



September 13, 2021

To The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois,

Attached are two letters written by youth participants. They are not from us, and the only editing we helped with was in formatting the letter. These are their words about Life Decisions.

First is a letter from Raheem Swift, who just celebrated his 19th birthday. He moved in with other family members when he turned 18. He was introduced to us in December of 2020 by his cousins. They had been introduced by their brother, upon his release from the Juvenile Detention Center, nearly two years prior. In February of 2021, we began a 6-month pilot Serve-Now Program, and Raheem was one of our first participants.

Second, is a Letter from Trinidad, who got connected with Life Decisions through my relationship with the Juvenile Detention Center. At just 21 years old today, Trinidad has already seen more in his life than most of us ever will. He has spent nearly the entirety of his teen years incarcerated. From the age of 14 to 19, he was out, home, and free for a combined total of just 9 months.

Now, for the first time ever he has remained out for more than a year and a half, but he continues to fight an uphill battle. Trinidad knows how tough the battle is that our city's at-risk youth are facing. He knows what they need to break free from the cycles of poverty and crime.

Thank you for taking the time to hear from our youth.

Jake Rogers,

Founding Mentor & Chief Visionary Officer

Date 09/09/2021

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Raheem Swift and I am a member of the Youth Leadership Council of Life Decisions. My favorite thing about Life Decisions is the joy and happiness I feel with this group of people. I have come a long way and Life Decisions has changed who I am. If I didn't become apart of Life Decisions there's no telling where I would be today but I know for a fact it won't be anyplace perfect. Since joining the Youth Leadership Council, I have grown in many ways.

I have had the oppportunity to record the services at my church/handling camera which I fell in love with dearly. I talked with my fellow partner and good friend, Jake, at Kiwanis about what Life Decisions is & I went to the Williams Tree Farm to mentor and co-lead elementary children, which to me, was like a test to use what I learned from Life Decisions. I have grown a lot with this group. I definitely see a change in me and so do my friends at Life Decisions. Every chance I get, I tell them and let them all know what a good impact they have had on me and over time my love has grown significantly for them all.

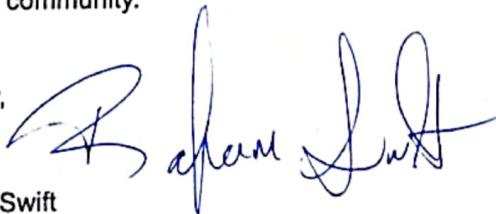
I have learned a lot from my mentors. They have taught me about how important it is to have a vision. Having a vision is important because you can see how things turn out and you can see the impact you could possibly have on someone or something and with people like my mentors here at Life Decisions visions are as clear as the blue sky but hard work, dedication, and commitment is key because to me a vision won't be a vision without it.

At Life Decisions, we value making our community a better place. I have seen this through at our community block party and there I seen that alot of people were so happy and thrilled to be there. It's alot of people who support and love what we do as a tribe, we more than these people who just work together, no, we are family! A family that wants to change Rockford by bringing restoration to this city and change the future of the youth because we as youth are the future so we must create a future that can inspire more youth to keep on inspiring other youth to change the future.

So far I have accomplished many goals within my Individualized Goal Plan. Some things I have accomplished I have a lot of goals. I have goals I want to meet with self care both physically and mentally and I have goals for my life and where I would want to be at in the future as a young man

I know my mentors at Life Decisions care about me and my success it's one of the reasons I love them so much because they are so supportive and caring. We have a good relationship. I am learning the importance of mentoring relationships and how they have the ability to change a life. My mentors at Life Decisions have changed my life. I went from not caring about nothing not even myself to wanting to care more about life and myself and the lives of others. I see a lot of changes in myself and I have a lot more changes coming along so sit tight. Tomorrow is a new day for Raheem Swift, Life Decisions, and the whole Rockford community.

Sincerely,



Raheem Swift

Life Decisions,  
Youth Leadership Council Member

3/5/2021

To whom it may concern,

Life Decisions is a program that is very integral in helping the community progress to a better and safer environment and especially in helping the young people who will lead our future get the support they need in order to reach their full potential. This program offers support that many do not have from other people in their lives and it has the ability to change someone's life in a very positive way because of it.

Jake has been a very positive influence in my life, he has been there when I was at my lowest of lowest without ever judging me or my decisions, he is very understanding and shows he actually cares. He has given me the opportunity to learn new skills by giving me side jobs where he taught me a lot of things such as taking down a porch deck and rebuilding one. He has taught me that nothing comes easy and if you really want something you'll do whatever it takes to get it. Mentors like Jake are making a difference through programs like this and I feel that the Life Decisions mission should get all the support from other members of the community so that we can keep seeing a difference.

Trinidad

(formerly incarcerated as a juvenile)