Keelin and Stephanie

Today Judge Nelson Rupp came to speak with us about his career and his creation of a drug court. He has a lot of experience in the legal system, considering he was a prosecutor, public defender, and currently a judge in the state of Maryland. His presentation was relevant to our incentives on this trip because he is an advocate of change for those who are struggling, in this case, with an addiction. Additionally, roughly one third of the homeless have been identified as addicts to alcohol or narcotics. The most inspiring part of his presentation was his obvious compassion for those who participated in the drug court. He was persistent with the idea that the court facilitated a reformation in the addicts who completed the program. His passion for the concept is evident from the fact that he balances heading the drug court with his full- time job as a judge. The people who participate in the drug court definitely appreciate his efforts, and a handful of the program’s alumni keep in touch with the judge. He mentioned that several of the alumni return to share their successes with the court’s current participants. Also, he indicated that the program presents a higher success rate than other national programs of the same nature, which may be attributed to the extensive length of the program relative to others. He provided the statistic that stated that less than twenty percent of the courts participants were re- arrested following their completion of the program. Judge Rupp’s court produced numerous graduates, but the story he specified stood out. During the court’s graduation, each member of the graduating class is asked to deliver a short speech. This particular woman brought her son to the ceremony, and subsequently up to the stage during her speech. She continued to explain how she had previously prioritized crack- cocaine above her own son, but they have been reunited as a result of her completion of the drug court rehabilitation. Hearing these cases made the subjects more relatable and the issue of drug addiction pertinent and impactful. Judge Rupp is the type of person that we should aspire to be, especially in regards to his down- to earth attitude, and passion related to the betterment of society.

-Keelin and Stephanie