



The Leadership Factory

By: Nancy Pierce '05

The debate had remained consistent over the years – Are leaders born or made? Based on the vast number of Leadership programs that exist, I'd say developing or “manufacturing” leaders has clearly shown the best long term value.

Granted, each person is born with certain personality traits and not all of those traits are going to develop into senior leadership positions. Yet, every person is the leader of themselves and that translates into a vibrant community.

Manufacturing and developing as a responsible, accountable adult have a number of similarities. Both start with raw material. The human at birth is full of unlimited possibilities, yet needs forming to learn how to harness and utilize their best skills. R&D (Research and Design) crosses both areas. Science is often the common factor. The actual manufacturing process is much the same as the milestones of human growth. As a product grows in the factory, so does the human grow. One has to crawl before walking and walking before running.

Enter Leadership programs – locally we have the Leadership Racine program. When it was first conceived over 12 years ago, the goal was to increase both the leadership skills sets of the participants at work and their understanding and capacity as community leaders. So far, Leadership Racine has “manufactured” over 330 committed community leaders.

Each session in the nine month course is like a manufacturing phase. Each session builds on the previous one both in skills and exposure to the community. Just like in the manufacturing process, it is not always a seamless or perfect result that is

obtained. Leadership Racine deals with 30 to 33 people each year and as we all know, life happens. Yet, it is that very core of life happening that forges great leaders. We learn to adapt, flex, find solutions and keep focused on the final outcome. Participants test their skills in their teams and with the outcomes of their team projects.

Yet, leadership development doesn't end with graduation. Participants move on to become Alumnae. The Leadership Racine Alumni Association is both similar and not to a college alumnae association. Sure, there is the continued opportunity to engage with fellow participants in social events. More importantly, there is the opportunity to continue leadership growth.

There are a number of graduate schools across the country that offer Masters in Community Engagement or Public Administration with a focus on non-profits and Leadership. Racine and Leadership Racine welcome Carroll University to Racine. Carroll University is offering a Master of Education in Community Leadership. Art Howell, LR '99,

Deputy Chief for the Racine Police Department, has been working with both Carroll University and the Leadership Racine Alumni Association to make this opportunity available here in Racine. Carroll University is also partnering with Leadership Racine to co-sponsor with Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare the opening sessions of this year's program.

So, take a look at where you are in your own “manufacturing” process. Are you ready to consider Leadership Racine? This year's program is already underway, but Spring will be here before you know it and opportunity awaits.

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