

Diagnostic and Evaluation Center "Read to Me" Program

(3/3/2006)

Worthwhile Activity For DEC Inmates

Diagnostic & Evaluation Center
READ-TO-ME Program
by- Earl West, DEC Librarian

One of the vision points of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services promotes inmate programming. In light of this, there existed a need to provide additional and meaningful programs for inmates housed at the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center (DEC). The Department has supported read-to-me programs at all facilities, particularly around the holiday season. It seemed that offering a program such as this on a continual basis to all newly committed inmates would be a nice fit at this facility.

The Read-To-Me program allows the DEC inmate population an opportunity to participate in a very worthwhile venture. Program participants are videotaped reading a book to be viewed by their children. In a small, yet important way, the program provides reinforcement to the child that although dad is not around at the moment; he cares for and loves them. Inmates desiring to participate must be verified as the biological, step, or adopted father and children must be eight years old or younger. There is a charge of \$4.00 to the inmate to cover cost of the videotape and the mailing.

Since the program began almost two years ago, over 250 inmates have been videotaped reading to their children. While the success of the program is not aimed at the number participating, this statistic does validate the positive impact of such a program. We have many inmates who do more than one videotaping and all have been very positive about the program. It is a program that the facility plans to continue in the years to come.