

A close-up photograph of two people shaking hands. The person on the left is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, and the person on the right is wearing a light blue short-sleeved button-down shirt. They are surrounded by a blurred crowd of people in the background. The entire image is framed with a thick orange border.

KEWANEE HORIZONS SPECIAL

DEFY EVENT ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“SUCCEEDING FEELS GOOD!” I'm sure most of you reading this can see those first few words and think nothing of them. For most, those words hold no value because you can understand them. You think “Yeah. Succeeding does feel good.” Yet to some of us we have been down for so long that success doesn't seem like second nature it seems almost unreal. This is where the **DEFY VENTURES ENTREPRENURIAL PROGRAM** comes in. This is a program that has now become a staple here at Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center not because of its ability to make everyone into a shark tank pitch expert, but because of its mission to make each one of us the **BEST** version of ourselves. Defy does not only believe in second chances but more importantly, it believes in **FAIR CHANCES**. Defy believes that we are not our mistakes and we can redeem ourselves despite what we have been hearing internally and externally. Defy gives us not only the chance but the tools to leave behind a lifestyle that did nothing but bring us a false sense of success, and move forward into a future that can be beneficial to everyone around us. They teach us to become the C.E.O. of our new lives. Which means through work and self reflection we learn to make better decisions for ourselves, our families, and our communities big and small. One of the most essential parts of Defy are the many events that they host, whether it is business coaching day or graduation day each event transports every one of us out of a carceral setting and puts our minds, hearts, and spirits into a place of freedom. This year the kickoff event for the new cohort was no different. Every volunteer brought their stories and their excitement for all of our potential and it gave the new cohort the energy that they will need because...Defy is no walk in the park. Defy makes us earn our graduation. It hands us nothing for free, not because it wants to push us to fail, but because everyone in Defy knows that we have what it takes to be successful. If this doesn't scream reentry...I don't know what does! Whether it is **“Mighty” Melissa** that gives us the energy we need to smile and loosen up or **“Terrific” Tori** who shows us the compassion that we should have for ourselves or **“Daring” Diana** that is here faithfully every Tuesday and Thursday pushing us to be our best, you couldn't find a better staff to walk with us on this new journey. In this Kewanee Horizons special issue you will see photos from this years kickoff event that was **ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!** There were dance moves that were unforgettable and discussions that allowed for empathy and understanding, two words that aren't very common in a carceral setting. With a kick off event that went so well and allowed so many people to open up and truly believe in themselves, I know that this Defy cohort will not only meet the quota but **EXCEED EXPECTATIONS.**

The
LEGENDARY
Welcoming
tunnel for the
volunteers.



Volunteers
prepare
themselves for
dance moves and
introductions.



“Mighty Melissa”
giving her
introductions and
instructions.



Positive affirmations
were declared and
promises were made.



“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.”

- Anne Bradstreet





Volunteers shared life experiences and stories of resilience.











**“Show me someone
who has done
something
worthwhile, and
I’ll show you
someone who has
overcome
adversity.”**

- African Proverb









“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The day was filled with comradery and hope.





There was even an *epic* photo bomb by an *epic* volunteer!



“There is an amazing power in getting to know your inner self and learning how to use it and not fight with the world.”

- Juhi Chawla





One on one peer and volunteer conversations provided enlightenment and guidance.





Mindfulness/
Radical Self
Inquiry

IF YOU DO TH
IF YOU WANT TO PLAY BIG,
WANT TO REALLY IMPACT LIVES
GOT TO FACE YOURSELF,
GOT TO BE COURAGEOUS,
WE GOT TO BE WILLING





**“Successful and unsuccessful people do not vary greatly in their abilities. They vary in their desires to reach their potential.”
- John Maxwell**