

Local program helps inmates start new lives

By Eric Kopp

Okeechobee News

A handful of men and women in the Okeechobee County Jail have made an overt commitment to change their lives from one of crime, to one of success and productivity.

"It's all about changing their lives," said Natasha McMullen-LaVigne, assistant director of the Public Defender's Re-Entry Program. "We talk about everything in here."

Ms. McMullen-LaVigne was on hand Friday, Feb. 27, to hand out certificates to 11 men and 13 women at the county jail who have successfully completed a re-entry program and will soon be striking out on their own to find work.

"We have partnered with the Public Defender's Office of the 19th Judicial Circuit to have the re-entry program for inmates that are getting out to help them become a more productive citizen," explained



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Thirteen women currently housed in the Okeechobee County Jail received certificates at a special ceremony held Friday, Feb. 27, to honor them for completing the Re-Entry Program. Those receiving their certificates included: (front row, left to right) Christina Rivera, Melissa Smith and Lisa Sills; (back row, left to right) Major Noel Stephen, of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office, Dawn Willis, Amanda Robertson, Sherita Thomas, Shirley Ardley, Lydia Rosemann, Re-Entry Program Assistant Director Natasha McMullen-Lavigne and Okeechobee County Jail Administrator Ronnie White. During the eight-week program the women learned how to fill out a resume, how to fill out a job application and how to handle a job interview.

New program: Offers a new start



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Eleven men currently incarcerated in the Okeechobee County Jail received certificates at a special ceremony held Friday, Feb. 27, to honor them for completing the Re-Entry Program. Those being honored for completing the program included: (front row, left to right) Robert Brash, Robert Simmons, Clayton Jenkins, Mike Stanley and William Adkisson; (back row, left to right) Major Noel Stephen of the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office, Richard Watson, Jarrell Molina, Jeffrey King, Jordan Shellen, Okeechobee County Jail Administrator Ronnie White and Natasha McMullen-LaVigne, the assistant director of the program. During the program volunteers came into the jail to talk to the participants about such things as the proper way to fill out a resume and how to conduct themselves in a job interview.