

L. Gale Buckner, Commissioner

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(Photos Available)

NINE YOUTH GRADUATE AT AUGUSTA YDC AND RYDC
– Commissioner and Board Chairman present high school diplomas, G.E.D. and technical certificates to youth –

(Augusta, Ga.) --- Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner L. Gale Buckner today announced that nine youth graduated collectively from the Augusta Youth Development Campus (YDC) and Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC) and another 16 youth from those same secure facilities received awards and certificates at a commencement ceremony before several dozen assembled guests including DJJ Board Chairman Dr. Edwin A. Risler, DJJ executives, teachers and staff members, as well as families of the youth.

"I'm so proud to be here with you today to celebrate what you have accomplished for yourselves," Commissioner Buckner said. "I encourage you to build on your success so that when you leave DJJ you can continue to see there are opportunities available to you."

Two graduates shared some of their personal experiences in addressing the guests in the auditorium.

"Less than one year ago, graduating from any kind of education program was the farthest thing from my mind and my life plans," said one youth, who earned a GED while his family, including his one-year-old son cheered and wiped away tears. (Because juvenile records are sealed, the youth's name is being withheld.) "I was a 16-year-old seventh grader whose only vision for my future was a long prison sentence. As God would have it, some honorable people in DJJ were in my corner. I thank DJJ for making it possible for young people like me to have a second or third chance in life."

Said the other youth, "If you had asked me what I would aspire to be before getting my GED, I would have said, 'I don't think I amount to much.' Now, like many graduates, I have the belief, skills, persistence and desire to go for further education."

Adding that he plans to attend Midlands Technical College to major in Computer Engineering, the youth said, "I believe I will have a happier, more successful, fulfilled life."

DJJ is the state's 181st school district and has dual accreditation from both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Correctional Education Association (CEA). Last academic year, 51 youth graduated from DJJ high schools and 125 students earned GEDs.

Last week, 40 youth received high school diplomas, General Equivalency Degrees (GED), and vocational certificates at Sumter YDC in Americus. On Friday, Dec. 16, graduations will be held at the Eastman YDC in Eastman and the Milan YDC in Milan. Macon YDC will hold its graduation on Dec. 21.

DJJ's mission is to protect and serve the citizens of Georgia by holding young offenders accountable for their actions through the delivery of services and sanctions in appropriate settings and by supporting youth in their communities to become productive and law-abiding citizens. Each day, at 26 facilities and 92 court services offices throughout the state, more than 4,000 DJJ employees work diligently to effect justice as well as redirect and shape the young lives in the agency's care so they can become contributing members of society. At the same time, DJJ seeks to protect the victims of crimes so that they can rebuild their lives.

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