

Juvenile Detention Center

==== Amazing Things Are Happening Here! ====

December 2021

**We Wish All of You a Most Joy Filled
Christmas Season!**



Oaks Annual Christmas Event

Each year, the Oaks Family Care Center visits our detention center to spread Christmas joy to our kids. Each member of the Oaks shared their story of their own struggles and how they began to grow a relationship with God. On December, 18th they brought their guitars and sang carols with our youth and told the story of Jesus' birth. They sat down with each of our kids and talked with them as the youth wrote Christmas cards to those they are missing this holiday season. Thank you to each member of the Oaks for brightening our youths' holiday season a little while they are detained with us.

We believe that even though our kids are away from their friends and family members, it is still important to recognize important days of the year. Our chaplain, Sue Jarvis, will be coming in Christmas day to visit and spend time with our residents and give them small gifts that they will take home with them once they are released. (www.oaks-family-care.org)

Pictured below from left to right: Jeff Rich, Fred Pfeiler Keith Herzing, Deb Wilson and Lisa Barry.



Forever Grateful, Forever Changed

Though lengthy, the following is worth reading. It is a personal letter to you from Jasmine Myers who spent the past three months coming in weekly to work with our kids on poetry and writing.

"As I sit here reflecting from the past 12 weeks at the Medina Juvenile Detention Center, my heart is full, and I am forever changed by this experience. To fully understand how these kids have changed me, one must understand a little about my story. I grew up in a small, impoverished town in NC and went through several challenges as a child that ultimately led to being a teen in the foster care system. I was sold into human trafficking by my father and endured years of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. I struggled with severe depression and suicidal thoughts, and writing became the only thing keeping me alive. When life would become too much, I would turn to my journal and write about the things I could not say out loud. The secrets my family kept were unbearable, soul shattering, and a heavy weight for a child to carry. I was often alone, scared, and left to defend myself against the evils of the

world. I vowed that if I could make it through my childhood, I would find a way to be that person for other kids who feel completely alone and like no one loves them.

I knew the journey would be difficult and everyone in my life told me I would never amount to anything, and I believed them. Writing was the only friend I had for most of my life and while in college, I was introduced to Slam Poetry. I was fascinated with this idea of getting on a stage and sharing the hardest thing you have ever gone through and watching the expressions of the audience. I was a scared young adult trying to find her way in a life she never knew existed. A life where I had choices and could decide what to eat and what to wear and who to be around. A life where people talked about a love I had never received.

I turned to poetry once again and processed the new experiences, the fears, the dreams, and recalled previous events that shaped my whole being. So, when I was asked to teach poetry to a room full of teenagers, I was terrified. I suddenly found myself struggling to accept the reality that I was a poet, that I was a great writer, and that I was qualified to teach what I have grown to love.

When I walked into that room (detention center) for the very first time, I was surprised to see a room full of teenage boys and I knew that this would be a challenge and that I would grow. I knew that I needed to be vulnerable with the kids but not show the lack of confidence I was struggling with. I needed to earn their respect and show them that I genuinely cared, and I was there to give them a tool that literally saved my life. So, I asked them to be vulnerable, I challenged them to find their voice, and I welcomed their opinions- even when they told me they thought I was absolutely crazy. I sat with each of them and listened to their stories. Week after week, these kids poured out their life stories to me and for the first time shared their fears and beliefs about themselves. They cried out to me and shared how they longed to feel loved, cared for, and valued. Countless times several of the kids walked in that room angry, holding the weight of the world, and the pain they have endured and walked away feeling like they mattered and like they found a way to express how they felt. I watched a room full of strangers find their voice and dream of a life that they never knew existed.

Week after week, I was challenged to find a new way to be vulnerable, to present this tool in a way that felt achievable and speak on a heart-to-heart level that forced me to show my doubts, my insecurities, my fears, and some of the experiences that have shaped me. As this chapter closes, I am forever grateful for the staff and the kids for allowing me to share an hour of their Saturday pushing them to do tough things. I will forever hold these kids in my heart. The pain that was shared in that room, I hope they feel a little lighter and allow me to carry their burdens because no kid should have to carry that weight alone. So, I leave you with this:"

Labels

I stand before you "successful"
Some would say, I have figured it all out,
That I should be a role-model,
Others would say I can't relate.

But there is a side of this story you may never know,
There are labels that were placed on me,

Much like many of you.
A girl that never imagined being alive past 25.

I once carried the weight of the world on my shoulder too,
I once felt like there would never be a way out of such darkness,
I came face to face with the evils of this world,
And I faced them alone, with no one to say, "I Love You."

I learned how to be my own advocate,
How to love myself even when all I could do is cry.
I learned the reality of never trusting anyone.
But I vowed to never give up.

No matter how far I dug my own grave,
I had this drive deep within,
That pushed me to my limits,
And refused to let me give up.

I shared my story even when no one was listening,
I loved others when no one loved me.
So I stand here today,
To remind you that it is never too late.

Don't let those labels define you,
Don't let your fears make you quit,
Don't let your mistakes paint the future,
And don't stop finding people who love you.

We were strangers once,
And you shared your heart.
Know that I am forever in your corner,
And I hope to meet you again when you can stand here and say,

"I made it."

Sincerely With Much Love,
Jasmine Myers

One More Poem

This poem was written by one of our youth during a session with Jasmine:

Dad, I Miss You

*Daddy why, why you wasn't ever there
When it rained I used to play basketball*

*You never came to my games
The pain still remains
My momma should have changed my name.
You was missing a lot
Wasn't even there to teach me how to walk, crawl, or pee in a pot
I'm your junior
You're my pops
Wish I was there when you killed yourself
Because I always had the question...
Did you love me or not?*

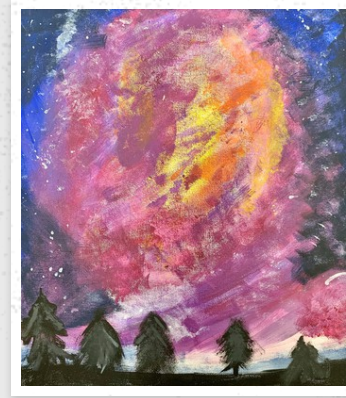
Coffee and Cards Anyone?

If you have not been to Coffee in the Valley - in Valley City of course - and are in need of a good warm or cold beverage and/or blank greeting cards, pay them a visit! Owners Sean and Stephanie Miller have greeting cards created by our kids for sale by donation to fund ongoing art for our kids. We appreciate that so much but what's even better is that Sean and Stephanie are going to match, *dollar for dollar*, all funds that people donate for the cards! Are you kidding us?!!

Thank you Coffee in the Valley for partnering with us! (They are at 6663 Center Road, and it is a delightful place to meet and hang out!) And if you like hot chocolate you MUST have their Toasted Hot Chocolate with Stephanie's homemade cranberry sugar. You must!

www.coffeeinthevalley.com





The Best Way to Protect Kids is Through Education

As co-chair of the Medina County Coalition Against Human Trafficking, this motto is something I have kept in my mind, every time while giving a training. For the last few years, myself and the Coalition have been providing trainings to our middle schools, high schools, and the MCJDC. Recently, we conducted trainings in Medina High School's health classes. These consisted of online safety, human trafficking, healthy relationships, bullying, and bystander intervention.



Most of the time when we think about human trafficking, the movie *Taken* will pop in our minds when in reality, it occurs through a process called "grooming." Students are taught how to create healthy boundaries online and offline in order to better equip themselves to stay safe. Our phones, tablets, computers, and any gaming device are gateways for a trafficker or child predator. So much so that 15,000 apps are added each week. Each class I teach, I start off by asking "What is your favorite app you use every day?" The answers are always, "TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Discord..." which happen to be some of the top apps used for online grooming by traffickers. By learning how to set healthy boundaries online and in real life, recognizing red flags for unhealthy/abusive relationships, we are better preparing our youth for the world around them. *(Pictured is Officer Ewing teaching at Medina High School.)*

- MCJDC Officer Bailey Ewing

Thank You!

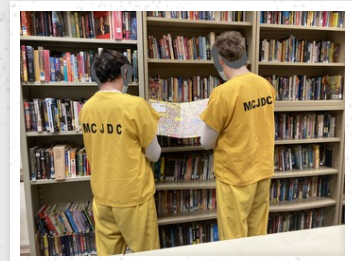
Our partner, Access the Arts, was very kind and donated Christmas gifts to our kids to take home. The gifts were comprised of canvasses to paint, word searches, playing cards, and crayons to name a few items. Thank you Access the Arts! *(Accessthearts.net)*



What It Means To Be An Honoree

An honorable person is someone who believes in the truth and doing the right thing.

At our detention center we have four levels in our behavioral level system. Each level has different incentives and rewards. Our highest level is Honoree status (known as trusty in most correctional settings). It is often seen that our residents are proud of their accomplishments once they receive achieve this level.



In order to become an Honoree, they must fill out an application compiled of several thought-provoking questions and scenarios. Currently, we have FIVE honorees. Each one stands out from our other residents by wearing a brightly colored uniform. They also stand out because they model leadership behaviors and encourage other youth to do the same.

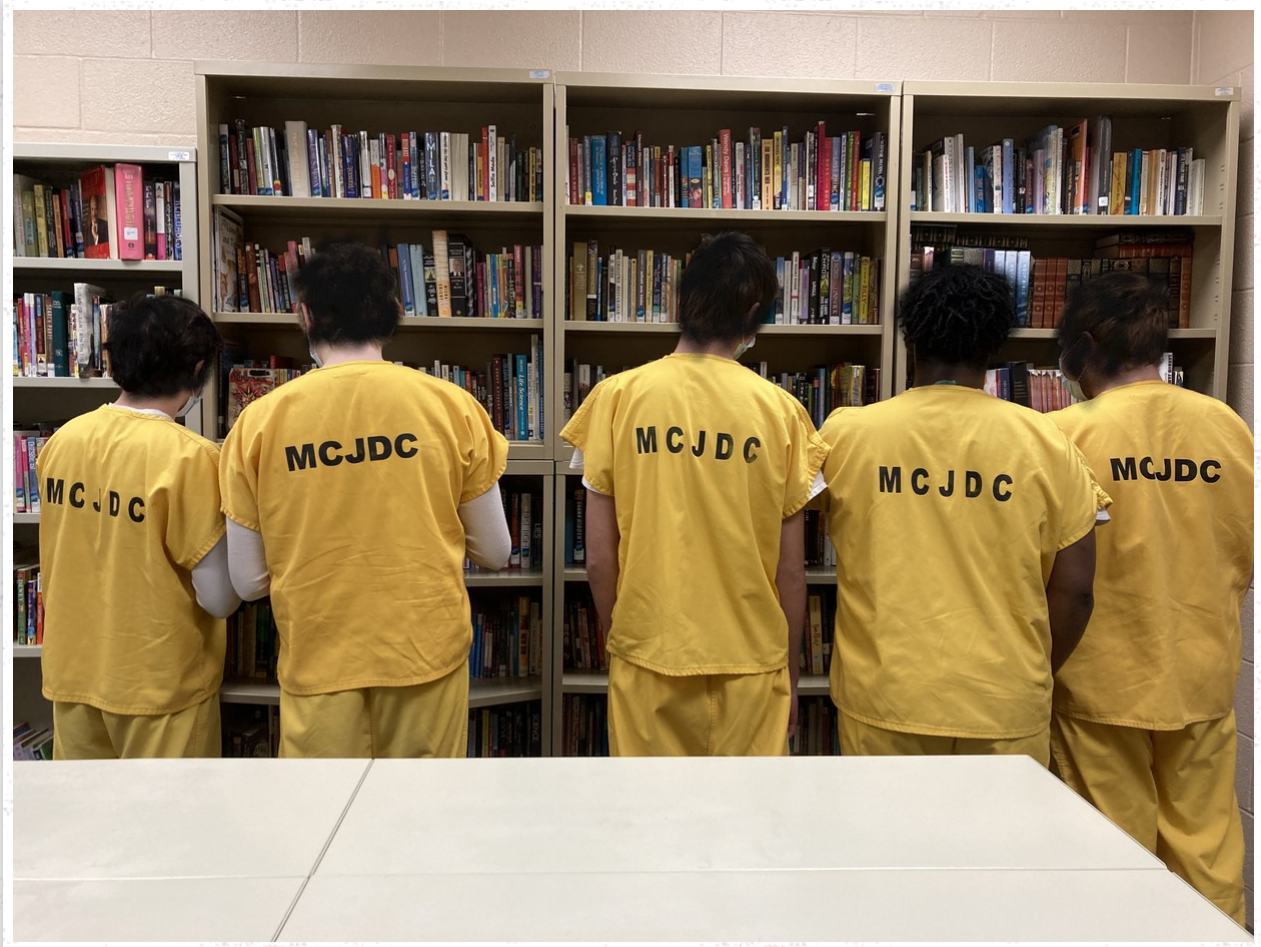
Here are some comments from two of our current Honorees:

"To me being an honoree means going above my past negative decisions and thriving to make the right choices even when I don't want to. Being an honoree to me means showing the people around me that they can do it too. Also showing everyone around me that I can do good pushes me to be a good honoree"

- D.W.

"I respect Officer Riegler because he has a respectable work ethic. Also, he is a great person to talk to about staying healthy and in shape. I also respect Sgt. Gordon because he is always willing to help us if we are confused about something."

- N. D.



And We Will Leave You With This...

THE JOY OF GIVING

*Somehow, not only for Christmas,
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you;
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing
Returns to make you glad.*

- John Greenleaf Whittier



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Click here for past newsletters!

Have you missed a newsletter? We archive all of our newsletters on our website. Click the link to see previous issues!

Contact Us!

655 Independence Drive, Medina, Ohio 44256

Phone: 330-764-8408

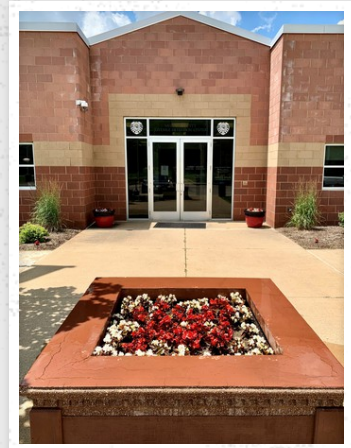
Fax: 330-764-8412

Administrative Hours

Monday-Friday

8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

www.medinajdc.org

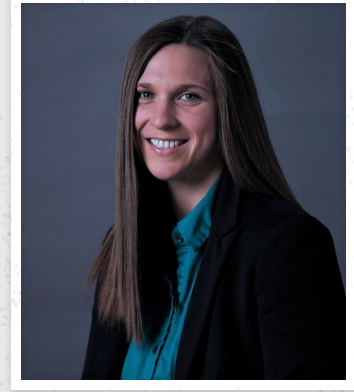




**Judge Kevin W.
Dunn;
Juvenile/Probate
Court**



**Ron Stollar;
Superintendent**



**Megan Millikin;
Assistant
Superintendent**

"We are making the Medina community a better place by inspiring troubled youth to become responsible, productive citizens."