



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

MAX N. OTANI
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2022

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTER HOLDS CEREMONY FOR GED, CULINARY AND OTHER RESTORATIVE PROGRAM GRADUATES

HONOLULU – A graduation ceremony was held for 31 women at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC). The women completed various educational programs including GED, GED Tutor Training, Pu'uohonua and Kapiolani Community College (KCC) Culinary Arts. Governor David Ige, First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige, Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald and House District 32 Representative Linda Ichiyama were all in attendance along with the Hawaii Friends for Restorative Justice Director Lorenn Walker, education program volunteers, employees and graduates.

The Hawai'i Friends for Restorative Justice was able to expand and continue important educational programming at WCCC with the help of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) grant awarded to them in August 2021. GEER provides grants directly to education entities in Hawai'i to fund innovative initiatives and offset the impact that COVID-19 has had on students, families and educators in Hawai'i.

"These women have taken an important step toward fulfilling their true potential. I'm proud of their progress and the role the GEER program played in supporting these women, providing them with educational opportunities, employment, and well-being," said Gov. David Ige.

The Hawai'i Friends for Restorative Justice are using their grant to train incarcerated women to be GED tutors for their peers, provide college correspondence courses for women in WCCC, and provide reentry and transitional services for women wanting to continue their education post incarceration.

"Education is a key to success, and we're so proud of these women for taking this step. Lorenn Walker and the Hawai'i Friends of Restorative Justice have created an innovative structure that can be a model for education in other correctional facilities and make a difference in even more lives," said Dawn Amano-Ige.

15 women received their GED diploma for completing the GED program and five women completed the GED Tutor Training program. The GED Tutor Program is a two-week long training for the women to become tutors for those students who are preparing for their GED.

“We’re just really thrilled with the success of this program, and we do appreciate the Department of Public Safety’s support in providing this. It’s been beyond our expectations,” said Lorenn Walker, Director of Hawai’i Friends for Restorative Justice.

“The tutor program helps students get the needed support and encouragement from their tutors and mentors,” said Amy Jodar, PSD Corrections Education Program Manager. “The tutors can work with the students in the housing units, and this has accelerated the GED diploma process.”

Eight (8) women graduated from the Pu’uhonua Program. Pu’uhonua is a college program through the Windward Community College. It is funded by the Pu’uhonua grant, a federal grant for women-at-risk. The women who completed the program earn the Academic Subject Certificate in Psychosocial Developmental Studies.

Eight (8) women also received Kapiolani Community College (KCC) Culinary Arts Certificates today. The women held a special graduation luncheon, featuring some of the 5-star quality cuisine they have learned to create.

The KCC culinary arts program at WCCC is a comprehensive program that aims to educate participants in professionalism, commitment, and responsibility. The women worked their way up to the Intermediate level class from three required beginner classes, including Fundamental Cookery, Safety and Sanitation and Introduction to Culinary Arts. They also earn 14 credits that will appear in their University of Hawaii transcripts.

The students not only learned the basics of culinary arts but also the skills that accompany a rigorous college course, such as: time management, study habits, completing assignments, teamwork and showing up.

“You have a new start. You made a choice to make a change in your life, to take that one step down the path of hopefully going further with your education. This is a huge accomplishment today,” said Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald. “The only limits for you, as far as I’m concerned, are the limits you put on yourself. Stay true to your heart, work hard and be willing to try. That’s what you have shown us today.”

“We could not be prouder of all our graduates. These women worked hard to complete their classes. They are learning real-life job skills and now have what it takes to continue their education when they leave, and work towards a better life, not only for themselves, but for their families,” said Tommy Johnson, PSD Deputy Director for Corrections.

###