We recently held the first annual Director’s Cup at Indian River JCF, where youth from Indian River, Circleville and Cuyahoga Hills competed in an intramural soccer tournament. What impressed me most, from this visit and a prior practice session at Cuyahoga Hills, was that although many of these youth had never played soccer previously, they were eager to learn. And, as they did, the game got competitive!

Here at DYS, we prioritize quality programming because we are focused on our mission of habilitating youth and empowering families and communities. When our youth try something new, like playing soccer or participating in yoga, they are opening their minds. When they increase their knowledge by participating in a computer tech camp, helping in the
greenhouse, or even listening to a presentation on real estate, they improve their opportunities for future career prospects. And when they work on a community service project, our youth begin to understand the importance of giving back to their communities.

All of these activities serve to supplement the extensive treatment, educational, and vocational programming that youth receive during their time in our juvenile correctional facilities. We know that this strong foundation makes all the difference when they return to their communities, equipped to make better life choices.

As school starts up again, I’d like to encourage all of us to explore further opportunities for quality programming, as a way to impact meaningful change in the lives of young people.

Because all of these programs help our youth discover that second chances are indeed possible.

And I can think of no more noble mission.