

Custodial Training For Inmates



Custodial training is granting Berkshire County Jail & House of Correction inmates a second chance for success.

By: Aaron Baunee, managing editor

As a county jail inmate, you have two options: Simply do your time and pay your debt to society, or discover ways to break your cycle of behavior and become a contributing member of society.

All inmates sentenced to a county jail will eventually be released and will have accountability for and control of their actions.

In an effort to help inmates secure gainful employment upon their release, one Western Massachusetts Sheriff, Carmen C. Massimiano, Jr., is taking a proactive approach to guide offenders toward employment in the custodial services industry.

With funding provided by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act, Sheriff's Deputy Alan Cetti of the Berkshire County Jail & House of Correction — with approval from Massimiano, Jr. — teaches the Cleaning Management Institute's (CMI) Basic Level Custodial Technician course to provide marketable skills inmates can use upon their reentry into society.

Cetti, a CMI-certified trainer, taught the seven-week, 55-hour course to interested inmates through both classroom instruction and hands-on work experience.

By utilizing overhead transparencies to display basic cleaning concepts and various props demonstrating dilution ratios and differentiating surface types, Cetti was able to captivate the classroom and present the coursework in an insightful and engaging manner.

"Camaraderie developed amongst the students to the point that some studied together in the living units, which helped the needier students to understand the more difficult concepts," explains Cetti.



Cetti explains dilution ratios to enthusiastic students.

What Do You Know?

Cetti bolstered confidence in his students by employing techniques to remind them of what information they already knew, a process that allowed complex math equations about dilution ratios to be easily deciphered.

In addition to teaching the inmates how to read schematics and blueprints commonly used in manufacturer equipment manuals, Cetti assembled a mock custodial closet to demonstrate the proper use and storage of cleaning tools and products.

After nearly two months of instruction and numerous weekly tests to ensure competency, each student was presented with a three-ring binder containing a personalized CMI certificate and Custodial Technician patch, corrected weekly tests, useful resources — including a copy of the pH scale, dilution ratios, etc. — and the CMI textbook.

According to Massimiano, Jr., participants are highly encouraged to review the course materials when preparing for future job interviews and before tackling cleaning assignments.

"These inmates now have the knowledge and confidence to pursue a career in their newly acquired trade," proclaims Cetti.

Education Breeds Success

Because of the success of the inaugural class — there was a 100 percent passing rate — the Berkshire County Jail & House of Correction will offer two cycles of the CMI Basic Level Custodial Technician course during the 2010 fiscal year.

Cetti plans to administer the courses similar to the way the initial course was taught, but with the addition of an interactive CMI PowerPoint presentation to replace the aging transparencies.

"My attendance at the CMI Train the Trainer course was an invaluable experience," recites Cetti. "At the training, I learned more about the course content and alternative teaching methods. I now feel even more prepared to teach the CMI Basic Level Custodial Technician course."

In accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws and the Massachusetts Department of Correction standards, "good time" awards may reduce the amount of time served by inmates who become involved in educational, self-help and work programs.

Because of this — not to mention contributing to a more educated workforce — the Berkshire County Jail & House of Correction is striving to procure more custodial services educational opportunities for those serving time.

"The hope is to secure funding in the 2011 fiscal year that will allow the program to add the CMI Advanced Level Custodial Technician course," concludes Massimiano, Jr. *CM*