

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: September 14, 2009

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, INMATES AWARDED TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS INSIDE SHERIFF'S JAIL

(Phoenix, AZ) Six juveniles, all of whom broke the law thereby losing their freedom and their chance to graduate with their high school classmates, will at least be awarded true high school diplomas tomorrow in an 11:30 a.m. ceremony in the Lower Buckeye Jail.

This is the first time in the history of Sheriff Joe Arpaio's "Hard Knocks High School," the only high school inside an American jail, that inmates will actually get a true and traditional high school diploma rather than receiving their GEDs.

Unlike the GED program, a traditional diploma would allow those inmates/students to apply directly to a major university rather than go to a community college for higher education once their jail sentences are served.

The high school diplomas are being awarded to six male inmates tomorrow, four of whom are incarcerated for armed robbery and two for aggravated assault, because they completed what is known as a "virtual high school curriculum" done via the internet in a jailhouse classroom setting, Arpaio says.

"We're always looking for ways we can help inmates who want to help themselves," Arpaio says. "These inmates volunteered to do the tough work in this tough jail environment, to stay on par with the classmates they left behind and we are very proud of their achievements."

EdOptions Foundation, the corporation which provides and supports lifelong learning,

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News Release

is working in concert with the Sheriff's Office to provide inmates with internet based classroom delivery.

Dr. David Reed, EdOptions' Director of Research and program manager for the MCSO project, said about the high school graduates, "These individuals have met rigorous state requirements, met or exceeded AIMS testing, and completed stringent academic requirements for graduation – it is truly an accomplishment to be proud of."

Dr. Tom Sawner, CEO of Educational Options, Inc. said, "The Foundation is proud to support and be a part of this program and delighted that through EdOptions High School six uniquely qualified students graduated from high school and earned their diploma. This will allow these students an opportunity to transition into mainstream society and to continue in advanced educational programs."

The inmates will wear the traditional cap and gown and be awarded their certificates before friends and family tomorrow at the Lower Buckeye Jail starting at 11:30AM. Sheriff Joe Arpaio will be joined by Paradise Valley Mayor Vernon Parker, a staunch believer in higher education for youths.

Media is encouraged to attend and meet these young men. Please contact the on call Media Relations Officer for entrance into the medium security facility of Lower Buckeye Jail located at 35th Avenue and Lower Buckeye Roads. END

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