

FEATURE –4-H PROGRAM HELPS KIDS OF CONVICTS

INTRO: A 4-H program is helping Missouri kids have better visitation with their incarcerated parents. The USDA's Patrick O'Leary has more. (1:57) (refeed from 1/08)

ALEXIUS SHADWICK OF ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI IS LIKE MOST TEN-YEAR OLDS, EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT HER FATHER IS IN PRISON.

Martez Shadwick, Inmate, Potosi Correctional Center: I got found guilty of murder and robbery and two counts of armed criminal action but I'm not going to be in here for long.

VISITATION HERE HAS BEEN LIMITED FOR INMATES. BUT A U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE-SPONSORED PROGRAM IS CHANGING THAT. A GRANT FROM U-S-D-A'S COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND EXTENSION SERVICE IS FUNDING THE LIFE PROGRAM Rob Wilkerson, University of Missouri Extension: LIFE. stands for Living Interactive Family Education. We use a term called enhanced visitation. And the whole idea is that the contact that intimate contact with the child- you know, putting your arms around them helps develop the bond between the child and the parent. Before they weren't allowed to do that.

Lynna Lawson, University of Missouri Extension: I'm glad that you guys are all here today for our 4-H LIFE parenting meeting.

THE INMATES MUST FIRST ATTEND WORKSHOPS ON PARENTING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

Rob Wilkerson: When we first started the program, a lot of the community viewed it as more of a program for coddling offenders. Over the course of the years, they've realized that the program's for the youth. That a kid deserves to have a relationship with his father.

TWO KIDS WHO HAVE BENEFITED ARE JUSTIN AND AUSTIN REED. THEIR FATHER, SAM IS SERVING A 13-YEAR SENTENCE.

Sam Reed, Inmate, Potosi Correctional Center: Yeah I feel ashamed, but if they learn from this situation in my life and it keeps them out of prison, that's fine with me

A TYPICAL VISIT INVOLVES GAMES LIKE CHARADES AND OTHER GROUP ACTIVITIES.

Sam Reed: They help keep my mind out of here. I'm thinking about, you know, the future when we're going to be able to be a complete family again out there in the free world.

Martez Shadwick : Me and her can really communicate. I can bond with her more. This program has helped me to strive to be there for my daughter. And I love her.

Rob Wilkerson: Once they've got this relationship with their child they have something to lose. So there is an incentive there for the offenders to stay out of trouble.

FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M PAT O'LEARY.