

For further information
Contact
Mandi Steele
Public Information Officer
Tele: 573/522-1118
Direct FAX: 573/751-4099
P.O. Box 236
Jefferson City Mo. 65102



For Immediate Release...

Corrections News

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Crafts with Conviction celebrates 10-year partnership with KidSmart

Crafts with Conviction reached a milestone this year, celebrating a 10-year partnership with KidSmart – Tools for Learning.

Since 2003, the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC) has donated more than \$500,000 worth of “Crafts with Conviction” items to KidSmart, a nonprofit organization that provides school supplies to underprivileged students in the St. Louis area. Offenders in the Restorative Justice program hand-make school materials known as Crafts With Conviction as a way to give back for the harm they have caused.

“Restorative Justice is an important program that offers offenders a way to repay some of the debt they have incurred in the communities for their crimes,” said DOC Director George Lombardi. “Offenders turn donated raw materials into hand-crafted items that are distributed through Restorative Justice to nonprofit groups. This teaches the inmates altruism, which is a key component for successful reentry to society.”

No tax dollars are used to generate Restorative Justice donations.

Sixteen DOC facilities donate materials such as coloring books, journals, flashcards, bookmarks, notepads and learning games to KidSmart. Teachers can shop for the items, along with other donated school supplies, at KidSmart’s Free Store in Bridgeton. KidSmart serves schools where 70 percent or more of the students are on the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program.

“A lot of the students don’t come to school with the supplies that they need on a daily basis or they don’t even start off the school year with the supplies they need,” said Sharene Brown, a second grade teacher in St. Louis, “so KidSmart supplies us that opportunity to focus on learning rather than on what the students are bringing to school.”

Brown said she uses the Crafts with Conviction items such as bookmarks and journals as incentives for her students.

“It’s something they can look forward to,” she said.

Jennifer Miller, president of KidSmart, said the educational enrichment materials provided by DOC have helped thousands of children.

“It’s just amazing how the impact has been so widespread,” Miller said. “The Crafts with Conviction area is one of the most popular. We put the things on the shelf and they fly off the shelf.”

KidSmart distributes an average of \$5 million worth of school materials to about 60,000 students annually and serves more than 200 schools in the greater metropolitan St. Louis area.

The facilities that donate to KidSmart are Algoa Correctional Center; Boonville Correctional Center; Cremer Therapeutic Community Center; Crossroads Correctional Center; Eastern Reception, Diagnostic & Correctional Center; Farmington Correctional Center; Fulton Reception & Diagnostic Center; Jefferson City Correctional Center; Missouri Eastern Correctional Center; Northeast Correctional Center; Potosi Correctional Center; South Central Correctional Center; Southeast Correctional Center; Western Missouri Correctional

Missouri Department of Corrections

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon • Governor
George A. Lombardi • Director

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Center; Western Reception, Diagnostic & Correctional Center; and Women's Eastern
Reception, Diagnostic & Correctional Center.

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