



MEDINA COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT

Probate and Juvenile Divisions

93 Public Square, Room 104, Medina, Ohio 44256

KEVIN W. DUNN
Judge

MEDIA RELEASE

December 2, 2019

Alex Sheen, Founder of *because I said I would*, Visits MCJDC for Third Time to Speak with Detained Youth



Medina County Juvenile Detention Center (MCJDC) became the first pilot site for a 12-week *because I said I would* program tailored specifically for detained youth earlier this year. The curriculum is centered around the simple concept behind the non-profit: Make a promise and follow through with it. *because I said I would* founder, Alex Sheen, made his third visit to the facility November 7 to reiterate that message in person with the youth.

Sheen gave a presentation and then took time to speak with the youth one-on-one. While some residents have heard Sheen speak at the facility before or through school presentations, Stollar said they continue to remain engaged and asked questions. The residents had the opportunity to ask Sheen how a non-profit model works, what happens to any money raised from his appearances, and most importantly, how does he continue to stay motivated to spread his message. Sheen responded that it's not just the message, it's the positive impact the movement has on others once promises are fulfilled.

"It's not a challenging concept to tell someone, 'you made a promise, now do it.' The challenge is to eliminate all the excuses we want to make for why we procrastinate or give up," said Judge Kevin W. Dunn. "We are all guilty of it, but it's never too late to change your mindset and do better. That's why I'm grateful for the *because I said I would* curriculum at the Juvenile Detention Center. We can order sanctions for court-involved youth who make mistakes, but our goal is to provide them the tools to do better and be better moving forward in their lives. This program provides that."

All detained youth participate in the mandatory curriculum, facilitated by MCJDC Youth Fulfillment Coordinator Jaclyn Balliet, by writing down a promise they will complete. The promise has to be something attainable and must be within the residents' means to complete on their own using a Promise Planner and best practices, and they must discuss and work through any barriers in order to complete their intention. Examples of Promise Cards made by the residents include: "I promise that next time I get angry, instead of acting out, I will find someone to help me through it," and "I promise to get no rule violations this week."

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The curriculum is designed to work as individual workshops each week, meaning while most residents will not remain detained for the full 12-week course, they will still attain valuable skills from the program for any amount of time they are there, including how to communicate during conflict, to express their feelings during disappointment, and to take responsibility for themselves rather than focus on external factors.

“The promise to minimize rule violations is an important one because to outsiders, it may seem simple to only give a time frame for one week, but that is realistically achievable for this youth and I was proud that the resident was able to focus on a specific goal for a set length of time,” said MCJDC Superintendent Ron Stollar.

During his visit, Sheen also donated *because I said I would* sweatshirts to the 22 residents to take home, along with the book, bracelet, and Promise Cards they receive from the curriculum. In addition, Sheen was given a gift: a black and white “PROMISE” piece from the MCJDC annual Art Experience this year. The lettered board was created by Assistant Superintendent Megan Millikin and showcases letters wrapped in individual promise cards.

“It’s a good reminder when he comes to talk about his worldwide movement,” Stollar said. “Our intentions may be real and honorable at the time, but the reality is that we all struggle with keeping our promises to each other and ourselves. We allow life and excuses to get in the way. But our hope is that instilling this pattern in the youth to follow through with their word will continue with them into adulthood and outside of this correctional setting.”

Sheen promises to return to the facility to work with the residents again, with a future date to be determined.

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