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Contact: Office of Communications
Phone: (601) 359-5701, 359-5289
E-mail: MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

MDOC opens first Prison Cosmetology School

JACKSON – The Mississippi Department of Corrections on Monday officially opened the state’s first licensed Cosmetology School for inmates in several years.

The entire Mississippi State Board of Cosmetology traveled to the Delta Correctional Facility (DCF) in Greenwood to cut the ribbon after spending a year helping to organize an instructional program for females there. In the program, the first class of 28 inmates faced rigorous coursework in the science of cosmetology for a year. Once past the exams, they are officially licensed.

DCF Superintendent Susan Swindle said the inmates have responded enthusiastically toward participating in the program as more than 50 inmates applied for the 28 available positions.

“To join and complete a course like this takes dedication on their behalf,” Swindle said. “Everyone remains excited about the program since it started and the girls are tickled about it.”

Inmate Katrina Gordon echoed that enthusiasm in describing the accomplishment of finishing the program and being more prepared for life after incarceration. “You have to have the passion to create and the will to keep going when you lose clients and get more,” Gordon said.

Motivation was a key component for selecting the first class members, said Richard Thompson, a contract consultant who helped to start the program. “We wanted to make sure we were getting people who wanted to be in the program and finish it. We had a great pool of applicants for interviews,” Thompson said. “We are looking to add more programs in the beauty industry.”

Graduates of this new program earn money and leave prison with a license and tools. Cosmetology Board officials said hardworking graduates can earn six figures within a few years.

Sharon Clark, executive director of the Mississippi Board of Cosmetology, said the graduates are skilled and ready to work from day one. “They can walk into any salon across the State of Mississippi, apply for a job, easily walk into that field and just pick up and go,” Clark said.

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