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MTI graduates over 1,200 last night

(Bradenton, FL—June 30, 2011) Manatee Technical Institute graduated 1,205 at its 47th graduation last night at the Manatee Civic Center.

The career and technical education program graduates numbered 388. The school also graduated 458 GED graduates and eight students who completed the highest level of English as a second language. In addition, 351 completed one or more occupational completion points in a career or technical education program.

The ceremony opened with an invocation by marketing graduate Crystal Saunders. Fire fighter class #15 led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Cosmetology graduates Chelsea Davidson and Henry Washington sang the National Anthem.

Superintendent Tim McGonegal, EdD, recognized the instructors for their service to the community. He congratulated the graduates and asked them to also consider giving back to the community.

The MTI faculty and administration gave the Honorable Marlene O'Toole a standing ovation when School Board chairman Robert Gause presented her with a plaque from the MTI Foundation as State Representative of the Year for championing the workforce funding equity issue in the Florida House this year.

John Ziemnicki, chairman of the MTI Board of Governors, read a poem written by Theodor Seuss Geisel, otherwise known as Dr. Seuss, which he had written specifically for a commencement ceremony.

Three graduates spoke of their lives and what led them each to MTI. Two of them reflected the growing number of adults over 40 who are going back to school.

(more)

A 62-year-old marine service technology graduate, William Pitts, II, spoke of wandering around Florida looking for employment after being laid off from long-term employment. His dream was to work on boats, so he decided to find the best school in the state to learn his new trade; his research led him to MTI. By the time he enrolled, he was homeless and living in the Salvation Army. He announced last night that he is starting his own business.

Cheri Knisely was 44 years old when she went back to school. She had been telling her children how important it was to stay in school and decided she needed to act on her words. She earned her GED at MTI and is currently enrolled at SCF.

Dental assisting graduate Leyanna Slentz referred to MTI as family. She focused on all the support she got from teachers, the friends she made in her program, and the personal growth she experienced while in school.

Superintendent McGonegal, Doug Wagner, director of Adult Career and Technical Education for the district, and all five Manatee County School Board members shook hands with students as they handed out diplomas. MTI director, Mary Cantrell, PhD, presented the Class of 2011 to the audience.

Graduates included 176 members of the National Technical Honor Society and two members of the National Adult Education Honor Society.

Wagner announced that all graduates are entitled to one-year complimentary membership in both the SkillsUSA and MTI Alumni associations.

The mission of Manatee Technical Institute is to meet and exceed our community's training and educational expectations. MTI is a 2007 Tampa Bay Business of the Year and has won more SkillsUSA medals than any other school in the nation for the past eight years.

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