

4-H LIFE group helps children of incarcerated women meet challenges



By

Participants of the 4-H LIFE program at the Chillicothe Correctional Center met for a regular meeting Saturday and children and their mothers made Christmas cards and rice crispy treats which the children later distributed to residents of The Baptist Home.

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Chillicothe, Mo. -

Children whose parents are in prison face many challenges, but on Saturday at the Chillicothe Correctional Center, some those hurdles faded to the background as a group of them met, along with their incarcerated mothers, for their regular 4-H meeting. That's right, a 4-H meeting.

The gathering is part of a program called 4-H LIFE, sponsored by the University of Missouri Extension. It was first introduced at the Chillicothe Correctional Center during the last week of August, with offenders participating in parenting skills and leadership classes. The first monthly club meeting involving children and care givers was held September 17, and was enthusiastically received by all those who participated, according to Rick Smith, a 4-H Youth Development Program Associate in Livingston County.

"The responses of the children, care givers, and offenders to the 4-H LIFE program at the Chillicothe Correctional Center has been amazing," he said.

At the 4-H LIFE enhanced family visits, children engage in a variety of fun learning activities that promote the development of essential life skills. On Saturday, Smith said, children learned the importance of public service and acts of generosity by making Christmas cards and over 100 rice crispy "snow men" treats. After the visit, the care givers and children met at the Baptist Home in Chillicothe to spread some holiday cheer by caroling through the

halls and passing out their holiday goodies to the residents. The rice crispy "snow men" were left at the nurse's stations for any passing by to enjoy.

"Children, who had never heard of 4-H, enjoyed the experience so much they wanted to learn more about how to get involved in 4-H in their own local communities," he said. Smith added that two participants immediately got involved with 4-H in their hometowns and are now serving as their club's president and secretary. In November, five participants from the program attended a 4-H Camp Food and Fitness event in Columbia, Mo.

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