



Kewanee facility is helping inmates bond with their kids

By Tatyana Fykes
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KEWANEE, III. (KWQC) — It was a special day at Kewanee Life Skills re-entry facility.

Inmates had the opportunity to bond with their children through a program called A Day with Dads. The program is the first of its kind for men in Illinois.

Through community donations, the inmates received paint and supplies to create carnivals games, birdhouses and putt-putt golf course.

“It’s good that they can see us not as convicts so much or inmates in this environment; they can see us as men ...and dads because no matter what to the kids we’re still dad,” inmate Sammy Stewart.

According to Anthony Williams, the facility warden, the day has been in the works over the last two years. Williams said some of the inmates planned the day.

“Some of these kids haven’t seen their dads since they were literally infants. Now, they are 10 to 12 years old”, said Williams.

Inmate Ivan Carmona said he has not seen his 9-year-old daughter since 2011.

“I’m overwhelmed and I don’t believe it... but I’m glad this day came,” said Carmona.

Carmona said before the program, families could only sit across a table from each other. Now, he has the chance to play with his daughters.

The program’s purpose is to give inmates the opportunity to bond with their children for a day.

“It goes towards giving that family support for whenever they get ready to re-enter society as well as trying to break the cycle children following in their father's footsteps,” said Williams.

Williams said being a father himself, having the opportunity to organize the program makes it even more special.

“My daughter is 21 and being her dad is everything. I want them to experience the same feeling,” said Williams.

Stewart feels he benefited from the day.

“I'm homesick. It makes me miss my little man even more but just being able to come up being able to see them play with the stuff that I help build that was enough enjoyment for me,” said Stewart.

Williams said he hopes to make this program an annual event for more dads to enjoy.

“That family support is crucial before to their success when they leave as well as for the child to experience what it is like to have the father around despite their father's mistakes,” said Williams.

In addition to a daddy-daughter dance and a father and son walk, the kids also received a special gift from their fathers.

The men came together and filled backpacks with school supplies to make sure their kids are ready for the first day of school.

<http://www.kwqc.com/content/news/Kewanee-facility-is-helping-inmates-bond-with-their-kids-441093233.html>