



GROWTH

LIFE DECISIONS - 2022 SUMMARY

**IMAGINE A ROCKFORD...
WHERE EVERY PERSON IS SEEN, KNOWN, AND VALUED**

2022.04.RS

IN ANY GIVEN COMMUNITY

2 OUT OF 10

YOUTH ARE AT-RISK OF NOT REACHING HEALTHY ADULTHOOD

5% OF THESE HAVE ALREADY ENTERED THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

1% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION
YET THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR 50% ALL CRIMES COMMITTED



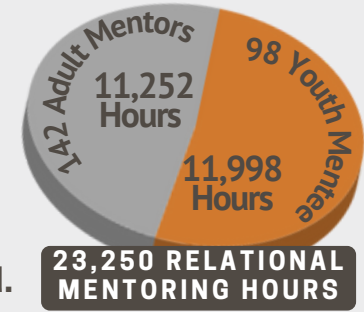
Restoration has already begun in the lives of these these young leaders...
Growth happens when they become Seen, Known, and Valued.

Growth Spurt

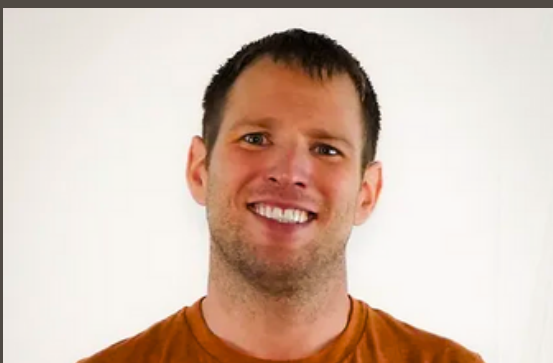
In 2022, Life Decisions has grown from 33 youth mentee participants to 98. We have grown from 47 adult mentors to 142. Our staff has more than doubled. We have surpassed the milestone of **20,000+ hours of relational mentoring.**

These faces hold REAL stories of resiliency and growth.
From living in poverty to running a business.
From homelessness to independent living.
From high school dropout to college and career oriented.
From suicidal ideation and hopelessness to seeking healing in therapy and finding purpose.
From lockup to leadership.
From foster care to family.

They are more than a statistic.
They are beating the odds.
They are leading Life Decisions and they are **On a Mission to Bring Restoration to Rockford.**



Our Tribe consists of Adult Mentors and Youth Mentees who engage in Relational Mentoring Activities (RMA's). Throughout this summary book, we use RMA's, tracked by the individual and pillar, as indicators of success.



JAKE ROGERS
CHIEF VISIONARY OFFICER

I've been increasingly burdened by the number of youth, who are highly motivated to change, yet continue to return to lockup shortly after their release.

The level of care they need to sustain lasting change simply has not been available to them in our county.

Life Decisions was birthed out of the vision to work alongside like-minded ministries & leading juvenile-justice experts to provide that intensive level of support & accountability.

-Jake Rogers

THE STRATEGY

Helping kids to get back on track, stay out of trouble, and reach healthy adulthood, the six Pillars of Life Decisions are interdependent, and crucial for providing the support necessary to set at-risk youth up for success with a foundation that can sustain the weight of lasting change.

It takes intensive support, strong relationships and a commitment to walking alongside youth through every step of their journey.

Mentors make a commitment to seeing the mentees through every challenge that comes up, as they work to develop new skills, gain knowledge in self-care, and grow in strong values.

MISSION

To build a Tribe of Mentors by investing in the lives of overlooked & undervalued youth, ages 15-23

VISION

A Tribe of Mentors grows into a community of life-on-life relationships bringing restoration to Rockford

RELATIONAL MENTORING IS A LOT LIKE FRIENDSHIP; BOTH SHOW UP TO GIVE AND BOTH SHOW UP TO LEARN. IT'S WHERE LIFE AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS INTERSECT.

HOUSING

SELF-CARE

SERVING

WORKING

LEADERSHIP

INTERNSHIP

IF EVEN ONE OF THESE PILLARS IS MISSING, AT-RISK YOUTH ARE NOT SET UP FOR SUCCESS.



"Life Decisions is important to me because I have a brother that once needed help and had so much built up inside of him that he went out and started robbing people with his friends."

I wish Life Decisions was an organization back when he first got in trouble with the law because he could have come here and gotten help."

~ Mya ~



NYLA SMITH

Nyla Smith has been a part of Life Decisions since the very beginning. She was first a youth mentee/volunteer and served on the Youth Leadership Council.

This past year Nyla completed an internship with Life Decisions, has become a peer mentor & is currently enrolled in nursing school!

"I feel like I got better at communication and handling my emotions better. Knowing when it's appropriate to say something and when it's not." - Nyla

WHO WE ARE: CORE VALUES

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS:

We see past the masks we wear to make real connections with each other.

COMMUNITY & BELONGING:

We create an environment where people experience a place to belong and a family where they are seen, known, and valued.

PERSONAL GROWTH:

We value risk-taking and developing potential in each other that we did not know we possessed.

SUCCESS AS JESUS SEES IT:

Just as the kingdom of God is often hard to see, we recognize that success may not always be what we expect.

RECONCILIATION & RESTORATION:

We resolve conflict, to address past wounds and seek healing and forgiveness, discovering new possibilities in our relationships.

INTENTIONAL PRAYER:

We understand that God's ways are higher than our ways and we want to be in regular communication with the Lord and be led by the Holy Spirit.

CELEBRATION & ADVENTURE:

We seek to celebrate and have fun with one another.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

In 2022, we launched an advisory team that has now merged with our Board of Directors to become our Leadership Team. We must give credit where credit is due: These faces - old members and new - have contributed to the exponential growth of Life Decisions, the growth of our staff and our strategic vision towards restoration and personal growth.

Next to the Leadership team, are the staff who've been hard at work, building a Tribe of Mentors and bringing a vision for restoration to life. We are so very grateful for, and couldn't do this without the support all of, those who have Joined the Tribe. Your prayers, donations, time, and connections have been the catalyst for our growth.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS & LEADERSHIP TEAM

LIFE DECISIONS STAFF



XAVIER LEWIS **LEADERSHIP TEAM CHAIR**

"I strongly believe in the mission of Life Decisions and the approach to reach youth in Rockford. We meet the youth where they are at rather than waiting for someone to show up. Life Decisions creates a safe environment where they can thrive. The six pillars are crucial and the foundation of the organization. My dream for this growing Tribe of Mentors is to develop a strong team of leaders.

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

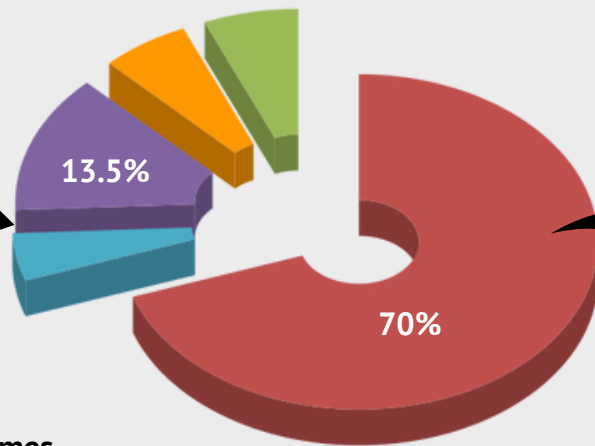


Life Decisions has received a Silver Rating from Candid GuideStar, the world's largest source of information on non-profit organizations. The Silver Rating demonstrates our continued commitment to transparency and to measurable impact.



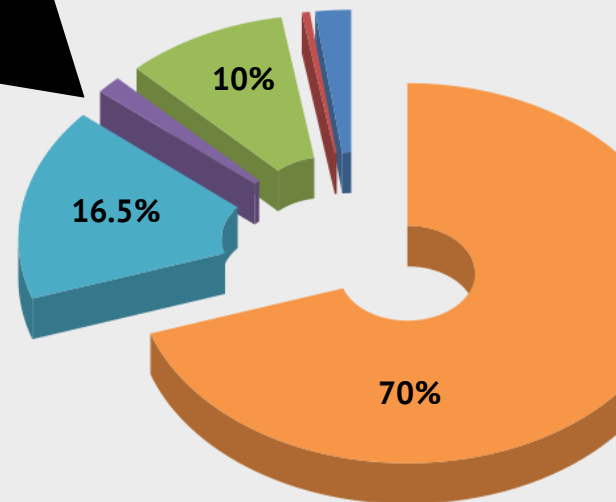
Incomes

Donations	\$197,866
Sponsorships	\$12,990
Grants	\$38,000
On the Job Training	\$16,920
Product Sales	\$18,176



EXPENSES

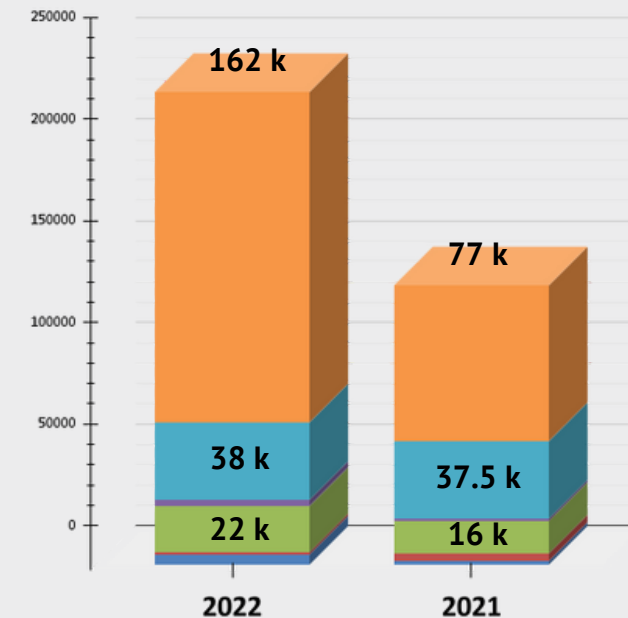
Wages	\$162,172
Programming	\$38,027
Property	\$3,497
Insurance, Dues, Subscriptions	\$22,449
Promotional	\$1,085
Office & Printing	\$4,935



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

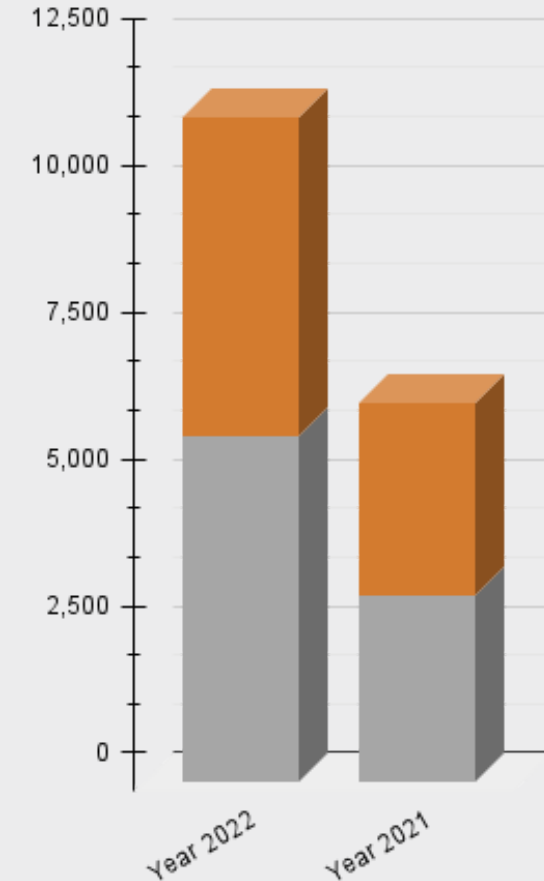
COST

- Wages
- Programming
- Property
- Insurance, Dues, & Subscriptions
- Promotional
- Office & Printing



ANNUAL RETURN OF INVESTMENT

- Total Adult
- Total Youth

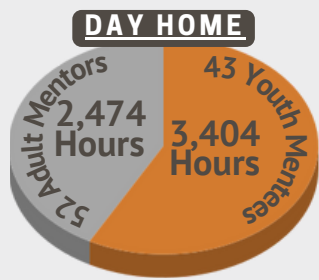




NICOLE DIDIER
ADULT MENTOR

"I enjoyed getting to take some of the young adults to Didier Greenhouse and picking out plants together...planting them and watching them grow over the summer! Then, the conversations we had while we worked."

-Nicole Didier



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The LD Day Home is more than a Drop-In Center.

It's a Home away from Home. It's where authentic relationships are formed and strangers become family. Celebrations are held. Meals are shared. Needs are met. Milestones achieved and fears are released. The Day Home serves as a central hub where relational mentoring takes place.

The Day Home is where growth begins.



LD'S OPEN HOUSE 2022



4TH OF JULY 2022



HALLOWEEN 2022

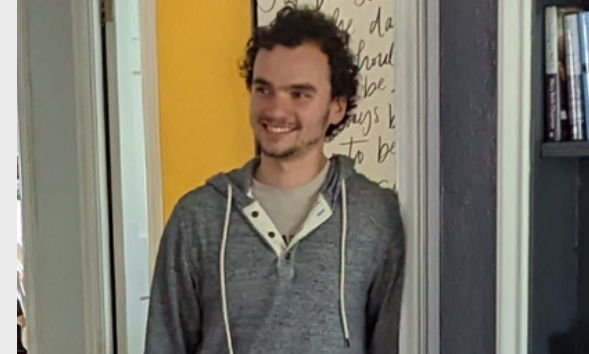


CHRISTMAS 2022

I BEG YOUR GARDEN

In the spring of 2022, Crosspoint Church allowed us to utilize the garden boxes on the property. Mentors and youth worked together, turning over the beds, planting and harvesting. Our first year of having a garden was extremely successful and we had an abundance of vegetables that we used in our meals at the Day Home. We had so many leftover that we were able to share with volunteers and the church. We know that just like in our garden at the Day Home, our own growth starts with a single seed taking root.

With the investment of time and care, there will be a great harvest.



KENNY WEBER

YOUTH MENTEE

"I started visiting the Life Decisions family after a co-worker (now friend) invited me to meet Jake. I had been through some difficult life changes and trying to put myself in environments that will help me grow and continue in my journey of self-restoration.

When I first met with mentors, they offered me a seat at their table and encouraged me to share my story...I had recently given my life to Christ and my prayer for a family who isn't 'family' was answered!

Overall Life Decisions has earned my trust. My daughter and I spend time at the Day Home during the week & I am so thankful for my new support system.



HOUSING



RAHEEM SWIFT

ASSISTANT PROJECT COORDINATOR

"I had a lot of things in my life that were at-risk. Dealing with most problems young people don't deal with all the time I eventually had a chance to transform myself.

I think mentorship is awesome, being able to teach someone a new skill they haven't known before is a gift in itself.

I appreciate my mentors. They have turned me into a mentor, it's such a magical thing"

-Raheem Swift

BUILDING TRADES

In our first full year at the Day Home, youth and mentors have ripped out the patio and expanded the dining room, removed the boiler heating system, patched up holes, replaced windows and gutted the basement. We have torn down walls within us and between us while at the same time tearing down physical walls at the Day Home.

We have experienced growing pains but continue to see restoration in this home and within ourselves.



BUILDING TRADES: MENTORSHIP

With every hour of Relational Mentoring youth are learning new skills and trades, growing and developing the experience needed for future employment.

1 IN 3 YOUTH WILL REACH AGE 19 WITHOUT A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP OF ANY KIND.



DON BARRETT

BUILDING TRADES MENTOR

A year ago, Raheem & Jake went downtown to Memorial Hall to present Life Decisions to the Rotary Club. After the presentation

Don said he would like a tour and for Raheem to call him once he had a chance to set it up. Don toured the Day Home several days later and interviewed the Tribe. Don is a skilled maintenance guy, retired, dentist and history teacher but Life Decisions looks at him as a great Life Mentor to every youth he has interactions with and every project they complete.

"The challenges of restoring the Day Home has been significant and dirty, however, the reward of working with this team of young adults has been worth more than the effort." - Don Barrett



MADDIE
YOUTH MENTEE

Educational therapy with Candice has taught me how to be confident in my learning. It has shown me that I can get stronger in reading and that I'm not alone in the struggle. This process has shown me a world of opportunity that I'm so grateful for. I think Educational therapy can help a lot of people!

-Maddie

NEW EXPERIENCES

Self-Care is critical for the mentee's journey to restoration. We define self-care as addressing physical and mental health through training of the body and mind. This includes primary mentor appointments, therapy appointments, meditation & yoga, journaling and mindfulness exercises, Bible study, field trips, time spent outdoors in nature, as well as sports, tournaments, and family nights together.



DEB LADWIG

**ADULT MENTOR,
LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER**

The greatest return I see, investing my time in the youth at Life Decisions, is that their lives are totally transformed. They are hungry to have opportunities that we take for granted: get a high school diploma, learn how to drive, have independent living. They are incredibly creative and brilliant and they just need to be seen.

Our kids are never happier than to give back to the community and see other kids in need, when they are the ones on the other side of the fence, providing for them. It gives them self-esteem. It gives them purpose. It's the biggest reward that there is. To become a volunteer, you receive more than you give. It's total transformation of lives...for the youth and for volunteers. -Deb Ladwig

JOURNEY TOGETHER

On our journey to bring Restoration of Rockford, we believe that one of the most important things we can do in healing our city is to work towards our own personal growth and healing. We know this happens best in the context of community and belonging.

As a Tribe, we experience highs and lows together; gains and losses, celebrations and grief. We are on a journey of learning how to care for ourselves so that we can continue to care for our community.

SELF CARE



MARIA MONTOYA
YOUTH MENTEE

"I serve at Life Decisions. I serve because it brings back memories, strengthens my faith and and sharing laughs, smiles and stories strengthens our community with one another."

-Maria Montoya

COMMUNITY GROWTH

Service is essential to our vision of bringing Restoration to Rockford. Serving together builds a sense of purpose, value, and connection within the community. It breaks down barriers and extends beyond age, race, culture, socioeconomic status, and belief systems.

This year our service projects included Kids Around The World, Miracle Mile Cleanup, Crosspoint Church, Park City Church, Camp Outdoor Outreach, and participating in the Festival of Lights again. With each service opportunity, our youth establish a deeper appreciation for our community *and their purpose in our community.*



ALI ROGERS
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

"Community Restoration begins with individual restoration. There is nothing quite like dedicating years to walking alongside someone, really growing up, together. The real fruit comes when young people are so impacted that they want to become a mentor to others and want to give back to the community.

Camp is one of my favorite service opportunities that we do because our young people are empowered and it is so rewarding to see the impact they have on elementary kids.

For so many of our youth, camp is the first time they get to experience things like fishing, canoeing, zip lining (etc) but none of that compares to the first time one of our youth mentees discover they are seen, known and valued (and can make a positive difference in their community!)"

-Ali Rogers

SERVING



OUTDOOR OUTREACH

This past June, our youth woke up before sunrise and served long into the evening at Outdoor Outreach. Our mentees connected with elementary aged kids, working hard, and invested time in getting to know these younger kids.

When a mentee's life is impacted by a mentor, they are inspired and empowered to become a mentor too. Their confidence grows, skills are developed, and life change begins. We caught a glimpse of this last June, when 4 Youth Mentees and 5 Adult Mentors spent their week serving a combined total of 416.25 hours at Outdoor Outreach camp. This week-long summer camp was an opportunity for our young leaders to demonstrate what they've learned from their mentors, and start investing in the next generation.

SERVING



AMAYA CASTANON

ASSISTANT PROJECT COORDINATOR

In Life Decisions, we are all about meeting where you currently are in life and that looks different for every youth that we come across. We are all about embracing pasts and not letting that define you, in order for them to evolve into leaders in their own time. Then eventually mentoring the next generation and seeing those prosper from their lowest point in life.

-Amaya Castanon



815 FUN FAIR

Last year, our youth and mentors had so much fun planning and hosting this community event that we have decided to do it again! Over 30 local community non-profit organizations joined us and showcased the services they provide to families and kids. Over 200 volunteers helped everyone enjoy free fun, games, food, and prizes. We were pleased to bring a diverse and multi-generational gathering together, where more than 400 people from the community attended, and enjoyed a beautiful afternoon together!



PETER GETTER DAY HOME SPECIALIST

"I consider Life Decisions my own family. We go through real life experiences together, give each other words of wisdom, and pray for each other.

The first year of our 815 Fun Fair, I enjoyed getting involved as mentor and began serving on the 815 Fun Fair Committee. Now two years later, I am on staff and I love my job."

-Peter Getter



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Imagine a city where every person is seen, known, and valued. At-risk youth no longer lead our streets destructively but are empowered and inspired, through relational mentoring. Serving together, barriers begin to be broken down and new relationships built- extending beyond things like age, race, culture, socioeconomic status, and belief systems. We seek to empower youth by providing opportunities to develop healthy leadership skills while raising expectations and challenging them to reach their God-Given potential. Every one of us has a mentor, several mentors, in our lives. They know us well and are there to teach, help, and motivate us to reach our God-given potential. They stand beside us. We trust them. They inspire us to then go out and learn to develop mentoring relationships too. *A tribe of mentors grows into a community of life-on-life relationships - together - bringing Restoration to Rockford!*



LEADING



SAVE THE DATE IN 2023!

This year's 815 Fun Fair will be:

Saturday, August 12, 2023 from 1pm - 5pm at Dahlquist Park

To Join the Tribe as a sponsor, resource vendor, or volunteer on the Planning Committee, please contact info@lifedecisions.net or call 815.570.3990



815 FUN FAIR SPONSORS



815 FUN FAIR SPONSORS(LISTED)

CHIC FIL A, ROCK RIVER YMCA, US BANK, TURES & ASSOC., RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH, PARK CITY CHURCH, TRADEMARK RESTORATION, OMAN AND OMAN, NAVY CLUB OF ROCKFORD SHIP #1, STATELINE CHURCH, A. TANNER DESIGN, IVANUCK INDUSTRIAL, BUCCIFERRO FAMILY MCDONALDS, NICHOLSON HARDWARE, HEARTLAND BANK AND TRUST, WOODWARD, INC, KP COUNSELING, STATEFARM - DAVID ZIERKE, AUDI LOVES PARK, SWEET BEAN CAFE & BAKERY, TWO MEN & A TRUCK, MERCYHEALTH, INZOMBIA, MAYOR TOM MCNAMARA

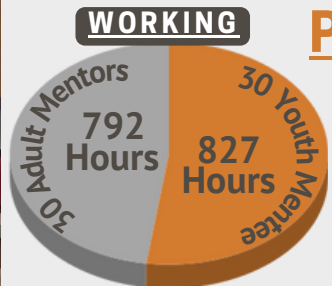
RESOURCE VENDORS FROM 2022

ROCK RIVER YMCA, AMERICAN RED CROSS, GET CONNECTED, THE LITERACY COUNCIL, MERCYHEALTH, GOODWILL, OSF HEALTHCARE, NORTHERN FOOD BANK, OUTDOOR OUTREACH CAMP, YOUNGLIFE, PARK CITY, JUDSON UNIVERSITY, YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK, WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS, CRUSADER CLINIC, JEREMIAH DEVELOPMENT, KENDALL SHERMAN FOUNDATION, COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS, STATELINE YOUTH FOR CHRIST, OAK STREET HEALTH, KIDS AROUND THE WORLD, ROCKFORD BARBELL, ROCKFORD POLICE DEPT., GRASSROOTS CHURCH, NATIONAL ADVOCATE YOUTH PROGRAM, FATHERHOOD ENCOURAGEMENT PROJECT, ROCK HOUSE KIDS, FIRST STUDENT, UW HEALTH, LIFE DECISIONS.



NAMELESS TO PROTECT PRIVACY

" My sister was killed by a friend, over jealousy. I lost my brother a few months later; he was killed. I had to hustle by selling weed and robbing people and doing side missions. I met a lot of good hearted people but I was so lost in my thoughts and feelings and I went down the wrong path. I've had no father in my life since I was 13 so I relied on the streets to learn about life myself."



PARTNERING FOR A PURPOSE

LD's popcorn has provided unique opportunities to partner with other organizations. Rockford Lutheran and Younglife sold LD's popcorn as a fundraiser, to raise money for their causes.



"We connected with and worked with Life Decisions on a popcorn fundraiser for Rockford Lutheran High School Girls Soccer. It was such an easy process to get setup and the samples provided were a great kick start for our group and families. The steps they took to make an easy and personalized fundraiser were as good as they come. The fundraiser for our program was extremely successful and the product was available for pickup well before we expected. Much to the happiness of the team and families involved- we are also blessed to help Life Decisions give back in their community efforts. It is without a doubt we will work with them in the future for another program fundraiser"

-Jeremy Horn-



LD'S POPCORN

The Work-Now Pillar addresses legal work opportunities to gain financial support and independence; as well as the development of skills and resources needed for on the job mentoring and employment.

LD's Popcorn was launched as a means to provide future work opportunities for Youth Mentees. This startup business venture began with mentors and youth working alongside each other to pop, season, package, seal and sell each batch. Today these mentors and mentees continue the production of this gourmet popcorn. We sell it locally at community events and fundraisers and on our website.



WORKING



JAYDON HUMMER
LDS YOUTH INTERN

"Mountains are easier to climb when you go up with friends & family who are on the same path as you."

-Jaydon Hummer



CITY MARKET

Many of our mentees feel disconnected and cut off from the rest of the community. Community engagement is a high priority for us as we work to reconcile and restore a sense of belonging.

One way we've done this was with a display at the Festival of Lights. Adult Mentors and Youth Mentees work together to build a light-up gingerbread house, LDs Popcorn Shop. In the summers, we also have the real LD's Popcorn Shop open downtown, every Friday night, at Rockford City Market!



SCREEN PRINTING

In 2022, We branched out of our comfort zone to experiment with screen printing, which taught our youth how t-shirts printing is done. Mentors worked with our youth in printing shirts for LDs popcorn and our Community Block party. These T-shirts featured our sponsors of the Life Decisions 815 Fun Fair and even though this project challenged us, we enjoyed it and will continue working on future designs!



XAN JARL
OFFICE MANAGER

"Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do – Steve Jobs

I started volunteering with Life Decisions and loved it, I then left a career in healthcare to become the Office Manager. This quote is so true for me, I truly love every day being part of Life Decisions from the administrative side to working and being hands on with the youth. I love to see the positive impact of Life Decisions in our youth"

-Xan Jarl



LAUREN SPEARS ADULT INTERN

I started here at Life Decisions in March of 2022 as the first intern from Judson University. Since then I have been blessed to be part of the Tribe here and seen the amazing progress Life Decisions has made. I love being apart of an organization that truly cares about the youth in our community.

-Lauren Spears

GROWING UP

The last pillar of Life Decisions is an Adult Internship Pillar. This is an opportunity for youth mentees to continue to be involved with Life Decisions as a "next step" into healthy adulthood. *They don't age out...but move forward with increased responsibilities and opportunities.*

Whether for personal fulfillment or college requirements, adult interns learn and grow personally, spiritually and professionally.



INTERNSHIP



BRINGING RESTORATION TO ROCKFORD STARTS WITH YOUR INVESTMENT

WE NEED **YOUR** HELP.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF AT-RISK AND JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH IN ROCKFORD;

YOUR INVESTMENT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING SEEN, KNOWN, & VALUED.

THROUGH THE INVESTMENTS OF OTHERS, LIFE DECISIONS HAS ALREADY EQUIPPED PEOPLE AND CREATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR 98 YOUTH MENTEES AND 142 ADULT MENTORS TO ENGAGE IN OVER 20,000 HOURS OF RELATIONAL MENTORING ACTIVITIES SINCE LAUNCHING IN 2021.

JOIN THE TRIBE

Make an Impact.



GIVE ONLINE AT:

www.lifedecisions.net/donate

GIVE BY MAIL:

3107 E State St. Rockford, IL 61108

GET INVOLVED:

info@lifedecisions.net

815.570.3990

Text **"JOIN THE TRIBE"** to 44-321 to give now



A Tribe of Mentors grows into a community of Life-on-Life relationships bringing Restoration to Rockford

