



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monarch Youth Center celebrates inaugural high school graduation

LINCOLN – On June 29, three youth in the custody of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) became the first high school graduates of the alternative high school at the new [Monarch Youth Center](#) in Lincoln.

Graduates had the opportunity to address the audience prior to receiving their diplomas. **One graduate stated**, “I want to thank all the staff members who helped me, you all were great. I am blessed to have you all in my life. And I want to thank my grandmother, who I did this for.”

Families of the graduates attended the ceremony, which was held in the gymnasium of Monarch Youth Center. IDJJ School District #428 officials present included Superintendent Dr. Tresa Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kimberly Kimbrough, Special Ed. Director Melissa Cory, and CTE Director Noah Boudreau. IDJJ Director Robert Vickery, Chief of Staff Marna Satlak, and Deputy Directors Tom DeBetta and April Curtis also attended.

IDJJ Director Rob Vickery stated, “I am proud of these young men for working toward a better future by earning their high school diplomas. The educators and staff at Monarch are doing a tremendous job of engaging and motivating the young people in our care.”

School Principal Traci Knisley (pictured at podium) stated, “These three students have demonstrated exceptional focus and determination. As our inaugural graduating class, they did far more than just complete their schoolwork, they actively helped build the culture of the school from the ground up. They stepped up as true leaders and mentors for younger students.”

Monarch Youth Center’s superintendent, Tyrie Fluker, also spoke to graduates during the ceremony, noting that “discipline, determination, and perseverance” were needed to achieve the important milestone of high school graduation.

Chief of Security Bryce Reno-Gibson presented the keynote address, asking graduates to look around the room. **Reno-Gibson stated**, “Every eye is on you, and every person here is full of pride. You did this. Let that take a second to sink in.”

Monarch Youth Center opened last fall and is designed to be rehabilitative and therapeutic. The center serves up to 30 youth in secure custody of the Department. It provides high school education, career and technical training, behavioral and mental health services, and recreation.

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The [Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice \(IDJJ\)](#) was created by statute in 2006 with the mandate of safely housing and rehabilitating youth committed to its custody. The mission of IDJJ is to promote community safety and positive youth outcomes by building youth skills and strengthening families.



School Principal Traci Knisley thanks educators and families of graduates.



IDJJ Director Robert Vickery congratulates graduate