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SCDC expands popular reading program to include fathers

JUNE 19, 2018 BY [RENEE SEXTON](#)

Although some inmates in the custody of the South Carolina Department of Corrections couldn't spend Fathers Day with their children, they were able to make the day a little happier for their families.

A popular reading program SCDC started with mothers has now been expanded to include fathers.

"We started a program called A Mother's Voice where it's a recordable book that the parent can read to their children and record it and they can say 'brush your teeth,' or 'go to bed,' or 'I love you' and things of that nature," said SCDC Director Bryan Stirling, who got the idea for the program working with the [Riley Institute at Furman](#).

"When parents make decisions to commit crimes their children suffer because they're not around," he said. "It helps keep a connection between the parent, who is incarcerated, and the child. Because most of the folks



who are incarcerated get out in under five years and it also incentivizes them to behave because you have to be disciplinary free to be part of the program," Stirling said.

He said the program encourages children to read and helps parents with literacy.

"They'll be able to listen to their parent every night read to them when they go to bed."

"I know most folks' earliest memories are of their parents reading to them and this continues that," Stirling said. "Hopefully it will help the child with reading comprehension they'll go on to be successful in school and will not follow in their parents' footsteps."

Stirling said he saw the success of the program with incarcerated mothers and wanted to expand it to fathers.

"It's been wildly successful," he said. "It's been phenomenal."

"A lot of the women and some of the men were actually crying because they were able to participate in this program. Volunteers were crying to see, hopefully, that positive connection between the parent — incarcerated — and the child."

"It's kind of interesting to see the parents look at the books and they really spend time because they want to buy the book that they think is most appropriate for their child or children, that their children will really like and take to," Stirling said. "It's really a great experience to watch."

SCDC received book discounts, donations, and grants to purchase the books, which come from area Hallmark stores costing approximately \$30.00 each. Donations have been contributed by a variety of entities, including Michelin, Delta Dental, Forest Acers Rotary Club, IM Services Recreation, Karen Moton, and various church groups. To donate, contact SCDC.

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