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The Leadership Academy

Story of Impact

“Nothing transforms a city more than strong and energized leadership,” says Nancy Coffee, president and CEO of The Leadership Academy, an influential, community-based leadership development group in Memphis, Tenn.

Coffee speaks from firsthand experience. Grounded by the belief that individuals are the linchpin for positive community change, The Leadership Academy (formerly Goals for Memphis) has a 25-year track record for nurturing leaders from all walks of life.

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) supports two of the Academy’s flagship programs: a *Masters* program for the city’s most influential movers and shakers and a *Fellows* program for emerging leaders from business, nonprofit and faith communities. Together the two programs form a chain of leadership that is rippling throughout the community to create significant and lasting impact.

Launched just over a decade ago, the Masters program counts more than 500 top Memphis executives among its alumni. Each participant completes an intensive, 3.5-day leadership development training program custom-developed and led by CCL. It includes a 360-degree assessment of leadership strengths and weaknesses, with personalized feedback delivered by CCL’s coaching staff.

“Our partnership with CCL helps me sell participation in the program,” Coffee said. “The Center is known globally as the gold standard in leadership development for executives, so the senior leaders we approach know they will be participating in a quality initiative.”

Since 2004, the more recently developed Fellows initiative has trained 200 emerging leaders from 130 organizations. Though the year-long program is underwritten by corporate and foundation support, participants commit to pay back that investment by tackling challenging community service projects. CCL provides two days of custom leadership training and assessment to help participants build the strong foundational skills they need to succeed.

“Many times Fellows come into the program with personal ambition for civic engagement but don’t know how to put their passion into action,” Coffee explained. “We give

them the tools, experiences and exposure to channel that passion and fuel positive change.”

One Fellows graduate who has seen the difference the program can make is Spence Wilson Jr., vice president of Kemmons Wilson Companies.

“What impacted me the most was coming together with a very diverse group of people, learning a lot about each other and, more importantly, learning to appreciate our different talents and skill sets,” Wilson said. “While many

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BY THE NUMBERS

- 700 Masters and Fellows alumni now share a common understanding of leadership development and are pooling their talents to make a difference.
- Masters classes have been filled to capacity for more than a decade and now are offered three times a year instead of two.
- Fellows have launched more than 65 community action programs mentored by Masters alumni and are committed to an estimated 85,000 in volunteer hours through 2010.
- More than 100 Academy graduates have been placed on local nonprofit boards.
- A recent survey of Fellows alumni shows:
 - 97% are likely to continue to contribute their time and talents to local nonprofits.
 - 93% are taking a leadership role in the community or are likely to do so.
 - 89% plan to remain in Memphis, though only half are natives.
 - 48% have advanced professionally since completing the program.
 - More than 50 are mentoring children and young adults.

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of us pursued different initiatives, we were all connected to a common mission – helping to make our community a better place.”

The power of the Masters and Fellows programs is multiplied by the interplay between the two. Experienced Masters graduates serve as consultants and mentors to Fellows as they tackle community action projects. They serve on project review boards, provide guidance and help to marshal community resources. The Fellows program, in turn, has reinvigorated Masters alumni by providing a meaningful outlet for what they’ve learned.

“It’s a wonderful partnership,” said Pam Shipp, of CCL, an adjunct faculty member for the Masters program who has watched the program evolve over time. “There simply is a heightened commitment to community and to one another.”

The impact of the Academy’s programs is seen both in an expanded network of individuals who can be rallied behind

GAUGING THE IMPACT

a cause and in concrete programs that are changing the community landscape.

Recent action projects include an internship program for at-risk youth, training programs to help school principals make more informed technology decisions, a nonpartisan election guide, a program to match newcomers with established city residents, and a middle school program to help kids imagine and prepare for a higher education.

Importantly, the Academy also is promoting retention of key talent. A recent survey shows more than nine out of 10 Fellows graduates are committed to staying in Memphis because of the connections they’ve built through their training and engagement in the community.

“The Academy is infusing Memphis with an army of trained, connected community leaders who are helping us make a significant and lasting contribution,” Coffee says. “Intensifying their passion for the city is helping us spread that commitment across their broad sphere of influence.”

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GET STARTED WITH CCL

If building organizational leadership capacity is a concern for you, the Center can offer creative and customized solutions for addressing your leadership needs. Whether your goal is to improve the effectiveness of the executive team, to systematically develop your high-potential managers, expand your organization’s ability to work globally or to create a shared leadership culture at all levels of the organization, we can help. To get started, visit www.ccl.org/custom or contact us at the CCL location most convenient to you.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is a top-ranked, global provider of executive education that develops better leaders through its exclusive focus on leadership education and research. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit, educational institution, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership – the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries – through an array of programs, products and other services.