

■ EDUCATION



## Working toward a new life



Photos by Stephen Lega

**Top: David Nelson listens to the speaker during the March 18 GED graduation ceremony at the Marion County Detention Center. Above: The GED graduates gather for a group photo at the end of the graduation ceremony.**

# First group of inmates complete new GED program



By Stephen Lega

[slega@lebanonenterprise.com](mailto:slega@lebanonenterprise.com)

**T**he pomp may have been lower key, but the circumstance was just as important to the seven most recent graduates of the GED program at the Marion County Detention Center.

David Nelson, 36, was the first person at the jail to earn his GED after the implementation of a computer-only testing system.

"It's been 20 years since I dropped out of school. It was not easy," Nelson said.

For him, completing the GED, along with the substance abuse program at the jail, is a new step in his life.

Nelson dropped out of school when he was 16 years old and got caught up in the party scene, he said. After an injury, he was prescribed pain medication. When he was taken off the medication, he said he turned to heroin.

He admitted that his addiction came before everything else in his life, and it also led to his arrest for theft, something he was doing to pay for his habit.

He said it felt like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders when he learned that he'd passed the GED program.

"I got a lot of things to be grateful for. I thank God for giving me the courage. I thank God for giving me the ability to go pass the test. It's opened a lot of doors for me," Nelson said. "Now, I can go out there and better my life and I can better the life of my four little girls."

He added that he hopes to go to culinary school when he gets out, possibly as early as April 1.

"Now, the doors of opportunity's opened up for me," Nelson said.

During the graduation ceremony on March 18, the seven gradu-

**"I got a lot of things to be grateful for. I thank God for giving me the courage. I thank God for giving me the ability to go pass the test. It's opened a lot of doors for me. Now, I can go out there and better my life and I can better the life of my four little girls."**

David Nelson