CIRCLEVILLE — The Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility (CJCF) hosted a holiday event, Winter Wonderland earlier this month in an effort to bring families closer together.

Altogether, 120 youth and family members participated in the event on Dec. 16, that was held in the facility's gym.

“The holiday season is all about family members spending time together,” Douglas Richard, superintendent at CJCF, said. “Because of the separation caused by incarceration, opportunity for connection is important. We wanted to step up our efforts
and use Winter Wonderland as a way to help youth remember what is truly important in life.”

Shari Wolf, deputy superintendent, said the event was priceless.

“With the smiles, appreciation, food and activities, it was a happy day that brought families together,” she said.

The event featured holiday music, a holiday meal, cookie decoration, crafts and games and the opportunity for the incarcerated youth to write Christmas cards ahead of time for their loved ones.

Kim Jump, deputy director for community engagement and reentry with the Ohio Department of Youth Services, said the event was incentive-based.

“The event was incentive-based for youth, and family members had to be formally established on youths’ visitation lists,” Jump said. “A total of 10 of the family members who participated in Winter Wonderland took advantage of the agency’s free busing program.”

Jump also noted that three of the youth at the event are fathers.

“They were able to have their young children participate,” she added. “A special room, complete with a tree and small gifts, provided just the right environment for young children. Dads and children made thumbprint reindeer photo frames together. The little children left with books with built-in audio recordings by their dads.”

Among those attending included a new father and another who reconnected with his father.

“One of the youths who participated had not seen his father in nine years, but father and son were able to reconnect at the event,” Jump continued. “Another youth was able to hold his baby daughter for the first time during Winter Wonderland.”