

HII Celebrates 170 Graduates of The Apprentice School



Chris Rose, recipient of the Homer L. Ferguson Award, speaks during the 2022 Apprentice School Commencement ceremony held March 12. *HUNTINGTON INGALLS INDUSTRIES*

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Global engineering and defense technologies provider Huntington Ingalls Industries hosted commencement exercises March 12 for 170 graduates of the company’s Apprentice School at Newport News Shipbuilding, the company said in a release. The ceremony was held at Liberty Live Church in Hampton.

“I want you to know how proud I am of each of you for everything that you’ve accomplished,” said Newport News Shipbuilding President Jennifer Boykin. “Today is just the next step towards your leadership role at Newport News Shipbuilding, and we and our country need you more than ever. As shipbuilders, we take on the truly unique honor of building vessels that protect our country and go into harm’s way.”

The commencement address was delivered by Karen Henneberger, program manager for New Ship Design at Naval Reactors, a joint Department of Energy and Department of Navy program. She told graduates at the heart of The Apprentice School and their development is craftsmanship, leadership and scholarship. During her address she offered a deep Naval Reactors’ perspective on each of these tenets as they relate to the graduates’ current responsibilities at Newport News Shipbuilding, and their impact beyond the shipyard gates.

Like Boykin, Henneberger, emphasized the Navy needs shipbuilders.

“We need shipbuilders more than ever. We need to find ways to put more ships to sea, to maintain our nuclear-powered

submarines and aircraft carriers in more efficient ways and to deploy innovative capabilities," she said.

Speaking next, in Apprentice School tradition, was the apprentice receiving the Homer L. Ferguson Award, which recognizes the graduate with the highest honors. This year it was Christopher S. Rose, a deck electrician who began his career in 2017 at NNS. He has supported a variety of projects in the Virginia-class program, as well as the Nimitz-class and Ford-class programs, and is currently working on USS George Washington (CVN 73).

"Always watch for your step, plan where you are going, and put the journey before the destination," Rose said. "No matter what you're doing, the most important step is the next one. Once you know what you need to do, it's just a matter of logistics."

As the event closed, Boykin reminded the graduates what they heard at the ceremony.

"Your critical role in the defense of our nation cannot be understated," she said. "The Navy depends on us to deliver capable, reliable vessels that help keep our sailors safe. And I'm depending on you to bring your skill, your experience, your knowledge and your heart to every challenge that you face. So always do your absolute best. Never settle for good enough and always keep learning. If you do this, I know that our nation's future will be safer and brighter."