

Family Activities Used at Potosi



Family Time

Sharing

One meeting focused on sharing. Members created hand puppets from lunch bags using crayons, ribbon, yarn, stick glue, “googly eyes,” etc. At their organizational meeting, incarcerated parents had written a puppet skit that pointed out the positive aspects of sharing. They assigned parts to members, who performed the puppet show. After the show, the club discussed the life lesson and how it applies to their own lives.

Love and Appreciation

In one February meeting, the topic was love and appreciation. Members made Valentine's Day cards to express appreciation for the other members of their family. (This activity came from the Family Times Curriculum's Affirmation and Caring section.)

Trust

One meeting focused on trust. Incarcerated fathers and their children played “pin the tail on the donkey” and took turns directing each other verbally. This activity illustrated trust building and generated a discussion of trust as an important foundation for family and other relationships.

Holiday Activities

Martin Luther King Day

In January, the meeting focused on “diversity and tolerance.” Members read excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches. Each family discussed what the speech meant to them and talked about how diversity and tolerance are important in society. They also discussed their feelings about Martin Luther King; whether we have achieved the changes he called for, etc. Members then wrote their own “dreams” and shared them with the other members of their family. The group shared some of the dreams and discussed them.

Easter

One meeting focused on creativity. The related activity tied the topic to the holiday through Easter egg decoration with incarcerated fathers working with their children to develop designs.

Mother's/Father's Day

During meetings in the respective holiday months, members took turns sharing ways their mothers/fathers influenced their lives. Members then made Mother's Day or Father's Day cards to show their appreciation for their parents. Children and youth then read their cards to their mothers/fathers and discussed what their respective parent means to them. For Father's Day, children and their fathers decorated t-shirts for each other using paints and markers.

Communication

Getting to Know You

Using a “How well do you know your parent or child?” activity from the Family Times curriculum, children and parents were asked a series of questions about each other, and they answered as they thought their parents/children would. Families compared their answers, then discussed how well they knew the



other members of their family unit (or how poorly they knew the members). Questions included favorites (music, food, classes, etc.), best friends, life experiences, strengths and weaknesses, etc. Discussion focused on differences and similarities, reasons for needing to know family members better, advantages of communicating with family members, etc. The objective of the exercise was to help children and their parents learn about each other's interests, hobbies, and friends.

Telephone

To underscore the importance of listening skills as part of communication, the group sat in a circle and played the telephone game. To play, one person whispers a sentence into the next person's ear. That person passes the message to the next person, and so on, until the message gets back to the person who made up the sentence. The group discussed any changes and identified where along the line the message changed. They also discussed the importance of listening and understanding in order to have effective communication.

Teamwork

Hula Hoop Challenge

Members split into two or three groups. Each group takes a turn and is timed during the challenge. Members of each group hold hands in a circle and may not let go during the exercise. Two members hold hands through the middle of a hula-hoop. Members must pass the hoop around the circle as fast as they can by squeezing through the hoop. If any hands come apart, the group must begin again. Each group has at least two turns so they can compare their own times to see if teamwork efforts improved. Groups compete against each other to spur competition and heighten the need for teamwork. After the exercise, members discuss what they learned in the exercise and talk about the need to work effectively with others.

Water Race

Children divide into teams and line up across the room from their assigned fathers. Fathers lie on their backs on the floor, holding an empty plastic cup on their forehead. Each child holds a plastic spoon. A caregiver for each team holds a cup of water. When the game starts, the children must scoop water into their spoons, walk to their fathers, and pour the water into the cup. At the end of a prescribed amount of time (usually only a minute or two), the team with the most water in the cup wins. The children and fathers love this game, as there is a lot of spillage onto the fathers' faces.

Trust/Following Directions

Obstacle Course

Fathers and children pair up to guide each other verbally through an obstacle course. The course consists of pieces of construction paper randomly placed on the floor. Stepping on a paper immediately ends the turn. Each pair begins with the blindfolding of one partner, who is spun around three times. The other partner must guide the blindfolded partner through the obstacle course strictly with verbal directions. Meanwhile, the other members of the group call out directions in an attempt to confuse the blindfolded person and get him/her to step on a paper and be eliminated. This, along with discussion following completion of the exercise, is designed to show the importance of trusting one's parents and the need to listen to what they say rather than to others who may not have one's best interest at heart.

