



Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers | Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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DOC, MATC Honor Fourteen Graduates

All Worked to Earn Associate Degree while Incarcerated

(Milwaukee) -- Fourteen people took steps toward a brighter future today, earning an Associate Degree from Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC). The group faced greater obstacles than most to earn their degrees, completing course work while incarcerated.

The 14 honored at a graduation ceremony today all worked towards their diplomas while in the Wisconsin correctional institutions. They are among the first cohort of individuals in the care of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) to participate in the federal Second Chance Pell pilot program, which allows a small number of colleges and universities nationwide to provide post-secondary education and training to prisoners. MATC was one of the first colleges selected to participate in this program in 2016.

“I always say the best part of my job is celebrating the successes of persons in our care with their families, our staff and supporters from the community. It’s not the same, because I cannot be there in person to feel all the pride and love around our graduates, but I know you feel it,” DOC Secretary Kevin Carr said during the virtual graduation ceremony.

The graduates honored Friday morning completed their studies online at five separate DOC institutions.

- Redgranite Correctional Institution - 1 graduate
- Robert E Ellsworth Correctional Center - 4 graduates
- Racine Correctional Institution - 3 graduates
- Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution - 3 graduates
- Jackson Correctional Institution - 3 graduates

The graduate speaker was Kyle Hansen, who is in DOC care at Jackson Correctional Institution. He notes his grandmothers were his inspiration to earn a degree, and his son was his motivation.

“To the rest of the world, my son is only one person. But to this person, he is the whole world, and my motivation for a better life and education,” Hansen said. “I constantly emphasis to him the importance of working hard in school. I would be a hypocrite to not lead by example. I owe it to him to be the best man and father that I can possibly be, and education guides me to that.”

All the graduates earned either an Associate of Sciences or Associate of Arts degree from MATC, taking a minimum of six credits per semester. Governor Tony Evers, the Keynote Speaker for the ceremony, praised their determination to reach this day in the face of all obstacles.

“It was a feat, but you did it. And we are all very proud of you and you should be proud of yourselves. And I know your families and loved ones are as well, as they celebrate with us today,” Gov. Evers told the graduates.

A 2013 study by RAND Corporation found that inmates who participate in correctional education programs had 43% lower odds of recidivism than those who did not. Also, their odds of getting a job post-release was 13% higher than those who did not participate in correctional education.

“I was motivated by a sincere desire to make positive changes in my life to enhance the likelihood of a successful future,” Hansen said, adding that he intends to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Business Management at UW-Milwaukee. “It is very easy to fall into the trap of sitting around and wasting time while serving a prison sentence; to simply count the years. I was motivated to not allow myself to fall into this trap and just simply count the years, but rather to make the years count. Because, anything lost can be found except for time wasted.”

Wisconsin DOC would like to thank its education services staff and MATC, Wisconsin’s largest technical college, for all the work that went into making this day possible.

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