



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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DJJ FOCUS ON EDUCATION: Georgia Preparatory Academy Graduates Largest Class Ever! DJJ Success Story for GA's 181st School District

(AUGUSTA – GA) Commissioner Avery D. Niles is proud to announce the success of this week's consolidated DJJ graduation ceremony, the first-ever combined graduation observance conducted by the Department of Juvenile Justice. The graduation event was scheduled on-site at Georgia's Youth Development Campus (YDC) in Augusta, designed to accommodate larger crowds of parents and facilitate increased safety and security measures.

"No previous DJJ administration has ever attempted to perform joint graduation ceremonies by gathering candidates from all its Youth Development Campuses together under one roof," said Commissioner Avery Niles.

Nearly seventy young graduates were transported by DJJ security vehicles across Georgia for the opportunity to cross the stage together in their caps and gowns and to receive their high school diplomas and GED's in front of a special audience that included parents and teachers.

"This combined graduation event was a DJJ-first," said Commissioner Niles. "Sixty-seven juvenile offenders conducted themselves in an orderly, professional manner to be a part of the 'Pomp and Circumstance' of a real graduation ceremony and to march in our processional."

"DJJ transported these students from our education centers at seven Youth Development Campuses around the state," said Commissioner Niles. "We wanted them to experience the personal excitement of graduating with a large group of classmates. We wanted to create that genuine feeling of accomplishment that comes with earning a degree and standing up to be recognized for academic achievement," the Commissioner said.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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The graduates were greeted by Richmond County Sheriff, Richard Roundtree and keynote speaker Senator Hardie Davis from Senate District 22. DJJ Associate School Superintendent, Dr. Audrey Armistad, members of the DJJ Board and the DJJ Executive Staff welcomed the grads on stage. Diplomas were presented by Commissioner Avery Niles.

The morning ceremonies began when DJJ grads from Youth Development Campuses in Muscogee, Macon, Milan, Eastman, Atlanta, Augusta, and Sumter filed into the auditorium as candidates from Georgia's 181st state school district-- And then with a traditional turn of their tassels, they marched-out as the Georgia Preparatory Academy's Graduating Class of 2013.

From the graduation speech of Milan YDC's Valedictorian came this peer advice to fellow graduates: "We must remain focused on our intended goals.. Today is the day we begin to plan our work and work our plan.. It was a long and hard journey, but with God's help all things are possible."

In all, 85 candidates qualified for diplomas from DJJ's Georgia Preparatory Academy. 74 students received GED's, and 11 others earned high school diplomas while serving out their juvenile court orders.

Commissioner Niles tells parents, "Our goal is that every youth who leaves our custody is a grade level or above where they ranked in school when they entered our system." Photos of DJJ's 2013 winter graduation ceremonies will be posted on the agency's "News & Views" webpage at <http://www.djjnewsandviews.org> .

(END RELEASE)

The Georgia Preparatory Academy has dual accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and from the Correctional Educational Association (CEA).

..The mission of the Georgia Preparatory Academy is to provide a comprehensive educational program which will facilitate the successful integration of each student into the community and workplace..