

Jail's GED program finding success

By Kelli Stokes
Georgetown News-Graphic

Scott County Detention Center's fourth inmate this year has successfully finished the jail's GED program.

It's the result of revamping of the jail's GED program which has been around for a while but which had not been as successful in the last five or six years.

"It's a really spectacular year for us on our GED graduations," said Jailer Derran Broyles.

Tina Whaley is the GED class' instructor who comes into the jail about twice per week and gives inmates the opportunity for individualized instruction.

Before instruction begins, a test is given to assess where the inmates in the program are in terms of education level and where they need help. English, math, social studies and science are the four subjects inmates have to learn to be able to pass the GED test.

"I will work with them only on the subjects they need assistance with," Whaley said.

Then, the inmates have to spend a total of 40 hours on coursework including homework. Each inmate learns at a different pace and chooses how much time they devote to work and studying outside of the classroom, Whaley said.

"It really does require quite a bit of commitment," she said.

After the 40 hours are completed, a GED Ready test is taken to see if the inmates are prepared for the GED tests. An inmate could even take the English GED test before the math test if they are more prepared for it.

Some inmates take the four tests and finish the program before they're released while others are given the resources they may need to finish the program after release.

"For some inmates, it can

obviously be quicker than other inmates," Broyles said.

The GED program at the jail is gaining momentum, with three or four people on the waiting list for an opening, Broyles said.

The program is important because education level, along with drug abuse and unemployment, is a contributing factor to crime, Broyles said.

"Our goal is to eliminate as many of those obstacles as we can while they're here, while we have a captive audience," Broyles said.

But inmates do have to meet a few qualifications to be accepted into the program, the jailer said.

The inmates must be able to communicate in English and must be nonviolent to keep other inmates participating and Whaley out of harm's way.

"We don't really want to put those individuals at potential risk," Broyles said.

Inmates could be kicked out of the program if they're violent or disruptive. However, most people in the GED program have an interest in getting their education, Broyles said.

"They're there to make a difference in their own lives," Whaley added. "If I can help them to see that they can be successful... you can tell that they really appreciate that."

And candidates for the program know it's a limited program.

"I do tell them that there's a lot of interest and I have a limited amount of spots," Whaley said.

Broyles hopes two or three more inmates can graduate from the program by year's end, he said.

"I think it's one of the best educational opportunities we offer here," he said.

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