduates also received apprenticeships.

Jesus Tovar received his certification in Healthcare Facilities Maintenance where he learned to clean at a hospital level. Many former graduates now work in hospitals, dental offices, or have started their own cleaning businesses.

“This is my first time having responsibility and it is a milestone in my life,” said Tovar. “I am completing this because I had proper training through CALPIA. I am getting out soon and now I can take this to the streets and provide for my kids.”

CDCR’s Undersecretary of Health Care Services Dr. Diana Toche emphasized that the cleaning they learn through this program is top notch and encouraged graduates to dream of a positive future.

“Congratulations for seizing the opportunities before you,” said Dr. Toche. “This is why programming is so important. We want you to be able to provide for yourselves and your families when you leave here. It is through our partnership, that we get to see firsthand the success of rehabilitation and job training programs.”

Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes also acknowledged the graduates.

“Mule Creek State Prison is proud to work with CALPIA toward your rehabilitation and a path that allows you the ability to learn these skills, trades, and a sense of normalcy,” said Chief Deputy Warden Holmes. “We want you prepared to return back to society and your families.”

Former CALPIA graduate Tony Curtis delivered the keynote address. Curtis was formerly incarcerated and shared how he obtained three certifications while in prison including his Optician certification through the American Board of Opticianry, a certification in Construction and another in Healthcare Facilities Maintenance.

“The skills and opportunities that were provided by CALPIA are the doors that I went through that lead to the success I have today,” said Curtis. “Viable skills that work in the real community outside these walls.”

When Curtis returned to his community, he started working weekends as an Environmental Services Technician at a San Diego Hospital along with working as a Journeyman for construction firm Henkels and McCoy.

Curtis is now the co-owner of his own construction company and is the Senior Pastor of a Southern California Christian Church.

“You must seize every opportunity that you are given and walk through that door in order to have success in the future,” added Curtis.

Davidson said it makes a difference when you have former graduates like Curtis returning to prison to share their personal stories of encouragement.

“He has been in their shoes and can inspire graduates with hope,” added Davidson. “Change is possible, and we want them to succeed.”

*CALPIA provides real-world job training to incarcerated individuals so they can succeed when returning to their communities. The self-funded state entity provides job skills to approximately 5,800 individuals in CDCR prisons. CALPIA reduces recidivism and increases public safety. The organization’s goal is to ensure incarcerated individuals have career opportunities when they leave prison in hopes they never return. CALPIA graduates earn industry accredited certifications and time off their sentences. Each individual applies to be in the program and CALPIA has countless success stories. A recent University of California, Irvine recidivism study found that CALPIA participants have a 15% return to custody rate after three years, which means 85% of all CALPIA participants do not return to prison.*

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