



WINNEBAGO COUNTY

— ILLINOIS —

09/02/2021

To whom it may concern:

Research shows that mentoring helps increase school attendance, with students being 52% less likely than peers to skip school when regularly meeting with their mentor. What's more, is youth at risk of not completing high school were 55% more likely to be enrolled in college, 81% more likely to report participating regularly in sports or extracurricular activities, and 78% more likely to pay it forward by volunteering regularly in their communities. Of importance is that it shows 90% report being interested in becoming mentors themselves.

The new organization, Life Decisions, is integral in the community of Rockford working to prevent the likelihood of juvenile re-entry into the justice system. Their proven mentoring, engagement model will fill a void in the community by offering the structure and support at-risk youth need to sustain lasting change.

Life Decisions is equipping people and creating opportunities to invest in the lives of overlooked and undervalued youth, ages 15-23, with an emphasis on justice-involved youth. Youth who once led our streets destructively will be seen, known, valued- empowered and inspired-through relational mentoring.

After meeting with the team at Life Decisions, it became evident to me that the unique focus on relational mentoring is what sets them apart. They are not simply providing another program for young people. They are collaborating with existing service providers to address critical needs in the areas of safe and stable housing, self-care, education, work opportunities, and service back to the community. Life Decisions is building a tribe of mentors growing into a community of life-on-life relationships-together bringing restoration to Rockford.

I ask you to favorably consider Life Decisions application. We are committed to supporting this comprehensive approach and believe they will be an outstanding partner and steward of any funds received. We look forward to your decision and appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marlana Dokken
Director, Chairman's Office of Criminal Justice Initiatives

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