



LEADERSHIP Ashtabula Ushers in 30th Signature Class

GENEVA - LEADERSHIP Ashtabula County welcomed its 30th class to a year of programming and civic engagement with the annual Signature Class Opening retreat, held at the Lodge at Geneva-On-The-Lake, September 30th- October 2.

Thirty-two individuals from around Ashtabula County and beyond, gathered in Geneva-On-The-Lake for a two-day retreat to get to know each other and embark on both individual growth and team building activities as close to 1,000 LEADERSHIP Ashtabula County Alumni have before them.

Regarding the diversity of the class, Ashtabula County Department of Environmental Services Director, Nick Sanford was quite positive. "I think you couldn't grab a better variety of professionals in this County," he said. "I'm particularly excited about the number of Conneaut residents in the group; it's great to see representation from Ohio's Sharpest Corner!"

After an introduction from LEADERSHIP Ashtabula County's Executive Director, Laura E. Jones, classmates gathered on the first evening of the retreat to become acquainted and begin working with retreat facilitator Ned Parks from Aegis 360 Consulting. Parks worked with the class members throughout the retreat and encouraged all participants to get out of their comfort zones and take advantage of this opportunity.

“Initially, I was a little anxious and nervous about having to go through the program with so many people I didn't know. However, after Sunday evening I started to feel more excited than nervous,” said ACCESS Ashtabula County Executive Director, Manda Jackson. “This year’s class is very diverse and has so much to contribute to the program and the community. I'm looking forward to working with them while learning more about Ashtabula County.”

Class participants were up early Monday morning, and traveled by bus to Beaumont Scout Reservation in Rock Creek. During the day they worked in small and large groups to learn more about their DiSC profiles and how understanding those personality nuances can enhance their leadership abilities, and how to best communicate with others that have styles different from their own.

Groups also worked together to discuss various aspects of civic engagement and begin to shape their thoughts and ideas for the programming year and capped off their first full retreat day with the opportunity to meet with LEADERship Ashtabula County alumni, trustees and board members at Laurello Vineyards in Austinburg on Monday evening. A highlight of the evening was the opportunity to experience Laurello Vineyard’s unique Kent State Ashtabula Wine, a collaborative project with the Winery and the University’s viticulture program.

2019 Signature Class participant Paula Ghiz, Academic Advisor at Kent State Ashtabula was grateful for the opportunity to meet and greet previous LEADERship participants. “Meeting some of the LEADERship Alumni was a great experience because they all had very positive experience and are willing to continue to be involved in the current LEADERship class to mentor or collaborate with others,” Ghiz said.

Class participants gathered on Tuesday of the retreat to start the early phases of the work they would undertake this year. Teams were formed to tackle a variety of topics throughout the programming year.

“I was struck by how quickly, and with so much vulnerability, this group opened up to one another in an effort to find solutions for the challenges faced in Ashtabula County,” Rachel Truelsch, Director of Regional Services for the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center commented. “Our retreat experience was unlike any other business training experience I have had in the past. Instead of networking and working to position selves and organizational missions, this group pulled up a chair and made space for authentically building relationships as whole people. That’s pretty unique. I am very excited to learn and grow through these relationships as the year moves forward!”

LEADERship Ashtabula County's 2019 Signature class will meet again on October 24th and includes the following community members:

Joyce Agne Jones, MST/Respite Clinical Supervisor for Homes for Kids, Inc.

Brian Bidwell, Wastewater Superintendent for the City of Conneaut

James DiDonato, Principal Advisor/Project Manager at Cristal

Carl DiFranco, Municipal Court Judge for the State of Ohio, County of Ashtabula, City of Conneaut

Nick Dunlap, Zoning for the City of Geneva

George Emery, III, Forestry Specialist for The Illuminating Company (FirstEnergy)

Debra Fleming, Quality Director for APMC Regional Home Health

Paula Ghiz, Academic Advisor for Kent State University Ashtabula

Brittany Gilbert, Nurse Manager, Ashtabula County Medical Center

Kristi Morris, Finance Director, Ashtabula Arts Center

Antionette Green, Executive Administrative Assistant to the City Manager for the City of Conneaut

Jeff Griffiths, Geneva Resident

Melissa Gruszka, Quality & Continuous Improvement Manager for A. Schulman

Manda Jackson, Executive Director for ACCESS Ashtabula County

Courtney Johnson, Director for Community Harvest Food Hub

Samantha Kiefer, Family Medicine Physician with University Hospitals, Conneaut Primary Care

Jenny Luhta, Owner of Harbor Halcyon

Lisa Michalk, Benefits Advisor for Slowey Insurance Agency

Yvonne Moon, Emergency Department Nurse Manager for University Hospitals

Linda Nerad, Human Resource and Office Clerk

Susan Paolo, First VP Investment Officer/Financial Advisor for Huffman-Mayer Wells Fargo Advisors

Lisa Paul, High School Guidance Counselor for Jefferson Area Local Schools

Brian Pruitt, Program Director for the Ashtabula County YMCA

Lori Riley, Superintendent of Conneaut Area City Schools

Nicholas Sanford, Director of the Department of Environmental Services for the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners

Heather Starcheski, TAC Nurse Manager for Ashtabula County Medical Center

Stacy Stevenson, Program Manager for LEADERship Ashtabula County

Patricia Stone, District Manager for Junior Achievement

Rachel Truelsch, Director of Regional Services for Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Casey Webster, HR Manager - Americas for Chromaflo Technologies

Ryan R. Whelply, Geneva Branch Outreach Services Coordinator for the Ashtabula County District Library

Ginger Yanchar, Clinical Supervisor, Supported Employment Services for Community Counseling Center of Ashtabula

For more information about LEADERship Ashtabula County, please visit <http://www.leadershipac.org>

For media information contact:

Laura Jones

Executive Director

LEADERship Ashtabula County

C: (440) 813.9053

Email: Laura@leadershipac.org