



March 15, 2021

To whom it may concern:

*Of the youth released from an Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice facility, 62% will reoffend within one year. Straight Ahead has been working in community-based re-entry for more than two decades and has seen recidivism drop to less than 20 percent. Intensive, relational mentoring works. Mentoring takes time. Mentoring will have its ups and downs. Mentoring is transformative. Relational mentoring defines Life Decisions.*

I work with Jake Rogers and the others at Life Decisions as a mentor and technical advisor. As their interim fiscal agent, I have seen this start-up group take shape and already begin to impact lives. This is not just "another group". They are focused and effective with justice-involved youth and filling a much-needed void in IL. Because mentoring and its related efforts are so labor-intensive, many well-established and larger organizations do not have the time, staff, or focus needed to provide the intensive level of mentoring and relational engagement of 15–23-year-old at-risk youth. This is where Life Decisions steps in. Life Decisions is a community partner. They are not reinventing the wheel. Rather, they are an important spoke in the wheel to building a healthy community.

These kids are not just problems to be fixed. They are leaders who you will be privileged to get to know. When invested in, and given the opportunities that Life Decisions will provide, they will no longer be out in the streets leading destructively. They will become a catalyst for restoration in your community.

Life Decisions began from, and is driven by, the existing needs and opportunities in the community. Too often I see well-intended and well-designed and funded programs be developed throughout the country, only to not have the necessary engagement to be impactful. Not Life Decisions. They have maintained a high level of commitment from a core group of kids, with a founding ownership, in the organization. They have demonstrated their commitment to doing the hard work of change, are being empowered with roles of responsibility, influencing the future and direction of Life Decisions.

Your financial support will go directly to mentoring these young people. There are immediate and direct impacts. There is accountability. Life Decisions is investing in a challenging group of young people, those who most organizations are not able to make the level of commitment for them to enter into healthy adulthood. They will prove to be worth your investment too.

*Since 1987, our staff, volunteers, and ministry partners have served over 75,000 young people in 40 states, 35 countries, and 7 languages. Our highly relational engagement model provides an intense counter-offensive to criminal and gang involvement. We're seeing unprecedented success in the lives of extremely high-risk young people - the kids that are involved in gangs, engaged in a dangerous activity, have dropped out of school, have rejected help, and are simply too difficult for other programs to serve. With your investment in Life Decisions, you too can see unprecedented impacts in your community.*

Sincerely,

Dr. Scott Larson

President and Founder

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