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28 Graduates Given a Second Chance Are Now Prepared for Brighter Futures



Honored for his long-time support of the Youth Automotive Training Center, Dr. Joseph Kump, founding board member, was the recipient of the prestigious Jim Moran Award. Pictured (l-r): Terry Routley, YATC executive director; G. Richard Knox, founding board member and YATC president emeritus; recipient Dr. Joseph Kump; and Larry McGinnes, president, YATC Board of Directors.



On hand for the evening's commencement ceremony were football greats Earl Morrall, Jim Kelly, and Jeff Cross, who along with Executive Director Terry Routley, presented special recognition awards to three young men. Graduates pictured (l-r) are Esteban Toribio (Outstanding Attendance Award), Preston Johnson (Turnabout Award) and Paul Mason (Jump Start Award).

Deerfield Beach, Fla. – With a police record for drug possession and a father of three children, 19-year-old Joshua Canion of Pompano Beach says he had never finished anything worthwhile during his young life before he became a student at the Youth Automotive Training Center (YATC). He's looking forward to a bright career in the automotive industry now that he's graduated from the unique program founded by automotive legend Jim Moran.

After being arrested, Canion was given the choice of jail or going to drug court. He decided to go to drug court, where a friend told him about YATC.

"I didn't care much about anything before YATC," Canion recalled. But now he's committed to his future. "It got me this far and I like it a lot, so I think I should keep at it," he said with a smile. Since he lost his own father when he was only nine years old, more than anything he wants to be a good dad now to his kids ages three, two and one.

Canion was among the 28 proud young men who graduated from YATC on May 29, 2008, during a commencement ceremony held at the Hilton Deerfield Beach/Boca Raton and attended by more than 300 family members and guests. It was an emotional evening for graduates, many of whom overcame past adversities with help from instructors and staff to become law-abiding, respected members of the community. Since its inception, YATC has graduated 465 students.

Shannon Henry, 18, from Miami Gardens, was placed in a drug abuse program for at-risk youth through a court petition initiated by his mother. She also pleaded with him to turn his life around. Henry says it was YATC that helped him finally decide to make a change. He had nearly perfect attendance during the nine months of automotive training, academic preparation, and life skills instruction.

"Four of my friends have died this year and others are in jail," Henry says. "If it wasn't for my mom and YATC, I'd be with them."



Dalton Carlton, 17, also from Pompano Beach, had a bleak vision of his future. He started getting in trouble stealing bicycles when he was only 12 years old. As he got older, he became involved in more serious crimes such as robberies and drug dealing. He was a high school dropout with a criminal record and little hope.

Carlton heard about YATC from his mother and a few friends while on probation. “When I got out of jail I was 18 and I knew I had to do something to make my life better before it was too late,” he said. “I didn’t want to go back to jail, so I gave YATC a try and started spending more time with my family.”

Waiting for his General Educational Development (GED) test results, Dalton is now optimistic about his future. He is ready to start working and setting long-term goals to open his own chain of Florida auto shops.

YATC Executive Director Terry Routley, along with football greats Jim Kelly, Earl Morrall and Jeff Cross, awarded each student a diploma signifying their completion of the nine-month program. Three graduates were recipients of special awards for their endeavors. Paul Mason, 17, received the Jump Start Award for his commitment and determination in developing his automotive repair skills; Preston Johnson, 19, received the Turnabout Award for shifting his life toward a more positive path; and Esteban Toribio, 20, received the Outstanding Attendance Award.

During the ceremony, Dr. Joseph Kump, retired Vice President of Medical Services at JM Family Enterprises, Inc., as well as a founding member of the YATC Board of Directors, was presented with the prestigious Jim Moran Award, which annually recognizes an individual who has demonstrated unparalleled service to YATC.

The Florida Youth Orchestra highlighted the evening with special musical performances.

“Our graduates have worked hard to achieve their diplomas,” said Routley. “I know that Mr. Moran would have been very proud of them and their accomplishments. He left us with an extraordinary legacy to carry on and all of us at YATC remain dedicated to giving our students second chances to turn their lives around and equipping them with the tools they need to prepare for brighter futures.”

About the Youth Automotive Training Center

Established by Jim Moran in 1984, the mission of the Youth Automotive Training Center is to train and educate at-risk youth in basic automotive repair skills, academic remediation, job readiness and life management skills. The goal of this program is to prepare young adults who are at a disadvantage in their lives to become self-sufficient, productive, law-abiding citizens. Students are referred to YATC in a variety of ways, including through the Departments of Juvenile Justice and Children and Families, as well as YATC graduates, local clergy and word of mouth.

For more information about the Youth Automotive Training Center, visit www.yatc.org or contact Hillary Gurman, Community Relations Manager at (954) 428-0909 or at yatcgurm@bellsouth.net. YATC is located at 399 SW Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Deerfield Beach, Florida.

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