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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Special needs children respond to offender gifts of special quilts**



Offenders are spreading warmth this holiday season, one quilt at a time. Quilts made by offenders at the Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC) were recently given to special needs children at the Knights of Columbus Child Development Center at the SSM Cardinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center and Saint Louis University. The 40 quilts were made as part of JCCC’s Restorative Justice Program.

The quilts were given as gifts to the children as they went through therapy for their respective disorders.

“One girl with autism was very anxious during her follow-up visit,” said Dr. Rolanda Maxim, associate professor of pediatrics at St. Louis University. “I offered her juice and cookies, and we tried to blow bubbles, but all our attempts failed to calm her behavior. Once we gave her the quilt, she wrapped herself in it, relaxed, smiled and was able to cooperate during the evaluation. Her mom was really impressed and grateful for the quilt.”

Department of Corrections Director George Lombardi said offenders in the Missouri corrections system have been engaged in the Restorative Justice Program for many years. Restorative Justice programs give offenders an opportunity to give back to the community in an effort to help heal some of the harm they have caused. Director Lombardi described this program, which provides quilts to children with special needs, as “wonderful.”

Lombardi said, “We hope this special relationship with the Knights of Columbus Child Development Center at the SSM Cardinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center and Saint Louis University will continue for the foreseeable future.”