

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

They'll break into song on Mother's Day

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Women residents of the Topeka Correctional Facility will experience a special Mother's Day May 12, thanks to funds raised from Saturday night's Bacchus Ball at the Kansas City Club.

They will join their children in a 30-minute opera, "Mystery on the Docks," which is being produced in 65 area elementary schools this year by the Lyric Opera Express program, beneficiary of the Bacchus Foundation. The Express program enables students to produce an opera themselves, meet with professional singers from the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and discuss the opera in classroom debates.

"We also went into 65 schools last year, but this year the Bacchus funds have helped us expand the Lyric Express program to community centers and to the Topeka Correctional Facility," said Paula Winans, director of education for the Lyric Opera. "On Mother's Day, the women at the facility and their children will participate together in a chorus for the opera! and will wear costumes which we will provide." With more than \$30,000 allocated by the Bacchus Foundation, the Lyric Opera has been able to commission the children's opera, "Mystery on the Docks," by composer Edward Barnes. It is based on a book of the same name by Thacher Hurd, children's author and illustrator. Costumes are patterned on the book's drawings.

The opera - about a gang of rats that kidnaps an international opera star and holds her for ransom on a ship - has a comical twist but a serious message.

"It's a springboard for studying gang resistance, how to stay away from gangs and how to resist peer pressure," said Winans. "We send out educational materials that are discussed before and after the opera is presented at each school. We are planning to take a former gang member who is in jail to talk to fourth- and fifth-grade students at the Chelsea Elementary School in Kansas City, Kan. There are gangs with members in the fourth grade. It seems unbelievable, but teachers are very concerned." More than 600 guests attended the 41st anniversary Bacchus Ball, which had a "World Tour" theme.

"We wanted to show diversity in the decor and the food," said ball co-chairman Molly Metz. "We want to reach out into the community. The Bacchus Foundation has a

membership of about 4,000 people. It provides young people the chance to meet in a setting other than a bar and the opportunity to get involved in philanthropic endeavors. "