

Parenting Connection

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Grant to Expand Missouri's Model 4-H Program to Other States

Prison isn't normally thought of as a place to nurture family growth, but one weekend each month dozens of sons, daughters, mothers and grandmothers travel across the state of Missouri for that very reason. A University of Missouri Extension 4-H program, 4-H LIFE, works to help both inmates and their children learn skills that will help them succeed in life, both inside and outside of prison walls.

"4-H LIFE just opens up the door to communicate, to be able to address issues that we wouldn't be able to address in another setting," said Judy Henderson, an inmate at the Chillicothe Correctional Center. "It lets me see a different side of them that I wouldn't normally have the opportunity to see because of the kind of sentence I'm serving."

That experience is one of the goals of 4-H LIFE, which stands for Living Interactive Family Education. Inmates meet weekly to tackle topics like anger management, parenting, communication and other life skills. They discuss their values as well as how their life decisions led them to where they are today. When their families come once a month, they have the opportunity to be a positive influence on them.

The National 4-H Council was awarded \$577,000 from a U.S. Department of Justice grant to replicate Missouri's 4-H LIFE program in 12-15 federal prisons in other states. Through the 4-H National Mentoring Program, prisons in New Hampshire, Alabama, Louisiana and Washington, D.C., hope to mirror the success of Missouri's 11-year program, which operates in prisons in Potosi, Chillicothe, Pacific, Vandalia and Jefferson City. "It makes a big impact on the children, because visiting your parent in prison in a traditional visiting room is kind of rigid, very strict, and that makes it hard for kids to connect with their parents," said Lynna Lawson, a University of Missouri Extension 4-H youth development specialist. "Offenders in the program also become positive leaders that are involved in other positive activities within the prison like hospice, restorative justice or whatever is available at that prison." (continued on page 2)

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During visits, parents, children and caregivers all participate in a 4-H club meeting. They often share in community service activities like Puppies for Parole, where they make items that benefit dogs that inmates train from a local shelter.

“When the kids and parents work together it is quality time, and they are given the opportunity to practice the skills they learn,” said Rick Smith, a MU Extension 4-H LIFE mentoring program educator who works with the Chillicothe program. “These life skills not only help them be a more effective parent but also help them improve relationships between themselves, their children and with their children’s caregivers.”

Henderson knows life in prison before programs like 4-H LIFE gave families the opportunity for a deeper interaction with their incarcerated loved ones. She has served more than 30 years for a capital offense, but said this program allows her to develop a more substantial connection to her daughter and grandchildren. “Years ago when my daughter was young, all we did was sit at a table. We didn’t have any activities to do and didn’t have any discussions going on that comfortably opened up topics like the subject of teen problems,” Henderson said. “Now my grandchildren see me in a leadership role, see what their grandmother is really about, and it shows me a side of my grandchildren and my daughter I didn’t know.”

Jordan, 15, is one of her grandchildren. She said that unlike in other correctional facilities — where she visited her grandmother and could not talk or interact fully — 4-H LIFE allows her a different sort of experience. “We’ve met a lot of friends here, other kids like us and that makes you feel like you’re not alone,” Jordan said. “It feels more like home, like you can be yourself, and that has really brought us closer to grandma and each other.”

That closeness can be heard each visit, especially when exuberance overflows in the 4-H meetings. Talking about service projects and values, recognizing birthdays and reciting the 4-H pledge starts to unite them in their common experience.

“Everyone is busy with their daily lives. Teenagers don’t really want to sit with their parents, but they get excited for these 4-H meetings,” said Angel, Judy Henderson’s 43-year-old daughter. “This has become our family time to the point that for the whole two-hour drive down we didn’t even turn on the radio. We just talked and laughed.”

The Missouri Department of Corrections recognizes this benefit inside and outside prison walls.

“The 4-H LIFE program is a family-strengthening program that teaches offenders to be good parents and helps them teach their children leadership skills, said Chris Cline, communications director for Missouri DOC. “A goal of the program is to help children avoid following in their incarcerated parents’ footsteps, and over time it has proven to change lives for the better.”

How it changes lives becomes even more apparent as inmates make parole or get released. More than 96% of those in Missouri prisons are eventually released.

The program makes a difference for people like Erin Markley, who participated in 4-H LIFE for nearly two years. After being released in July, Markley returned home to take care of her 7-year-old daughter, Nevaeh. “Through 4-H and other programs here, I’ve got goals in mind today and realize the value that I’m missing in being a mom,” Markley said. “It has given me all the opportunity as a mom to instill values, morals and teaching techniques from a distance, and I recognize how important it is to be a positive example for Nevaeh and how my actions reflect in her growth.”

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4-H Model Enhances Family Visits

4-H Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) is a family strengthening program to address the needs of children of incarcerated parents or other incarcerated family members. It was designed to provide a strong, healthy and nurturing family environment during scheduled visitations at Missouri correctional centers using the 4-H Club model.

Benefits of 4-H LIFE

Children

- Are excited about the 4-H Club and regular, enhanced visits with their incarcerated parent
- Build their communication and leadership skills
- See their incarcerated parent in a positive leadership role

Caregivers

- Meet other caregivers who are experiencing similar situations
- See their incarcerated family member interact with the child in a variety of healthy and structured activities

Incarcerated Parents

- Talk more about family issues with others
- Serve as role models within the context of the program activities
- Practice new parenting skills

What 4-H LIFE Offers

4-H Club Meetings

The 4-H Club meeting takes place during visiting hours at the correctional center in a family friendly atmosphere. The incarcerated parents serve as leaders and their children are enrolled as 4-H members. Meetings include traditional 4-H Club activities, leadership opportunities and family recreation.

Planning Meetings

The incarcerated parents have a monthly meeting to make plans for the upcoming 4-H Club meeting to select topics, activities and address family needs or concerns.

Parenting Skills Classes

Incarcerated parents must currently attend or be a graduate of a parenting class at the correctional center to be in the 4-H LIFE program.

For more on 4-H LIFE, go to www.extension.missouri.edu/4hlife.

Tell Us About Your Program

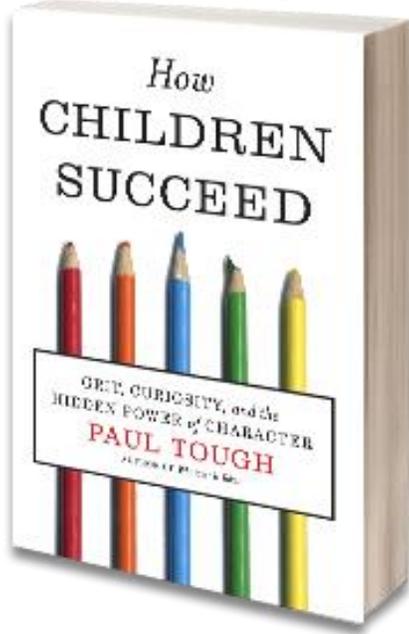
One of the goals of the Parenting Special Interest Group is to provide a vehicle for communication among educators who are teaching or developing parenting programs in correctional facilities. You are invited to share your ideas by contributing an article for a future issue of this newsletter. Email your articles to Barbara.Rasmussen@Wisconsin.gov or JerryBednarowski@new.rr.com

Here are some suggestions for articles:

- Share a creative lesson plan that you use in your Parenting Class
- Compile a list of books and videos you use in your Parenting Class
- Describe how your parent/child book project works
- Share advice on establishing a Fathers or Mothers Fair
- Describe a training workshop that you found useful
- Describe how you involve community organizations in your program
- Describe how you have made your institution more family-friendly



How Do Children Succeed? – By Developing Character Skills



Many incarcerated parents are concerned that their children will fall into the same lifestyle and make the same mistakes they made. They feel that education is key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of incarceration and their children need to develop basic skills before they enter school. But are basic reading and counting skills enough?

In his book, *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough argues that disadvantaged children (and all other children) would be better served by learning such skills as grit, conscientiousness, curiosity, and optimism. These non-cognitive skills of self-regulation are often summarized as character.

In a Q&A on his website, Tough reports that after he published his first book in 2008, *Whatever It Takes*, “I realized I still had a lot of questions about what really happens in childhood. *How Children Succeed* is an attempt to answer those questions, which for many of us are big and mysterious and central in our lives: Why do certain children succeed while other children fail? Why is it, exactly, that poor children are less likely to succeed, on average, than middle-class children? And most important, what can we all do to steer more kids toward success?”

Tough’s reporting for his book took him all over the country and involved professionals from many fields working with populations from all economic levels. He found a new and groundbreaking conversation going on that is very different than the traditional education debate.

When asked what he learned about kids growing up in poverty, Tough commented, “A lot of what we think we know about the effect of poverty on a child’s development is just plain wrong. It’s certainly indisputable that growing up in poverty is really hard on children. But the conventional wisdom is that the big problem for low-income kids is that they don’t get enough cognitive stimulation early on. In fact, what seems to have more of an effect is the chaotic environments that many low-income kids grow up in and the often stressful relationships they have with the adults around them. That makes a huge difference in how children’s brains develop, and scientists are now able to trace a direct route from those early negative experiences to later problems in school, health, and behavior.”

As a result of the interviews he conducted, Tough concludes that grit and self-control can be built, in part, through failure. “I don’t think it’s quite true that failure itself helps us succeed. In fact, repeated failures can be quite devastating to a child’s development. What I think is important on the road to success is learning to deal with failure, to manage adversity. That’s a skill that parents can certainly help their children develop — but so can teachers and coaches and mentors and neighbors and lots of other people.”

When asked how writing this book affected him as a parent, Tough responded, “In the end, though, this research had a surprising effect: it made me more relaxed as a parent. When Ellington [Tough’s three-year-old son] was born, I was very much caught up in the idea of childhood as a race — the faster a child develops skills, the better he does on tests, the better he’ll do in life. Having done this reporting, I’m less concerned about my son’s reading and counting ability. Don’t get me wrong, I still want him to know that stuff. But I think he’ll get there in time. What I’m more concerned about is his *character* — or whatever the right synonym is for character when you’re talking about a three-year-old. I want him to be able to get over



disappointments, to calm himself down, to keep working at a puzzle even when it's frustrating, to be good at sharing, to feel loved and confident and full of a sense of belonging. Most important, I want him to be able to deal with failure."

Tough believes, "That's a difficult thing for parents to give their children, since we have deep in our DNA the urge to shield our kids from every kind of trouble. But what we're finding out now is that in trying to protect our children, we may actually be harming them. By not giving them the chance to learn to manage adversity, to cope with failure, we produce kids who have real problems when they grow up. Overcoming adversity is what produces character. And character, even more than IQ, is what leads to real and lasting success."

In *How Children Succeed*, Tough presents compelling portraits of adolescents from backgrounds rife with poverty, violence, drug-addicted parents, sexual abuse, and failing schools, who manage to gain skills that help them overcome their adversities and go on to college. Discussions of these portraits and Tough's belief that character skills can be learned and children's lives saved can be an important addition to Parenting Skills classes being taught in prisons and jails.

The complete Q&A with Paul Tough may be found on his website at: <http://www.paultough.com/about-paul/qa/>. More information about Paul Tough's books, *Whatever It Takes* and *How Children Succeed*, may be found at www.paultough.com.

Book Fills Gaps in Knowledge about Children of Incarcerated Parents

For the more than 1.7 million American children separated from an imprisoned parent and millions more having parents in jail, the risk of behavioral problems, attachment insecurity, poverty, cognitive delays, and other negative outcomes is elevated. But by how much? How many are able to overcome these challenges? And what public policies give them the best chance of persevering? Experts say cross-disciplinary research and interventions are needed to better care for children of incarcerated parents.

The scholars contributing to *Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*, published in November 2010, say it has taken decades to accumulate a body of scientific knowledge about these children, because most practitioners and researchers who gather this information work in isolation. The book takes a fresh, comprehensive look across disciplines — including criminology, sociology, social work, family studies, education, nursing, psychiatry and psychology, and prevention science — to present a detailed view of exactly what we have learned about these kids. And, it identifies the gaps in our knowledge base that demand further attention.

"In this volume, we have brought together key scholars from various disciplines who are experts regarding children, parents, caregivers, and systems associated with parental incarceration," write the book's coeditors, Julie Poehlmann and J. Mark Eddy. "There are clearly many gaps in our knowledge, both at the developmental science level and at the intervention science level. These gaps limit our ability to effectively intervene with these children and families."

Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners is edited by Julie Poehlmann Poehlmann, professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and J. Mark Eddy, senior scientist and licensed psychologist at the Oregon Social Learning Center in Eugene. The book may be ordered online from the Urban Institute Press at <http://www.uipress.org>.



Amachi Provides a Different Path

America's most isolated and at-risk children are the estimated 7.3 million children who have one or both parents under some form of state or federal supervision. Without effective intervention, 70% of these children will likely follow their parent's path into jail or prison. In 2000 the Amachi mentoring organization was developed to provide children impacted by incarceration with a different path by establishing the consistent presence of loving, caring mentors. Since then, the organization has created at least 350 Amachi-modeled programs in more than 250 US cities and all 50 states. To date, these programs have served more than 300,000 children.

Amachi mentors meet weekly with a child who has been carefully matched with them; they often live and worship in the same neighborhoods. Amachi's hope is that one-to-one mentoring by caring adults will significantly improve the life opportunities of the children. Studies have clearly demonstrated that the Big Brother Big Sister mentoring model has positive effects — and through Amachi, the strengths of mentoring and congregational volunteers are brought together.

History

Amachi began in Philadelphia in September 2000 with funding from Pew Charitable Trusts as a partnership between Public/Private Ventures and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southeastern Pennsylvania. John Dilulio, now Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, had the idea for Amachi and W. Wilson Goode, Sr., former Mayor of Philadelphia and currently President of Amachi, Inc. carried it out.

Amachi's success in Philadelphia sparked interest in many cities around the country, as well as at the White House and in Congress. In 2002 Public/Private Ventures began an Amachi program in New York and during the fall of 2003 began expanding the Amachi model nationwide.

The first Amachi Training Institute was conducted in December 2003. As of 2012, the Institute has trained more than 3000 people representing almost 900 organizations from 525 cities in 47 states. Although Public/Private Ventures ceased operations in July 2012, Amachi, Inc. continues the work of the program.

Most recently, Amachi has collaborated with the Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program to provide mentors for the Angel Tree children in selected locations across the country. In return, Prison Fellowship offers the mentors from local congregations a workshop on how the Angel Tree program works. There are more than 600,000 children of prisoners in Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program.

Amachi Training Institute

The Amachi Training Institute provides hands-on training for local organizations mentoring children of incarcerated parents. Whether an organization is in the proposal phase or has been up and running for a few months, the Amachi Training Institute offers valuable guidance on each stage of program development — from recruitment of volunteers and children to data collection and evaluation.

The intensive one-and-a-half-day training offers a comprehensive introduction to the Amachi model. Participants learn effective strategies for recruiting pastors, volunteers, and children and have the opportunity to practice these strategies during a variety of role-play sessions. Guest speakers provide significant insights while leading workshops on topics such as establishing and maintaining relationships with pastors, record keeping and data collection, and making and maintaining matches. The training provides beneficial lessons learned from the development and implementation of Amachi and offers attendees a roadmap for applying the Amachi model in their communities.

The Amachi Training Institute welcomes any representative from an organization that mentors children of incarcerated parents, including organizations with public or private funding and paid or volunteer staff. The training is most beneficial for those who are responsible for developing of an Amachi-modeled program in their community; recruiting religious leaders, volunteers, and children for the program; or monitoring and evaluating the program.

For more information about the Amachi mentoring organization and the Amachi Training Institute visit their website at www.amachimentoring.org or contact Muna A. Walker, Amachi Program Officer, at mwalker@amachimentoring.org.



Re-Energize Yourself at the Fulfilling the Promise Conference

March 13-14, 2013

Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI



Are you looking for new ideas and approaches . . . a chance to re-energize yourself? At the Fulfilling the Promise conference, you'll hear from parent education and home visitation professionals, peers with innovative programs, and experts in related fields. This year's 18th Annual Fulfilling the Promise Conference will give participants a chance to select from workshops and full and half-day training institutes. The conference for parent educators and home visitors will be held on March 13-14, 2013 at the Kalahari Resorts in Wisconsin Dells.

Among the workshops scheduled is "Connecting Incarcerated Parents and Their Families" presented by CEA Parenting Special Interest Group Chair Jerry Bednarowski and Fair Shake, Founder and Director Sue Kastensen.

Parents who will soon to be released from incarceration need to reconnect with their partners and children — many need to connect for the first time. To do this, the offender not only needs to learn information and skills to be a better parent, but also needs to transform his thinking, develop positive parenting behaviors, and access support in the community. This workshop will describe Parenting Classes, Parent Support Groups, and Parent/Child Reading Projects available to offenders while incarcerated and the newly created handbooks which encourage incarcerated parents and their families to stay connected. Participants will learn to utilize the extensive clearinghouse of information, resources and skills development modules available from the non-profit Fair Shake organization to help the offender both pre- and post-release.

For a conference brochure and to register online go to: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/conference/index.cfm>.

Streamlining the Newsletter Distribution

Since 2004, the Wisconsin chapter of the Correctional Education Association has published the Parenting Connection newsletter. For the past 27 years, we have also published the CEA-Wisconsin newsletter. Some of you receive only the Parenting Connection. Others receive both newsletters. Because of duplication in our email lists, still others have been receiving multiple copies of the newsletters.

To streamline the newsletter distribution process and to get the newsletters into the hands of more people who may find the information in the newsletters relevant to their work, the CEA-Wisconsin Board has decided to send everyone on the email lists both newsletters. Hopefully, this will eliminate most of the duplicate emails resulting from different email lists for each newsletter.

Because of program changes in correctional facilities over the past few years, the overlap of topics covered in the Parenting Connection and CEA-Wisconsin newsletters has been increasing. For example, many reentry programs contain parenting modules and many facilities have family literacy programs. So it makes sense for correctional educators to have access to the information in both newsletters.

The changes in our distribution plan will be increase the number of people who will be receiving electronic copies of the newsletters. This will result in almost 800 teachers, administrators, volunteers and other staff who work in prisons, jails and juvenile detention centers having access to the newsletters.

In addition to these emails, the CEA-W and Parenting Connection newsletters will also be posted on the CEA-Wisconsin, National CEA, Wisconsin DOC and Fair Shake websites.

If you know of any other individuals or groups who would be interested in receiving the Parenting Connection and CEA-Wisconsin newsletters, email their addresses to jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com



Editor's Musings:

I heard a horrible news story about a woman who scalded her two-year-old's feet because she was frustrated that he couldn't get the hang of potty training. I also had a past student tell me that he learned about fire the hard way. He had been playing with matches, started a blanket on fire, but quickly extinguished it. He begged his sister not to tell, but you know how little sisters are. She told. His dad proceeded to teach him about fire by holding in turn each foot and hand over the flames on a gas stove until they blistered.

It seems incomprehensible to most how those "techniques" could be considered discipline. Yet in a recent Inside Out Dads class, many of the students stated that their most eye-opening topic was the difference between discipline and punishment. The common belief was that in order to "discipline" kids, it was necessary to use whatever was handy — cords, spoons, belts, etc. — otherwise, how was a kid going to figure out what was right and what was wrong.

Plato said, "Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each." He seemed to have a handle on what is needed to teach or discipline a child. Maybe we need to go back and study some Greek.

Barb Rasmussen

To join CEA go to: www.ceanational.org

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