



The second cohort of the Business of the Hard Knocks program receives certificates upon graduating from the course. (Frances Martinez)

14 graduate in second cohort of School of Hard Knocks

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LYNN — The second cohort of 14 students graduated from the North Shore Latino Business Association’s (NSLBA) School of Hard Knocks on Tuesday.

The 12-week course is designed to empower people affected by incarceration to open businesses. By completing the program, each of the graduates receives a \$1,500 stipend to support the first step of launching their business. The

course is split into group sessions and one-on-one sessions, during which students get feedback on their business plans, with the goal of pitching their ideas to local vendors after the program.

“Firstly, congratulations are in order for their remarkable effort, which will ultimately equip them for the launch of their business. Secondly, the NSLBA Center will always be on hand to provide ongoing guidance and support,” NSLBA CEO Frances Martinez said.

The first cohort of the course saw nine students graduate, and Martinez said the NSLBA will graduate 30 students yearly.

The course was made possible by a state Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant, which was directed toward aiding and training those aspiring to open businesses.

The Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Lynn applied for the grant in partnership with Roads Consulting Group, the North Shore Latino Association, the Essex County Sheriff’s Department, and the Lynn Police Department.

“When there is a strong team in place, anything becomes achievable. We are pushing ahead with determination to improve the small-business community,” Martinez said. “The NSLBA Center is grateful for the backing of Mayor Jared Nicholson of the City of Lynn, Lynn EDIC, Sheriff Kevin Copping, the STAR Program, Lynn Police Department, as well as ROADS Consulting and their team.”

The graduates of the second cohort are Adrian Abad, Escarly Severino, Evelyn Santiago, Gina Machuca, Ivonne Arias, Kendy Mateo, Lidia Armando, Mandela Isaak, Maria Jimenez, Marvin Taveras, Miriam Contreras, Sindy Garcia, Williamna Peña, and Wilson Disla.