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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS
Secretary Gary Westcott

Date: March 24, 2026

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Raymond Laborde Correctional Center Held Graduation Ceremony

Dozens of inmates conquered odds to receive certifications, diplomas and degrees

Baton Rouge, LA - The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections is proud to announce that 45 men who are incarcerated at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center (RLCC) received either a certificate, diploma or degree from various accredited programs. The Class of 2026 graduation ceremony occurred Friday, March 20, at 9 a.m. inside the RLCC Chapel in Cottonport.

During the ceremony, forty individuals ranging in age from 20 to 63 years old earned High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) diplomas. The event celebrated the accomplishments and conferring of five graduates at the collegiate level, which included one Bachelor of Arts in Communications and two associate degrees in general studies from Ashland University. Two additional participants earned postsecondary certificates in Biblical Studies through Nations University. Over a period of several months, these participants successfully conquered numerous odds to further their education.

Participants also earned a total of 613 industry-based certifications (IBCs), including 148 forklift certifications. Additional certifications were obtained in areas such as personal financial literacy, plumbing, welding, Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) 10 general industry, and career preparedness. These credentials align with industry standards and support workforce readiness.

"We are incredibly proud of what these graduates have achieved through their commitment to education," said D. Brent Thompson, warden, Raymond Laborde Correctional Center. "Through the dedication of our educators, corrections staff, and community partners, these individuals have been given the tools and support needed to pursue a path that can positively shape their future."

While each program has its own requirements, all programs maintain consistent testing standards. Graduates can use their newly earned skills, certifications and education to secure employment upon release and reentry back into the community. If a graduate is not slated for release, their skills can be utilized within the facility.

The graduation ceremony's theme was perseverance, which was eloquently delivered in the Warden's selected video portion of the program. Two students were selected to give moving commencement speeches to a room full of family, friends and other men who are incarcerated at the correctional facility. While the graduation ceremony was not open to the public, the graduates were allowed to invite guests from their approved visitation list to attend this milestone achievement. Also in attendance were representatives from Ashland University, and leadership from the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, as well as the Louisiana Department of Education.

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