

Delinquent Youth Find Way To Make Positive Impact

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— A most unlikely site to start up a business is a detention center. Even more unlikely is that the profits are used to buy gifts for needy children.

But that's exactly what happened recently at Barnes Hall, a youth detention facility in Lancaster City.

"We wanted to teach the kids how to earn money the right way," said Brenda Stallman, who introduced a 4-H Learn to Earn program to the delinquent youth who range from 10 to 18 years in age.

The curriculum taught the incarcerated youths how to select a business, what is needed to start the business, where to get the financing, how to market it, set prices, and sell the product.

With these guidelines in mind, the youth decided that they wanted to make stromboli to sell. For many years the 4-H program held cooking classes at the detention center and stromboli was always a popular activity so Stallman felt confident that the project would be a success.

The task was monumental, but the Barnes Hall staff and many volunteers helped the kids fulfill their plan.

The youth made the stromboli from scratch. While rolling out the dough, they nicknamed themselves the "Boli Rollers."

The project posed some problems, some seen and some unfor-

seen. Because the kids are limited in contact with society, the staff and volunteers needed to make the contacts to sell the stromboli. They also needed to purchase the supplies, and deliver the finished product.

But the enthusiasm of the youth who participated in the project was so contagious that the staff and volunteers willingly worked to make the project successful.

An unanticipated problem was that some people seem hesitant to purchase food made by juvenile delinquents.

"But that need not have been a concern at all," said Brenda, who is thoroughly trained in food safety in her job as a Penn State Cooperative Extension advisor for Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program in Pennsylvania (EFNEP).

Stallman and a EFNEP aide taught the youths the importance of food safety and the necessity of thoroughly washing their hands and wearing plastic gloves, aprons, and hats whenever working on the project.

The participants learned hygiene, cleanliness, how to follow a recipe, how to bake, pricing, labeling according to USDA standards, designing sale flyers, and management of the project. About 21 kids were totally involved from start to finish.

Because the youth said that so far they had made a negative impact on the community, they decided they wanted to use this



From left, Ed Heston, Barnes Hall administrator, Lavonne Hartstein, secretary, and Brenda Stallman, who taught the 4-H Learn To Earn program, show off the gifts that delinquent youth bought with money they earned by operating a legitimate business.

project to make a positive impact. They chose Toys for Tots to be the recipient of their profits. By checking out newspaper and catalog ads, the youth chose the toys that they wanted to buy with the profits. Staff members Lavonne Hartstein, receptionist, and Cristina Boudier, secretary, purchased the presents that the kids had chosen and brought them back for the Barnes Hall residents to wrap.

Some of the kids had never wrapped a present before in their

life. A typical comment was, "I wanta play with this. Buy me one of these for Christmas."

"The cooperation was astounding. This was a project that went on without a hitch," said Ed Heston, administrator at Barnes Hall.

"Success in projects such as this builds a positive environment for the future," he said. "It also helps change the perception of those in the community who have reservations about helping kids in trouble."

"Brenda provided a fantastic project. Everyone won. The kids

got a lot out of it; so did 4-H, Toys for Tots, and the staff."

Stromboli was sold during November and December. After each sale, unsolicited calls came in requesting more because callers kept saying "the stromboli tasted wonderful."

Heston said, "It was the first time Barnes Hall ever attempted a project like this. It was very successful for everyone involved. I hope ways to contribute to the community will be a continual process for the Barnes Hall residents."

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