



South Carolina Department of Corrections

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COLUMBIA, S.C. – Inmates across the S.C. Department of Corrections are being given the opportunity to record books for their children as part of a program aimed at strengthening family connections.

The program, *A Father's Voice* and *A Mother's Voice*, provides incarcerated parents with recordable books suitable for toddlers and small children. The parent records the book, which is then given to the child. This enables the child and parent to “read” together, connecting the two through the joy of reading.

Inmates who are interested in the program earn the right to participate. After recording, the books are given to their children as gifts. The program, which is funded by private donations, recently received \$10,000 from Original Six Foundation and an anonymous donor associated with the group.

“This program allows children to hear their parent’s voice and reinforces a basic tenet of literacy – a parent reading to a child,” S.C. Department of Corrections Director Bryan Stirling said. “We are so grateful for this donation, which will allow hundreds more children to have a bedtime story read to them by their parent.”

This program is particularly valuable on Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, birthdays and the Christmas holidays, when children can get a gift containing their parent’s voice. More than 300 inmates across S.C. institutions have recorded books since the program began. The books, which are funded totally by donations, cost about \$30 each.

“When a child's primary caregiver is incarcerated, they are more likely to have behavior issues, do poorly in classes, or drop out of school completely,” said Original Six Foundation Founder

and Chair Ambassador Nikki Haley. “Although parents made decisions that took them away, we want these kids to know they are loved by their families and that organizations like the Original Six are here for them. They are important and deserve our support.”

The program was founded in 2016 in conjunction with the Riley Institute at Furman University.