

# Parenting Connection

Volume 1, Issue 4

May/June 2005

## Fathers & Books Program Begins at GBCI

Good news has finally come to parenting at Green Bay Correctional. We have been given permission to begin the Fathers & Books program. The books and tapes have been ordered, a volunteer from the community that is going to be able to come in and supervise the men practicing plus doing the video taping has been found. This program has been a long time in the developing due to the many security hurdles in a maximum security institution. There are still a few details to be worked out, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The men will be able to select a book, practice reading it using picture walks, introduce vocabulary, as well as using good expression. The guys will be able to then tape the book and send both home to their children. The men will only have to cover the cost of the postage.

The guys are very excited to participate for a variety of reasons. One being that their child will be able to see them acting silly. For many, who don't get visits, their children have not seen them in a while. Others want their children to become more excited about reading. If they see Daddy doing it, they may want to try it too.

Submitted by Mary Dahl, Parenting Instructor, GBCI

## Fathers Read Books Reaps Rewards at SCI

Another successful Fathers Reading Books

Program has been completed at SCI. Eight men completed the class and had the opportunity to be videotaped reading books to their children. First-time readers are sometimes nervous, but want their children to have the tape, so they give it their best effort. When they receive letters from home or call their family, they say it was worth everything they went through. Some fathers come back and tell that their children took the tape to grandma's house, to school, to friends and anyone else they can get to watch. They report that their children play the tape over and over and ask when they will receive another one.

Fathers are given the opportunity to make additional tapes about four times a year. They must have completed the initial class. If they are still in the institution when taping is scheduled, they select their books from the library, practice reading, and are scheduled to videotape.

The program started at SCI in the early spring of 2004. One father that was in the first class has made a tape every time he has had the opportunity. He doesn't get many visits this far North. He had a very small son when he was incarcerated. He didn't expect his son to recognize him when his son finally came to visit. He had sent videotape of him reading books to his children at home. He told his kids hello from Dad and said he loved them and missed them. The kids played the tape over and over just to see their Dad. The youngest child also watched. Much to his surprise, when he had a visit the youngest child saw him and ran right to him and called him Daddy. He told me he was so surprised and happy that his son knew who he was. He credited this to the reading program. Programs like this take a lot of time and extra effort. All of that becomes worthwhile when you hear this from a father.

Submitted by Diane Birch  
Teacher, SCI



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## Creative Communication

Since this is the month of April and the men are finding it hard to find stuff to write to their children about, I had an English teacher come in and teach them various styles of poetry. The inmates learned how to write a cinquain, naming and an autobio just to name a few. In case you'd like to try them here is a little information as to what they are.

A Cinquain starts with one word or name, the second line describes you in three words, third line addresses does in six or seven words, fourth line deals with likes in four words and the last line ends with one word that relates to the first word. It would look something like the following:

Mary  
active and curious  
singing, playing cards, volunteers  
spend time with family  
Mom

We put these poems on kite patterns so they could add color and details.

They enjoyed this method because they were simple and didn't have to rhyme, yet told a lot about their feelings.

A Naming poem involves printing their name down the page and then adding a describing word that begins with that letter.

**M**arvelous  
**A**rtistic  
**R**esponsible  
**Y**acks a lot

An Autbio poem:

Your 1st name (3 words to describe you)  
Son of:  
Lover of:  
Who feels:  
Who needs:  
Who fears:  
Who gives:  
Who loves to witness:  
Born in:

These were just a few

Let's hear from other teachers out there about the activities they have used and the men thought were worthwhile.

Submitted by Mary Dahl  
Parenting Instructor, GBCI

## ANGER



An emotion that wreaks havoc in many households is **anger**. Unabated anger will have devastating consequences on your health as well as the relationship you are building with your child. Recent research cites that if you have an anger problem, your health could be adversely affected, increasing your susceptibility to disease and heart attack.

At Stanford Medical School, they instituted anger control training for victims of heart attack. They found a 44 percent lower incidence of a second heart attack when compared to those who had not participated in anger control training and did not try to change their hostility. Their program utilized a number of simple elements to regulate anger, such as identifying the triggers that lead to escalation, managing hostile thoughts once they begin, and learning ways to cool down and contextualize tension and anxiety.

For fathers, learning to control angry thoughts and feelings is vital to our relationships with our family members. Fathers who have learned to resolve conflict in positive ways incorporate a family strength that benefits their relationships with their children. Further, according to author Dr. Gary Oliver, when fathers learn to manage their anger, their relationship takes root, particularly in the areas of trust, safety, and security. Conversely, leaving a legacy of toxic unresolved anger diminishes a child's ability to achieve his potential.

When a group of teens and young adult women were asked to anonymously identify why they would not confide in their fathers, one of the primary reasons was, "He would blow up!" Other responses included: "His reaction." "I'm scared about his response." "He would start yelling at me." "I'm afraid of what he will do." "He will reject me." "He will freak out."

We should strive to create a relationship and environment where our children can discuss any issues they are facing. Granted, many decisions our children make may be detrimental to them and our family. Nevertheless, our ability to listen with concern and empathy will distinguish our households. Further, if we fail to be emotionally tuned in, our capacity to address weightier issues with our children as they mature decreases.

All of us should regularly evaluate the delicate balance between our expectations of our children and their performance, especially in light of our understanding of forgiveness. We need to be reminded of the challenge to us to treat our children with respect, speak calmly to them, and correct them without demeaning them.

Adapted from an article by Dr. Ken Canfield  
Fathers.com  
National Center for Fathering

Submitted by Mary K. Knox WRC



## Motheread/Fatheread Training

In November, 2004, DeNeal Ericksen (REECC) and Barb Rasmussen (RCI) had the opportunity to attend the training for Motheread/Fatheread program. This program originally began in a North Carolina women's prison as a way to teach inmates about themselves, to connect in a more positive manner with their children, and to improve their own literacy skills. Many family literacy centers and libraries are using it.

Offered through the Wisconsin Humanities Council, the four-day training covered the philosophy behind the program and provided practice in implementing the program. An entire curriculum was also distributed—and best of all, the curriculum is very complete and easy to follow. The program is research-based, and findings have shown that after participation in Motheread/Fatheread (the recommended length of the course is one two-hour session for 10 weeks), participants have improved reading ability as much as two grade levels. It has also been an effective tool for ESL instruction.

Motheread/Fatheread makes learning fun. Through ACTIVE story-reading, participants become very familiar with a story, work through many follow-up activities, and are given writing opportunities at their level of ability. They also learn how to model reading skills for their children by making stories come alive.

Both institutions will be implementing their first sessions of program soon. 📖

### Please Help!

Does anyone have any special materials on teaching African American Parenting? I would like to read-up and share special materials to my guys who want it. Can anyone share? Please email me at [wontocd@doc.state.wi.us](mailto:wontocd@doc.state.wi.us)

Thanks.  
Cheri Wontor  
MSDF Teacher

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## News and Tid Bits Wanted

I hope everyone is having a great time with their parenting classes. I bet there are a lot of neat things going on out there. Please send either Mary at GBCI or Diane at Stanley your news article. We would really like to hear from everyone. Remember you can send questions of any nature to *Parenting 911* and they will be addressed. Also if you have a great project to share with us, news articles, or words of wisdom please pass them along.

Our newsletter will be going national as of this issue, so we'd really like to show our wonderful hard work that we in Wisconsin have been doing.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Mary Dahl  
Parenting Instructor, GBCI



## Resource Corner:

### Fatherhood Arrested-Parenting from Within the Juvenile Justice System

This book provides a timely, thoughtful analysis of how the justice system frustrates the relationship between fathers and their children. It provides a picture of the human side of incarcerated young men.

The contents include:

- \*Prison and Fatherhood-overlapping social problems
- \*Fathering from behind bars
- \*Negotiating relationships
- \*Young fatherhood, incarceration

This is an excellent book to have available to the parenting students because it specifically meets their needs.

by Anne M. Nurse





## Parenting 911

*Dear Parenting 911,  
Both Active Parenting Now (ages 5-12) and Active  
Parenting of Teens cover overlapping material. How can  
you keep it from being too repetitive?*

*In Need of Activities at JCI*

In Need of Activities at JCI;

It is true that these two books cover similar material, but the messages bear repeating. Emphasize the differences between the two books (goals of behavior, for example), but the students who have heard it before can help new students by explaining it or just feel good about knowing the information.

However, it can be sparked up by providing a different emphasis in the two classes. I usually cover the 5-12 material much more in depth, but I'll emphasize the courage and character chapter especially. For that group, I go into character development in great detail, and the competency for that chapter is making courage and character collages and writing letters of encouragement to their children (individual activities). In the teen group, I'll spend less time on that section, and I'll simply give them case studies to analyze (in a group). By varying the competencies and the degree of emphasis on material, one can provide different skills for the students to use and a different take on the material. I will also spend more time covering legal issues, absence from home, etc. in greater detail.

When we cover the teen information, I'll usually spend less time with the text, but bring in a lot of extra material (videos/handouts, etc) to cover the issues of sexuality (birth control and STD information), drugs and alcohol, and violence (effects of media on teens, statistics, etc.). This livens up the class and clears up a lot of misinformation. They really pay attention and it sparks many lively discussions! Hope this helps...

**The Dispatcher**



*Dear Parenting 911,*

*Many offenders have learning disabilities, and they are very concerned that their children may have inherited the learning disability. Can it be passed on parent-to-child and if so, what signs should they look for?*

*--Julie*

Julie;

This required a lot of research on the internet. (What did we do *before* we had this tool?)

According to NIFL (the National Institute for Literacy), as many as 50% of inmates have some sort of learning disability. This compares to about 5%-10% of the general population. There are also many, many sites that discuss learning abilities, the causes, and what to look for. Here is a condensation of some of the information out there about learning disabilities.

**Causes:** There is no clear-cut cause of learning disability. That's the good news. The bad news is that there are a lot of risk factors that may contribute to learning disabilities in children. Among them are: heredity, problems during and pregnancy or delivery, cigarette smoking (parental, especially prenatal), alcohol and drug abuse (on the part of the parent or child), head injuries, central nervous infections, poor nutrition, chronic medical illnesses, exposure to toxins, or poor environment (physical and emotional).

**Signs of Learning Disability:** delays in or problems with listening or spoken language; problems with reading, writing, or spelling; problems with performing math computations or math concepts; reasoning difficulties; or difficulty with memory skills. These may show up in a variety of ways, such as: hyperactivity, poor visual-motor coordination, poor performance on tests, difficulty in time concepts, reversal of reading or writing words, impulsive behavior, problems interacting socially, delays in developmental milestones, and disorganized thinking, just to name a few.

**What's a Parent to Do?** If a parent notices these signs, DO NOT get hung up on being guilty, deny the problem, blame anyone for the problem, get angry, or any of the negative emotions that just amplify the problem. Instead, accept the child/children, catch them being good rather than being critical of faults, provide structure, help them correct mistakes, let them have responsibility they can handle and enforce it, READ to them, encourage their academics by providing a good place to study and lessen distractions, serve as a model to them, and consult with teachers and other professionals as needed.

Sites I found helpful: [www.childdevelopmentinfo.com](http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com);  
[www.med.umich.edu](http://www.med.umich.edu); [www.dldcec.org](http://www.dldcec.org);  
[www.umm.edu/mcadd/ld\\_causes.html](http://www.umm.edu/mcadd/ld_causes.html);  
[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org); [www.pressrepublican.com](http://www.pressrepublican.com);  
[www.ohio.edu](http://www.ohio.edu); and a really interesting site regarding environment –  
[www.chemtox.com/pregnancy/smoking.htm](http://www.chemtox.com/pregnancy/smoking.htm)

**The Dispatcher**



# FOR LOVE OF READING RELATIONSHIPS

February 8th was the start of the fourth session of KMCI's FLORR program. As usual, it started out with teachers teaching reading, writing, and listening skills to the fathers. Teachers modeled reading and fathers read a variety of children's literature. A greeting card was artistically designed, authored and sent out to the fathers' child/children. A self-made book consisting of handouts, journaling, poetry, letters and pictures from their child/children was made with a personalized cover.

Building on that foundation, we decided to enhance our program in a way that would help fathers be more connected to their child/children, beyond the occasional visit. We introduced the idea of having the fathers choose, and then tape stories to send home. After practicing the stories, the fathers each taped two, and noted the authors. A short message of fatherly love was written by them and inserted into the envelope to be sent home. The fathers eagerly embarked on their new endeavor.

Here are some comments made by the fathers concerning the taping:  
"My son will probably fall asleep listening to my voice."

"I could speak directly to my child through the tape so she knows specifically why I made the tape, and that is, to encourage reading."

Following are examples of some of the stories chosen for taping:

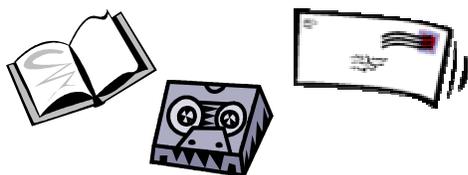
The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses, by Paul Goble

My Brother Martin, by Christine King

Bedtime for Francis, by Russell Hoban

We have been informed that the children are eagerly anticipating the arrival of stories taped by their fathers.

By: Cheryl Edwards  
Jane Boyle  
KMCI FLORR Instructors



## It Takes a SIG

It may take a village to raise a child, but to effectively deliver parenting programs in corrections, it takes a network of concerned instructors sharing ideas, curricula, methods, materials and experiences. At this year's International CEA Conference in Des Moines, a proposal to create a national Parenting Special Interest Group will be submitted.

Conference participants will be invited to get in on the ground floor of the creation of this new SIG by attending the "Establishing a Parenting Network" session that will be presented by Jerry Bednarowski and DeNeal Ericksen.

About a year ago, the Wisconsin chapter of CEA created its own Nurturing Parents Special Interest Group. A Chair, Co-Chair, and Administrative Liaison were elected. All programs within the state correctional system relating to parenting were surveyed. An email network of parenting instructors was created. A "Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections" detailing all Parenting classes, Fathers/Mothers Support Groups, Parent/Child Book Projects, and Fathers'/Mothers' Fairs was published. The bi-monthly "Parenting Connection" newsletter was established and four issues have been published so far. Presentations at several correctional and education conferences were delivered. And a "Recommended Parenting Program Curriculum" was developed.

During the Des Moines conference session, Wisconsin's efforts will be described and expansion of the SIG into a national organization will be discussed. Participants will be asked their input as to the goals of the Parenting SIG and the initiatives to be under taken during the upcoming year.

Jerry Bednarowski, who has been involved with the Wisconsin SIG since its inception, has agreed to serve as the initial Chair for the national SIG.

By Jerry Bednarowski, WRC



# Carrot, Egg, and Coffee

## An Inspirational Message

A carrot, an egg and a cup of coffee. . . . You will never look at a cup of coffee the same way again.

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She didn't know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling.

It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose. Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In the first pot she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and come to a boil, without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished out the carrots and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl.

Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me, what do you see?"

"Carrots, eggs and coffee," her daughter replied. Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard boiled egg. Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, "What does this all mean?"

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity. . .boiling water. Each reacted differently. The carrot began as something strong and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

"Which are you?" she asked her daughter.

"When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

Think of this: Which am I? Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity, do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength?

Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and hardened heart?

Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you. When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, do you elevate yourself to another level?

How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human and enough hope to make you happy. The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything: they just make the most of everything that comes along the way.

The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past; you can't go forward in life until you let go of our past failures and heartaches.

When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling.

Live your life so at the end, you're the one who is smiling and everyone around you is crying.

