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## MCIW inmates complete Haven Phase 1

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PEARL – The Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) recognized the first graduating class of “The Haven,” a residential rehabilitation program developed within the Mississippi Correctional Institute for Women, during a recent ceremony honoring 23 incarcerated women who completed the program’s initial phase.

“The Haven” is a peer-developed initiative created by incarcerated women to support others working toward personal growth and recovery. The program focuses on addressing challenges such as addiction, unhealthy relationships, and personal accountability, while encouraging participants to pursue long-term positive change.

During opening remarks at the graduation, a long-term incarcerated participant who helped develop the program described its mission: “The Haven was created by incarcerated women for incarcerated women who struggle with habits, hangups, and who are working toward freedom from addiction, bondage, relationships, and finding liberty in Christ.”

The program is structured in three phases, with the first cohort completing Phase One: Refuge. Coursework during this phase includes instruction on emotional awareness, forgiveness, identity, recovery principles, life skills, codependency, and self-discovery. Participants live together in a shared unit, where they attend classes, share meals, and support one another through accountability and peer encouragement.

Dr. Beth Masters, chaplain and facilitator of The Haven program, emphasized the level of commitment required to complete the program. “You have chosen to work on yourself for a season, and that is what it takes. We have dug, and they have really examined themselves in this program. They have received certificates of completion for 11 in-person classes. They were also asked to complete a set of classes on their tablets. They have truly earned these certificates.”

Several participants were also recognized for reaching personal recovery milestones and received sobriety chips to mark their progress.

Graduate Whitney Hixson, an incarcerated individual who has recently been granted parole, shared her personal experience in the program, describing it as a turning point in her life. She noted that The Haven provided a structured, supportive environment where she could reflect, grow, and develop healthier

coping strategies. Hixson also spoke about improvements in her relationships and her outlook on the future.

Program leaders emphasized that the initiative is designed to prepare participants for life both during incarceration and after release. "We are equipping women to live outside of this space, whether they are in their freedom outside of the gates or they return to our community," the inmate facilitator said. "When they leave The Haven, they will carry what they have learned with them and share it with others."

The program was launched with support from community partners, including First Baptist Church of Jackson, Crossgates Church of Brandon, and God Behind Bars.

MCIW Supt. Katrina Reid commended the graduates for their commitment to the program. "Recovery is a journey of a thousand steps, and today you took a significant one," Reid said. "The tools you have learned can serve as a strong foundation for continued growth and progress."

