Q & A with Kevin….

**Why did you decide to write this book?**

I always wanted to write a book, but this book was written for two main reasons…First, I found that many people really didn’t understand the role of a school counselor. A friend of ours told my wife that it was nice that “I was a camp counselor!” I wrote the book because it gave me an opportunity to allow others to see what a school counselor does and how every day is so different from the last. The role of a school counselor is so varied, this book shows both the wide variety of responsibilities a school counselor has as well as the varied issues they deal with. However, the most important reason I wrote the book was to be a tool to guide teenagers in making important life decisions. I wanted the book to allow teenagers to learn from the choices of other teenagers and see the impact those choices have both good and bad. Then I could use my role as a school counselor to add insight and perspective. I hope I have achieved that.

**Why should parents read this book?**

My hope is that parents will read the book. I want them to see first hand what teenagers deal with. I think sometimes parents “look the other way” so they don’t have to have certain conversations with their teenage children. My hope is that as a result of parents reading the book, that they will have the necessary conversations with their teenage children about everything from dating and sex to drugs and alcohol. It is my hope that conversations about these and other key topics will allow for parents to play a pivotal role in shaping both who their teenage children are now and what they aspire to be in the future.

**You say that you “believe in today’s teenagers”. What do you mean by this?**

I do believe in today’s teenagers. I read the newspaper and watch the news and there is seldom something positive about teenagers. It seems you just hear about them getting arrested, drunk driving, or doing drugs. I have worked with hundreds of incredible teenagers over the years. They are capable of more. They have the ability. Maybe that ability needs to be unlocked or maybe they don’t recognize their potential. In the last ten years, I have seen an overwhelming increase in the use of technology and a real decrease in the family unit and parents being involved in the lives of their kids on a daily basis. Teenagers want to be heard, respected, and validated; they just need to be mentored and given the guidance necessary to make it in a world where it seems there is a new obstacle for them to face around every corner.

**How is this book for teenagers different from others?**

I find this book to be very different from other books that have teenagers as their audience. In many other books, the author is speaking to teenagers directly about how they should be living. My book uses the real life stories of teenagers. When teenagers read these stories, they are able to consider how the choices other teenagers made impacted their lives. They read about the true confessions, trials, and triumphs of their peers. The difference with my book is I share my experiences with teenagers as I strive to inspire them as they work through their struggles behind the closed door of their school counselor. Working with teenagers has allowed me to see what they deal with on a daily basis and I think that comes through in the book.

**What do you hope to achieve through people reading this book?**

My hope is that teenagers will really take an honest look at themselves and where they are at in life. I want them to then consider where they want to be in the future and come up with a plan as to how they can achieve it. Too many people wait for something good to happen to them. I want those who read my book to take action, make solid choices, and make something of their lives; instead, of waiting for it to happen to them. I want the reader to be motivated to change and be willing to make the tough decisions to better themselves. Teenagers are the future of our neighborhoods and communities. I want them to grow up as young adults who will be positive contributors to society for years to come. My hope is this book is the beginning of that.

**Tell me about the role of a school counselor in high schools today?**

The role of a high school counselor is often misunderstood. I have been amazed by how many people I have met who think they know the role of a school counselor yet haven’t worked in education themselves.

The role of a school counselor has many layers. We are not teachers and we are not administrators. Our roles have become muddled with more paperwork and data entry in an era of budget cuts; thus we wind up as I see it being asked to do more administrative tasks such as standardized tests and less time face to face with students.

We are advocates for students and their needs. I see my role as one who desires to look out for their best interests. As you see in the book, I have assisted in the more common tasks of scheduling and college admissions, yet I have also aided a student who was being deported and championed the cause of thousands of others over the years too numerous to name. I see my role as helping a student to navigate through high school and into college or a career of their choosing. I often tell my students: “My job is not to prepare you for graduation, my job is to prepare you for life, graduation just happens to be a part of that journey. Ultimately the role of a school counselor is to be an advocate for students and to prepare them for the demands of life. A complex job, with complex students, in a very complex and complicated world.

**What is your message to teenagers through reading the book?**

My message to teenagers through the book is to guide them as they make important life decisions. I want teenagers to realize that they are capable and can achieve more. A world of opportunity awaits them and with commitment and hard work they can achieve the greatness in life that exists within them.

I believe that teenagers need that trusted adult who believes in them and will champion their cause. I hope this book becomes that “person” that encourages them to be resilient and overcome obstacles in life. Sometimes I find that I believe in my students more than they believe in themselves. Teenagers make numerous critical life decisions. I hope the book can inspire teenagers to realize that they can’t leave life up to chance; instead, they ought to grab life with both hands and achieve excellence.

**You said that this book is an excellent tool for those studying to be teachers, how so?**

I have worked with many teachers who were taught how to teach as they went through their education in college. Most universities excel at doing this. They explain to teachers how to teach algebra, but very few programs encourage teachers to consider the backgrounds or home lives of the students they are teaching. There is a story behind each student and some are more serious than others. These stories may aid a teacher in teaching any curriculum or subject to students.

My book can create awareness of those learning to be teachers to be open minded when working with their students. The book allows them to be more aware of outside factors that may be impacting students’ abilities to learn. Additionally, getting to know students shows that a teacher cares and thus can build repore with them that may result in improved academic success in the classroom.

**How did you decide on the topics covered in the book?**

The topics covered in the book were selected from a lengthy list that I created as I desired to select topics that would adequately represent the role of a school counselor. I also had a focus group of adults as well as students that provided insight and perspective as to what topics they believed should be included. I discussed these topics over many months with students to get their thoughts about what topics teenagers would also be willing to read about.

**You said that reading the book is only the beginning? Explain.**

Many times people read a book and they are inspired by what they read. As the book is read they are motivated to change and they want better for themselves, but when the book is finished and the book is closed it ends there. There is no change. I don’t want this to be another inspiring and motivating book. I want it to be a book that motivates someone to change. Reading the book is just the beginning. My hope is that after the book is read the reader will make the changes necessary to bring about improved success in their own life. Change is not easy, but it ultimately is what allows dreams in the lives of teenagers to become reality. My hope is that my book can be a catalyst for that to happen.

**What has surprised you the most about working with teenagers as well as the students you refer to in the book?**

I think the two main things that has surprised me the most in working with teenagers is resiliency and apathy.

First, there are some students that are incredibly resilient. They don’t allow circumstances to impede their progress, they don’t just overcome obstacles, they break down walls to be successful in life. Their home lives may be dysfunctional, the odds may be stacked against them, yet they find a way to persevere both in school and in life. I am amazed at how much fight these students have. While many teenagers have amazed me with their level of resiliency, I have had a growing concern for apathy among teenagers.

Apathy is a real problem with today’s teenagers. This is an issue that continues to grow on a wider scale and I believe it is an issue that must be dealt with at the State and national level. Too many teenagers just don’t care and incentives don’t work. They just settle for “good enough” because it is easy. I am surprised with the apathy among teenagers; especially when so many of them are able and very capable to be incredibly successful currently in school and in a future career.