

Prison graduates

Students learn from past, prepare for future

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

They're not certain what the future holds.

But some inmates at Scott Correctional Facility in Plymouth are preparing to launch their careers — once they get out of prison.

"We're in prison to be punished," acknowledged Michelle Bazzetta, who was a student at Milford High School before being sentenced to life in prison for second degree murder.

"But that doesn't mean we can't do something constructive while we're here," said Bazzetta, who can be eligible for parole in 15 years.

Bazzetta is one of 61 inmates at Scott Correctional who recently completed studies required to qualify for a GED (intended as the equivalent of a high school diploma), an associate's degree, paralegal certification or a bachelor's degree. The facility also offers vocational training.

Friends, relatives and the faculty helped them celebrate the occasion at commencement exercises on July 31.

Bazzetta, who earned an associate's degree through Montclair Community College, said graduating gave her a feeling of accomplishment. "It helps me believe in myself," she said. "I'm definitely going to continue."



Congratulations: Michelle Bazzetta, center, shares a congratulatory hug with her grandfather, Frederick Winstanley Sr. and a friend, Irene Couture.

Mindy Brass, who was arrested on drug charges in Troy in 1991, said earning her associate's degree underscored a message for Erika, her teenage daughter.

"I've tried to emphasize the importance of an education," she said.

Tanika Lynch, who earned her GED, said school was more meaningful, compared to her days as a student.

who graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree from Spring Arbor College, said the problems she encountered were similar to those of students elsewhere.

"The most difficult thing for me was finding a place to study and getting quiet time," she said. "And sometimes we didn't have adequate (library) resources."

Bronaugh is in prison for manslaughter. As she was addressing her classmates from the podium, her proud relatives shouted, "You go, girl."

Clara Wilson of Detroit didn't get a degree, at least not yet. She served food at the commencement festivities as part of vocational training to learn the restaurant business.

"My time will come," said Wilson, who is doing seven to 15 years for manslaughter. She's also taking academic courses toward an associate's degree.

"I'm going to make it," she said.

One of the graduates, who had served almost four years for shoplifting in Southfield, had been paroled about a week before commencement exercises. But Anita Jordan returned to graduate with her classmates.

"I did the studying," said Jordan, who received a bachelor's degree, "and I'm enjoying the satisfaction of graduation."

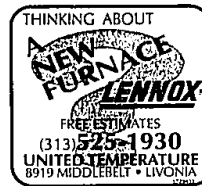
Adrienne Bronaugh of Detroit.

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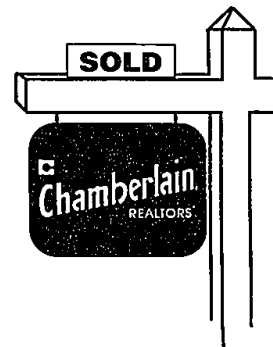
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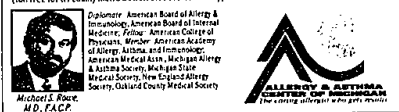
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