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**When you support  
Extension, men  
gain opportunities  
to engage in  
positive ways with  
their children  
and strengthen  
the parent/child  
relationship.**



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE

# *Changing Lives*



*Father and son practice their archery skills during an overnight father-child camping trip.*

## **An Extension Fatherhood Program is Supporting Dads in Wolfe and Todd Counties**

*Fatherhood programs in Wolfe and Todd Counties provide educational programs for fathers and families to strengthen parenting skills and promote family resilience.*

**“I love the programs you offer ... it gives me quality time with my children. There’s a lot of times I can’t afford to take them places. I appreciate all that you do for the people in Wolfe county ... it truly is a blessing, thank you.”**

*Program Participant*

With grant funding from Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR), educational programs are being conducted for fathers or father figures and their families in Todd and Wolfe counties. The primary goal is to strengthen parenting skills of fathers as a means to promote family resilience. The program employs a multi-disciplinary approach that views fathers in the context of the family and community. Programming is based on local needs grounded in research. The program uses evidence-based curriculum including *24/7 Dad*® and *Inside/Out Dad*®.

One grant-funded program being offered in Todd County works to break the cycle of incarcerated fathers. Fathers who complete this program and all its requirements are eligible to have 90 days deducted from their sentence. All 84 incarcerated fathers who have completed the program revealed that they have improved their communication skills with their children and have a renewed sense of what a good father is supposed to be. Responses indicate a positive progression toward more effective parenting. All fathers revealed an increase in positive perceptions about their relationships with their children. Informal interviews with program participants have revealed that the fathers all have a self-realization after participating in the program that, despite the fact that they feel they are good fathers, they always notice areas that need improvement. In addition, only one father of 84 participants since the program began in 2014 has been re-incarcerated, or .01% compared to a state average of 29.5% (Kentucky State Criminal Justice Profile, 2014). Informal interviews of Todd County Detention Center program participants and staff documentation revealed that participating incarcerated fathers had a:

- Better understanding of child development,
- Positive perception toward relationships with their children,
- Decrease in negative perceptions regarding fatherhood.



*A father and daughter fish together during a “Dad’s Day Out” program in Wolfe County.*

Many other programs have been offered in Todd and Wolfe counties through this grant, including an ongoing program for fathers of preschoolers and a school-based program for teen dads. In the first two years of the grant, a total of 98 fathers or father figures completed pre- and post-surveys. For all fatherhood programs offered through this grant, there has been a decrease in negative perceptions regarding fatherhood by all program participants. Every respondent viewed experiences as parents as well as their parenting skills in a more positive way after participation. For example, there was a significant change between the pre- and post- surveys on the statement, “I encourage my child to be curious, to explore and question things.” This reveals that the program contributed to the participants’ understanding of basic child development. Nearly 100% of program participants have expressed new insights that have allowed them to realize there are still more opportunities for personal growth as a father. This, in turn, has resulted in participants engaging in programs, planning and evaluating processes in relation to fatherhood programs, and in reflective dialogue about themselves as fathers and the larger community and society as a whole in relation to fatherhood.