

Over 900 youth graduate in Correctional Science Learnership Programme



IDEAL CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS IN WAITING: These are some of the 978 graduates who successfully completed their Correctional Science Programme

More than 900 South African learners edged closer to securing permanent employment in the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) following their successful completion of the Correctional Science Learnership Programme offered at Kroonstad and Zonderwater Training Colleges in 2011.

Some 978 learners graduated at a ceremony held at the Kroonstad College, Free State, on Tuesday 31 January in the presence of their families, correctional services executive managers and other dignitaries following a year-long of intense training and learning. The newly graduates were chosen from over one million applicants who showed

interest in serving the South African public through the DCS when the programme was advertised in 2010.

According to the department's National Commissioner Mr. Tom Moyane, the learnership is aimed at giving unemployed youth skills, knowledge and experience and to provide the department with a pool of candidates from which to recruit for entry level jobs. The programme also serves as the department's flagship to government's mandate to provide training and development opportunities to the youth.

“Welcome to the Department of Correctional Services, the journey has just begun. You have been chosen to be part of this organisation,” said Commissioner Moyane as he congratulated the graduates. They had earlier greeted him with a standing ovation and thunderous applause. “We have invested a great deal in you during this learnership programme and are keen to see the return on our investment. We would like to employ all of you permanently provided we have sufficient vacancies and you meet all our appointment criteria,” said Commissioner Moyane.

He added: “You have gone over the first hurdle. Well done! The next hurdle is to undergo the selection process which will determine whether you qualify to be permanently employed and at which vacancy you will be placed.”

At their graduation ceremony, the graduates, all dressed in the dark brown Correctional Services Departmental outfit, could not hold back their excitement. “I've waited a long time for this (receiving her FET certificate). I'm relieved because I was very nervous,” said 35-year-old Irene Oliphant who travelled all the way from Graaf Reinett, Eastern Cape with her 94-year-old great grandmother.

When the Department of Correctional Services advertised the Further Education and Training Certificate in Correctional Science Learnership programme in 2010, more than one million applications were received. Of these, 1 032 people were enrolled but 978 successfully completed the programme. The rest had, along the way, either received employment or disqualified after being found to have criminal records.

The learners were divided into two groups - one based at Kroonstad Management Area and the other at the Zonderwater Management Area. Zonderwater hosted a total of 479 learners, 207 women and 272 men while the group at Kroonstad comprised 253 men and 249 women, bringing the total to 499. Of the 978 learners, 11 are disabled. They all took part in a theoretical programme from 31 January 2011 to 21 April 2011 and then a practical from 22 April to 13 December 2011. The Safety and Security Seta (Sasseta) had partnered with Correctional Services in the learner-ship programme and Sasseta CEO Z Baloyi lauded the Department and congratulated the graduates.

Baloyi said the programme allowed learners to obtain a nationally recognised qualification in Correctional Science. A qualifying learner would afterwards be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of correctional practices which will contribute to the development of persons involved in a corrections environment. Buntu Bokwe from Ezibeleni in Queenstown said he will grab the opportunity of permanent employment with both hands and work with passion.

“I'm very happy. Getting employment is the most important thing to me,” said Bokwe.