



## PATCH Celebrates 25 Years

### Keeping the Connection for Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children

Friday, October 16, 2009, was a day of celebration as PATCH marked 25 years of providing services to maintain and strengthen relationships between children and their mothers incarcerated at Chillicothe Correctional Center (CCC). Events were held inside and outside the prison to celebrate the past and anticipate the future of PATCH and what it can mean for families across Missouri. PATCH provides parent education for mothers and coordinates visits for mothers and children who are separated due to incarceration.



Presented before a group of over 100 offenders and staff inside the prison, the program featured remarks by PATCH Board President, Lou Cowherd, CCC Staff, PATCH mothers, the CCC Gospel Choir, State Representative Mike Lair, Barb Burton, PATCH Director, and a special tribute to Coleen Scott, former PATCH director who would retire October 31st.

#### Former Offender Speaks

The featured speaker was a former offender who had been incarcerated at CCC for 12 years. She returned to Chillicothe to



From left: June Pearse, former director of PATCH at Renz; Coleen Scott, former PATCH director at CCC; Barb Burton, current PATCH Director; Lou Cowherd, PATCH Board President; and Ruth Beamer, one of the original organizers of PATCH.

share her personal experiences with the program. Her daughter, who attended the program with her mother, was 5 years old when her mother was incarcerated. "It is *devastating* for a mother to leave her children. The children don't understand. They just want their mom." "Through PATCH Visits", she explained, "I was able to maintain a personal and parental relationship with my daughter from inside for 12 years. I have been home for 16 years and now enjoy not only my daughter but also 2 granddaughters and a step grandson".



In closing, she praised the efforts of all involved with PATCH and asked for continued support. "I wonder how many kids go the wrong way because they don't have that one-on-one bonding. I encourage you to keep doing this and encourage others to be involved with PATCH."

### Coleen Scott Retires After 22 Years as Director

After 22 years of tremendous commitment and service to PATCH as Director, Coleen Scott retired October 31st. In her retirement letter she writes, "For the past 22 years PATCH has been my life. I have witnessed PATCH bring real joy to mothers and their children while enduring time away from each other. I will dearly miss the program and all of you. Thank you, each and everyone for all your help, prayers, and love throughout the entire 22 years... God Bless!"

Coleen will continue to volunteer for PATCH and assist with visits.

# PATCH: How It Began

Following a 1981 statewide conference on “The Female Offenders in the 80’s” which was sponsored by the United Methodist Church Office of Creative Ministries from Columbia, Missouri, and the Missouri Association for Social Welfare from Jefferson City, a dedicated group calling themselves “The Women in Prison Coalition” chose the establishment of a prison based parenting program as their first priority.



The program began with the name, Prison PATCH (Parents and Their Children), in January of 1984 at the Renz Correctional Center near Jefferson City.

*The mission was to provide services to incarcerated mothers and their children to maintain and/or strengthen family relationships during this forced separation.*

Prison PATCH was a private, not-for-profit corporation developed by resident mothers, volunteers, and community professionals.

In 1986, when the Department of Corrections moved the women to the Chillicothe Correctional Center, Prison PATCH followed, establishing a visiting center in a single wide house trailer on the grounds.



The “PATCH Visit” is fundamental to the program based on the premise that keeping the connection between children and their incarcerated mothers provides benefits to both. PATCH visits which used to be held in a trailer on the prison grounds on Third Street are now held in rooms provided by the Department of Corrections in the new Chillicothe Correctional Center. Visits are supervised by trained PATCH staff and volunteers. Officers are available nearby, but not visible during the visit. From the earliest beginnings of the program, PATCH has been committed to provide transportation if children do not have a way to come and visit their mothers. PATCH makes every effort

to utilize volunteers to provide this service.



For many years the PATCH van was driven by local volunteers to communities across the state picking up children in the very early hours of the morning to arrive in time for the 10 a.m. visit with their mothers. Now, volunteers are recruited to drive their own vehicles or some drive a church vehicle with children from their area of the state. The PATCH van now limits its trips to those within a 100 mile radius of Chillicothe.



In the early 1990’s PATCH received a grant from the Missouri Children’s Trust Fund to establish year-round parenting classes. Parenting classes are provided by PATCH and are taught weekly at Chillicothe Correctional Center along with a weekly support group.



## Trick-or-Treat for PATCH

Missouri Union Presbytery’s Criminal Justice Mission Team came up with a great way to support PATCH. Trick or Treat for PATCH was created as a way to support transportation and visits for children across the state to visit their mothers at Chillicothe Correctional Center. Churches were encouraged to develop a pumpkin patch and watch it grow as funds were collected for the Trick-or-Treat project. Over \$2,500 was raised and will be used to support transportation and visitation for children of incarcerated mothers through PATCH at CCC.

PATCH provides parent education, visitation and transportation to make a difference for families who are dealing with incarceration.

# PATCH Mothers Say Thank You

**"When I was a young girl, one of my dreams was to grow up and have a child. I always wanted a girl. Well, my life didn't turn out exactly as planned, but eventually my daughter was born. When she was two months of age, she and I were separated due to my incarceration. I thought my dream of being a Mother was over.**

**Then I became involved with the PATCH program and began having PATCH visits with my child. PATCH, and Mrs. Coleen Scott, literally saved, created, and allowed me to maintain a relationship with my daughter. If it wasn't for the PATCH program, and Mrs. Scott, I have no doubt that the beautiful, bonded mother-daughter relationship that my child and I share would not exist.**

**I will be eternally grateful to this very necessary program."**

**—Lisa**

I think you ladies and the guys too, deserve a pat on the back for all you do with the inmates. Keeping my daughter in touch and hands-on with both of the kids has meant so much to her. She has mentioned to me how it has helped her to get on the right track for a better future. Thanks again for all you do.

**-Betsy (Mother of offender)**

"Despite the circumstances that come in our lives, a mother and her child must maintain a connection. The adverse affect of incarceration can break or temporarily separate that connection. But the PATCH volunteers, those who assist and participate is the missing link that unites us with our children. Time won't permit me to express in depth the gratitude that I possess in my heart for each and every individual that enables us to maintain that connection with our children. However, humbly I would like to take this opportunity to say with everything in me, from the bottom of my heart and with sincere gratefulness, THANK YOU. Because, without you and this program, the gift of seeing my children wouldn't be possible. Thank you for making the impossible, POSSIBLE!"

—Tonya

"I would like to share my first visit with my son through PATCH. It was wonderful and beautiful. It's been 22 months since I've last touched my son. We had fun and a wonderful time together, we ate pepperoni and cheese pizza, chips, cupcakes and ice cream. We played Monopoly and played bowling. We took a picture together, we talked and laughed and cried tears of joy together. And I thank PATCH from the bottom of my heart for going to get my son and bringing him here to see me and then taking him back home. I'm dedicated to PATCH and look forward to more PATCH visits in the near future. I would also like to encourage the other women who have children to come sign up for the PATCH class. I would also like to thank PATCH for their time and support." —Paula

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**Barb Burton, PATCH Director**  
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