



## Foundations of Leadership

A high-achieving nonprofit leader gains confidence in her skills as she moves up to new challenges.

**Cindy Watkins**  
Executive Director  
Alamance Partnership for Children

Cindy Watkins had just started her job as head of a children's nonprofit service when she attended the Foundations of Leadership program. Though she brought an impressive record in public education, child advocacy and community development to the position, Watkins was still struggling with her decision.

"I always thought I was missing the nuts-and-bolts tools of how to be a good manager because I didn't have a business-related college degree — the credentials you would typically expect the leader of a multi-million dollar nonprofit to have," she said. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) presented an opportunity for her to sort through those doubts and hopefully gain a higher level of confidence as executive director of the Alamance Partnership for Children in Burlington, N.C.

The Foundations of Leadership program is designed in particular for managers who are taking on new responsibilities and could benefit from training in the fundamentals of leadership development. The three-day format includes many features found in CCL's longer core programs: 360-degree assessment, peer feedback, videotaped exercises on influencing and conflict resolution, goal development, and one-on-one coaching. "You receive so much information in such a short period of time," said Watkins.

The majority of her peers in the program came from the for-profit world. "I was a little intimidated at first because it seemed that our worlds were so different," she said. "But as the sessions progressed, I realized that we could relate to one another because we really weren't very different at all. Our goals might be different, but the skills are much the same. In my job, I also have to constantly think about bottom-line issues."

"One of the main benefits of attending the Foundations of Leadership program was learning more about my leadership style and translating it into a higher level of confidence. I was at CCL only three days, but I could have stayed there a month, it was such a wonderful experience."

Perhaps the program's greatest benefit was the dispassionate analysis Watkins received of her leadership style and accomplishments. "I look at myself as someone with a great deal of passion about various things and I see opportunities for making a difference," she said. "But there had been a big disconnect with how I think about myself and how I believe the outside world thinks of me." When her coach read aloud peer feedback that described her as a "high-achieving woman," she responded: "Wow, that's pretty amazing!"

Watkins said the feedback and learnings about effective leadership practices and strategies were what she had hoped to achieve from the program. She took advantage of the optional after-program telephone coaching with her CCL coach to build on her experience.

"I had been concerned that I didn't have the right tools to be a leader at this level, but the program showed me that tools aren't as important as a leader's personal qualities," she said. "My CCL experience validated that the skills, interests, natural temperament and personality traits that I have are a really good match for making a difference in the work I love."

For more  
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