

CAPITAL REGION GIVES

Training offers inmates a clean start

Classes curb incidents inside Schenectady County Jail

By Jennifer Patterson

Schenectady

The halls at the county jail are a little quieter these days.

That's because inmates are on their best behavior lest they lose access to new programs being offered by the Schenectady County Sheriff's Office, the deputy superintendent said.

The cooking and painting programs are popular, but what inmates are responding to most is the certified custodial technician vocational training program, provided at no cost to taxpayers through a partnership with the Cleaning Management Institute in Albany.

"Since we started the programs in January, there has been a decrease in what we call 'codes,' or fights between inmates and incidents with officers," Deputy Superintendent Bob Cutitta said.

"If there's a fight, the inmate gets pulled immediately from whatever program they're enrolled in, so there's a direct correlation between programs and the reduction in violence."

Brant Insero, a sales and operations manager at the Institute on Wolf Road in Colonie — which is affiliated with Cleaning & Maintenance Management and owned by ISSA, the leading trade association for the cleaning industry — developed the pilot program with the sheriff's office.

The institute donated materials and Insero donated his time to teach inmates about technical skills like chemical safety, carpet care, cleaning hard floor surfaces and bathrooms, as well as custodial service operations. He also spoke at length about interview skills.

In addition to the institute, the sheriff's office teamed up with Hill & Markes, a local distributor of cleaning supplies and equipment, to provide the latest technology and tools for inmates to learn their new trade.

The pilot program ended in March and graduated 11 inmates, who received a national certification to use when they are able to enter the commercial cleaning industry.

"There has been a lot of excite-



Photos courtesy of the Cleaning Management Institute

Inmates at the Schenectady County Jail participated in a certified custodial technician vocational training program, offered through a partnership with the Cleaning Management Institute on Wolf Road in Colonie.

What they need is a chance

Employers interested in hiring graduates of the program should contact Deputy Superintendent Bob Cutitta at robert.cutitta@schenectadycounty.com.



ment and a boost of motivation and morale at the jail," said Insero, who is teaching a second eight-week class at the Veeder Avenue facility. "Similar programs are offered at the state and federal levels, but this is the first one that I know of on the county level in New York."

Insero's classes are hands-on, and inmates are learning how to maintain and refurbish floors at the jail to enhance the facility's image.

Guest speakers are also brought in to augment the instruction.

Sheriff Dominic Dagostino said one of his main goals with the new programming is to reduce the rate of recidivism.

"Inmates incarcerated here are doing long time and will be out in a year or less, typically, so we want to get them in a position where they will be successful when they reenter the community," Dagostino



Sheriff Dominic Dagostino, far left, appears with inmates who graduated from the certified custodial technician vocational training program, taught by Brant Insero of the Cleaning Management Institute, far right.

no said. "It would be irresponsible if we didn't offer these programs, especially when there is no cost to the rest of the county."

Building on the success of the vocational program, the sheriff's office is also working to develop a curriculum to teach inmates how to interview for a job, and how to keep a job once they're hired.

The mission is clear — to teach inmates how to be successful on the outside while they're incarcerated.

Dagostino said he has been in contact with the Albany County sheriff and is working to share the program with other county jails throughout Capital Region and beyond.

"I'm always talking to the inmates and tell them, hey, do me a favor and don't come back here, unless it's just to say hi," Dagostino said. "Life's too short."

▶ jpatterson@timesunion.com - @JenSPatterson - 518-454-5340

Route 150 bridge to be replaced

North Greenbush

A public information meeting will be held Thursday to discuss a proposed project to replace the Route 150 bridge over Wynantskill Creek in North Greenbush.

The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. at the town offices at 2 Douglas St. in Wynantskill.

The bridge was built to the codes and standards of its time and is safe for everyday traffic, the state Department of Transportation said. Due to severe weather and the increasing frequency of major storms and floods, the bridge is susceptible to damage from scour, erosion caused by foundation material such as rocks and sand being carried away by flooding.

The Route 150 bridge is among 105 across the state that have been identified as flood prone. Work on the new Route 150 bridge is expected to begin in 2016, with major activities scheduled to begin in June 2016 with the closure of the bridge for three months.

An official detour for vehicles will be posted during that time, and a temporary pedestrian bridge will be installed.

—Staff report

Albany hosts event about severe weather

Severe-weather experts from the State University of New York system will share what they know at a virtual event Thursday hosted by the University at Albany and the Rockefeller Institute of Government.

"Facing the Storm: Severe Weather Challenges Confronting New York State in the 21st Century," will be livestreamed for participating SUNY campuses from 9:30 a.m. to noon. The public is welcome to attend.

Experts will discuss severe weather the state has faced and what people can learn from it. The talk is meant to help emergency managers, not-for-profit executives and government officials.

—Madeline St. Amour