

Prison Inmates Begin Teaching Core Curriculum at DOC

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FOR TRADES

In March earlier this year, the Department of Corrections launched a pilot training program designed to equip short-term release inmates with construction skills by providing standardized NCCER curriculum taught inside the prison by long-term release inmates.

In April, five inmates completed the instructor training program and became certified to lead the courses. Those instructors are now teaching the first round of classes to a group of ten fellow inmates.

"The concept was, when they get out of this program, they're going to have something of value that they can take and start a new life with. We can't simply just release them from prison and say 'OK, you're on your own,'" said Bert Johnston, GCA Trades Academy education director. "We are giving them a skill that is something of value, to give them a purpose in life, so that they don't have to return to prison."

The training program gives inmates a chance to earn NCCER certification in construction craft trades that would help them overcome the challenges of securing employment after serving time in prison.

"The Department of Corrections really needs to turn its resources, not just to incarcerating individuals, but to training them for the future," said Tony Lamorena, DOC director. "It's within our responsibility not just to incarcerate, but to make sure that when they leave this facility we've provided them the necessary skills and training to make them successful."

The department's training program is the result of several years of discussion and collaboration between DOC, GCA Trades Academy and the Department of Labor. The training program is funded by the American Jobs Center.

"We received a federal grant from Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which is designed to help those who are really want-



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DOC director Tony Lamorena says the resources at the correctional facility will train inmates for the future.

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Gov. Eddie Calvo, right, says the program is a part of an initiative to build up the island's workforce.

ing and are interested in joining part of our workforce," said Shirley "Sam" Mabini, DOL director.

"The governor has made it clear that it is up to us to prepare our workforce here on island and the region, and it is about human resources. We have human resources here in the facility. They are going to be valuable. We want them to be valuable contributing citizens in the community," said Mabini.

With Guam's shortage of skilled laborers due to H-2B visa application denials, Governor Calvo applauded the training program, citing it as part of a long-term solution to train and build up the local workforce to counter the island's dependency on



foreign workers.

"We are now seeing a mass out migration. Unfortunately, with the current policy with homeland security with regards to our H-2 workers, if things go as they

are going now, we are going to look at about 1,200 to 1,300 highly skilled jobs — individuals that will leave the island — and they need replacement or we will have major issues," said Govern-

nor Calvo.

"In the long term, it's about making lemonade out of the lemon, and these programs are the long-term solutions that will ensure that we won't have to worry about what happens, where foreign labor is being cut off, because it will be home-grown labor," said Calvo.