



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

**children
& families**

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

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Capitol Exhibit to Feature Art by Incarcerated Youth

Artwork Highlights Implications of Current Policy Regarding Handling of Young Offenders

(Madison)--The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) is pleased to present a new art exhibit, **“Art from the Inside: Unlocking the Creativity of Incarcerated Youth.”** This exhibit will be on display in the State Capitol Rotunda from **Monday, January 14 through Thursday, January 17.** “Art from the Inside: Unlocking the Creativity of Incarcerated Youth” features work created by youth who have been incarcerated in the Wisconsin juvenile or adult correctional system. The pieces exhibited will be accompanied by an artist’s statement describing the work and the artist’s experiences as a youth in the correctional system.

On Wednesday, January 16 WCCF will host a reception in the **Senate Parlor from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.** The reception will feature presentations beginning at 4:00, including recognition of the artists’ achievements; a reading of poetry written by the youth; and acknowledgment of the authors of legislation currently under consideration to return 17-year-olds who commit nonviolent crimes to the juvenile justice system.

In the mid-1990s, Wisconsin changed its laws to treat all 17-year-olds as adults in the justice system, regardless of the severity of the crime. Since that time, we have seen an influx of young people in our adult prison and jails. In fact, according to a recent national report, Wisconsin leads the nation in the rate at which minority youth are incarcerated in adult prisons. The vast majority of 17-year-olds arrested are accused of low-level crimes; only 1% are arrested for the most serious, violent offenses, and only a tiny minority are likely to move into a life of crime as adults. Meanwhile, research has strongly suggested that treating nonviolent youth offenders as adults yields no societal benefits, and in fact has negative impacts on community safety.

“This exhibit will help us better understand what young people in the corrections system are going through,” said WCCF Acting Executive Director Jill Jacklitz. “New research on adolescent development has raised serious questions about how we deal with young offenders. We are missing valuable opportunities to help these kids turn their lives around.”

Some of the artists whose work is being exhibited may be available for interview. Please note, however, that some of the artists are currently incarcerated, so arranging interviews with them may take considerable time. Therefore please contact us well in advance in order to allow sufficient time to make arrangements. To arrange an interview, contact Bob Jacobson at (608) 284-0580, ext. 303 or bjacobson@wccf.org.