

Incarcerated Men Build Toys for Local Charities

January 4, 2019

By [Rachel Friederich](#)

DOC Communications

(Rachel Friederich, DOC Communications)

ABERDEEN – Hundreds of children experiencing hardships received brand new toys for Christmas, thanks to some incarcerated men at [Stafford Creek Corrections Center](#).

Twenty-six inmates at the correctional facility took on the role of Santa's elves. Over the course of several months, inmates made toys, stuffed animals, clothes, and leather jewelry. Inmates donated them last month to several charities serving underprivileged families in Grays Harbor County.



(Rachel Friederich, DOC Communications)

See the video at <https://youtu.be/HgM843OvgdQ>

Every December, the prison invites charity representatives to see the toys in a festive holiday display. They also get to meet the men who made the toys.

“This whole program is awesome. It gives the guys something to do to give back to the community,” said Ramona McCormack, with [Christmas for Kids](#). “You can’t replace handmade items like these with things you get at the store.”

Christmas for Kids is a group of churches and businesses that provide gifts to local disadvantaged children. Other charity recipients included [Connections: A Center for Healthy Families](#) (formerly the Children's Advocacy Center of Grays Harbor) and [Beyond Survival](#), a sexual assault victim's advocacy organization.

The program, called "Toy Time," began 15 years ago with a group of eight inmates, according to prison Recreation and Athletics Specialist Ryan Graves. Incarcerated individuals, who work in the facility's hobby shop, came up with the idea of making toys to give to local charities. They enjoyed the project so much, they made it an annual tradition.

"The organizations are always so thankful to get this stuff," Graves said to the incarcerated individuals during the event. "You guys don't get to see it, but there's a lot of kids out there that are going to have big smiles on their faces when they receive these gifts."

No taxpayer dollars were used to create these items. The wood comes from scraps in the [Correctional Industries'](#) furniture manufacturing program. Leather and other materials come from fundraisers and community donations.

Incarcerated individuals who use the facility's hobby shop to make toys must remain free of major infractions for at least a year and a half. They also must receive operational training and pass safety tests before they can use any wood working machinery. Staff take inventory of all the tools after each work session. They also lock up the hobby shop when it's not in use.

One of the Toy Time incarcerated participants, Andrew, says contributing to this event has changed him. The 39-year-old is serving 324 months. He knows he can't undo the crimes he committed, but says the program has given him hope that he can turn his life around. He wants to get a job in carpentry or manufacturing after leaving prison, or maybe open up his own wood shop.

"The program doesn't just develop mechanical skills," Andrew said. "It develops skills of empathy and caring about other people. That's why I feel like these programs are necessary. They don't just reform your ability to build products. It also reforms the soul."

Incarcerated individuals in the Toy Time program say they would like to give to more organizations, including health care or first responder agencies. If your organization would like to be considered to receive items, contact Stafford Creek Corrections Center at (360) 537-1800.