

# INMATES

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certification at no cost to the county.

The program consisted of a 40-hour course completed over five days, during which 12 selected inmates successfully earned forklift operator certification.

Training followed OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178(l) safety standards and included detailed instruction on pre-shift inspections, load stability, equipment operation and refueling procedures. Participants first learned the fundamentals through classroom instruction before applying those skills through practical evaluations, including a virtual reality forklift simulator and hands-on exercises designed to build

Automotive Casting and Staffmark to connect individuals with jobs that align with their newly developed skills.

More than 80 inmates at the detention center qualified for the program, though staff ultimately selected 12 participants to take part in the first training group. While officials said narrowing the list was difficult, they also expressed hope that the program can continue in the future so that more individuals will have the same opportunity.

Employers from AISIN and Staffmark also visited the detention center during the training, meeting with participants and discussing how the certification could help them transition back into the workforce once they return to their communities.



The 12 inmates who participated in Forklift University successfully completed the course, and earned their certifications. | PHOTO COURTESY FELICA FORE/WCDC



Steve Drake, CEO of Forklift University, meets with the inmates and helps them go over what they have learned. | PHOTO BY MACEE SWAFFORD

confidence and workplace safety skills.

After earning their certification, representatives from Goodwill Industries International met with participants to help develop job-readiness skills and discuss employment opportunities following their release. Program partners also work with local employers such as AISIN

Whitley County Detention Center Office Manager Felicia Fore described the program as a way designed to support the reentry process — helping individuals rebuild their lives step by step and reminding them that their past does not define their future.

Steve Drake, CEO of Forklift University, said

the initiative represents a first-of-its-kind pilot program that could serve as a model across the country.

“Everybody here came together to build a program that I think is going to be valuable across the nation,” said Drake. “This is our pilot, and hopefully it works out for the guys.”

Drake explained that the training went far beyond a traditional certification course that relies only on a video and written test. Instead, participants spent four to five hours in classroom instruction before transitioning to virtual reality training, allowing them to learn the mechanics and safety of operating a forklift without the risks associated with first-time equipment use.

Throughout the five-day program, participants practiced driving and operating a forklift in a VR simulation where they were evaluated on safety and performance. After successfully completing the simulation portion,

they moved on to operate an actual forklift in a controlled environment.

Scott Peloso, vice president of Forklift University — who once participated in a reentry program himself — worked directly with the group throughout the week, guiding participants through the hands-on portion of the training and helping them build both skill and confidence.

Peloso said each of the 12 participants demonstrated dedication and enthusiasm throughout the program.

“It gives us a real opportunity to be able to leave jail and be able to return to work, and be able

to provide for our families,” said Phillip Burchett, an inmate at the Whitley County Detention Center who just recently graduated from the program. “It’s a real opportunity — it’s a shot. It’s given us that chance.”

Another participant said the program represented more than job training — it also provided valuable life lessons.

“I’ve learned to work in a structured environment, discipline, safety, and how to provide for my family the right way,” said Darren Canada. “I want to get back into society and provide for my family the right way, like I can. And

this right here is the next step in doing that for me.”

By the end of the five-day program, all 12 participants successfully completed classroom instruction, virtual reality simulations and hands-on forklift operation. Each earned their certification — a credential that could help open doors to employment opportunities and provide a renewed sense of purpose once they are released.

For those who participated, the program represented more than a certificate — it represented a chance to move forward and begin building a new path.

# ANNIE

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all likelihood, they will be calling to just thank you for the guidance and maybe want some of your best recipes! — Also a Vegan

Dear Also a Vegan: Those are two great rec-

ommendations for people looking to learn more about being a vegan, and they are great options for “Struggling Vegan” and others to suggest when someone questions their lifestyle.

“How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?” is out now! Annie Lane’s

second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to [dearannie@](mailto:dearannie@)

## ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

**London - Corbin Airport Board** will receive sealed Bids from Contractors until 2:00 P.M. Local Time, Thursday, March 26, 2026 for the project entitled “Storage Hangar Replacement”.

All Bids must be mailed or delivered to: London - Corbin Airport, 566 Hal Rogers Drive, London, Kentucky 40744, sealed envelopes must be marked ATTN: Storage Hangar Replacement - London - Corbin Airport. No faxed or emailed Bids will be accepted.

**A mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting will be held at 2:00 P.M. Local Time on Thursday, March 12, 2026. All Contractors shall meet in Terminal Building. Attendance at this meeting by an appropriate Contractor representative is mandatory in order to be eligible to submit a bid**

The Instructions to Bidders, Form of Bid, Form of Contract, Plans, Specifications, Form of Bid Bond, Performance and Payment Bond and other Contract Documents may be examined at the following locations:

Richard C. Rinks & Associates, Inc., 30 North Jefferson, Cookeville, Tennessee  
London - Corbin Airport, 566 Hal Rogers Drive, London, Kentucky

Electronic copies of Plans and Specifications may be obtained at the office of the Designer, located in Cookeville, Tennessee.

London - Corbin Airport Board, in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 252, 42 U.S.C §§ 2000d to 2000d-4) and the Regulations, hereby notifies all Bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, disadvantaged business enterprises will be afforded full and fair opportunity to submit Bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color or national origin in consideration for an award.

The Bid inclusive of all required forms, which shall be enclosed in a sealed envelope, shall be clearly labeled on the outside of the envelope with the name of the project with the vendor’s name and address.

Each Bidder must deposit with his Bid Security in the amount of 5 percent of his Bid in the form and subject to the conditions provided in the Instructions to Bidders. 100% Performance and Payment Bonds will be required.

Withdrawal of Bid: Any Bidder, upon his or his authorized representative’s written request, will be given permission to withdraw his Bid not later than the time set for opening thereto. At the time of opening of Bids, provided written request has been submitted prior to the time of the opening and when such Bid is encountered it will be returned to the Bidder unopened. Unless contrary to the laws of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, no Bidder may withdraw his Bid within 60 days after the actual date of the opening thereof without Owner’s consent.

If FEMA funds are to be included in this Project, an Addendum will be issued prior to Bid Date listing all FEMA requirements.

Award will be made to the lowest responsible qualified Bidder, If awarded. London - Corbin Airport Board reserves the right to reject any/and/or all Bids, to waive any formalities and informalities in the Bids received and to accept any Bid which in its opinion may be in their best interest.

**London - Corbin Airport Board**

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