



Passing the Torch: Correctional Officer graduation celebrates new legacies

The Stewart Gymnasium buzzed with anticipation during the Correctional Peace Officer P.O.S.T Category III Graduation on Friday, August 25, as families, friends, and distinguished guests gathered to witness a significant moment in the lives of 13 individuals who had chosen a unique and often challenging path.

But this year's ceremony held a deeply personal significance; Nevada Department of Corrections' Lieutenant Ira Brannon and Correctional Officer Ed Mason had the distinct privilege of pinning the newly earned badges onto the uniforms of their sons. As they stood before their children, their eyes held a mix of pride and hope. The exchange of hugs carried an unspoken message, acknowledging the shared journey that's about to take place.

Colby Mason, the son of CO Mason, shared his perspective on his cadet experience, speaking of how his father's stories had shaped his own aspirations.

"Ever since I was really young, my dad came home every day with plenty of stories about what happened at work and what he did during the day," Colby said. "Just hearing about his experiences from his previous work, I take that all in and try to learn from him and set my own example."

Dylan Sieber, son of Lt. Brannon, echoed similar sentiments. In addition to the honor of receiving his correctional badge, Dylan had also been recognized with an Academic Achievement Award.

"Growing up, from what I've seen, it's worth it," he said. "My dad is a hard worker, and he's shown me every day that even though he's tired, it's been worth it. Every single week with the academy, we built a bond with my new coworkers – they have my back, and I have theirs."

Colby and Dylan are only a glimpse into the beginning of a new era in the world of corrections. Mason, a seasoned correctional officer, built a path into corrections as a choice that evolved over time, influenced by friends who worked at the Lovelock institution.

Ed's commitment to his work was deeply rooted in his family-oriented upbringing; building bonds within the correctional community is essential, forming a sense of belonging.

"I hope by being the first Correctional Officer in my family, the principles I have passed to my son, who just started his career, would be to work hard, look out for your team and remain professional," Mason said. "I would like to see the next generation in my family take his career a step or two further than I did. Never to walk in my boots but to walk through the gate I opened and make his own path and to challenge the next generation to do the same."

Lt. Brannon, with nearly two decades of service, also was the first in his family to work in corrections, but also influenced by his grandfather's law enforcement background.

"My grandfather was a constable, chief of police, and a Captain for Fish and Game in California," he said. "His influence is what pointed me in the direction of wanting some type of career in law enforcement."

The essence of community policing, a concept Brannon once encountered during college, had taken on a profound meaning in his work within the correctional system. While law enforcement often emphasizes building ties with communities outside of prison, Brannon ensures he fosters a sense of community within the confines of incarceration.

"We have offenders that want to serve their sentences, participate programming, and try to actively make changes in their lives," Brannon said. "We have offenders who will continue with their criminal activity in and out of prison and will never change their behavior, no matter what is offered to them. We have offenders who may change their behavior but may never get the chance of being a free person again and resigned themselves to the fact that this is their life and their reality."

To graduate as a Correctional Peace Officer is more than just the culmination of rigorous training; it's a celebration of dedication, commitment, and the passing of a legacy from one generation to the next – all while making an impact in the community, refining the path ahead.

"This career can be as rewarding as you want to make it," Brannon said. "As correctional officers, this is the community that we are tasked with policing. For us to do our jobs, we must get a buy-in from the community that we police, which are felons. This is not an easy task, but it is a necessary one."