

# LEADERSHIP



ashtabula county

**ROCK CREEK** -- LEADERSHIP Ashtabula County kicked off its 2018-2019 year of youth programming on Friday, September 14th at Beaumont Scout Reservation in Rock Creek.

Nearly 90 Ashtabula County juniors and seniors gathered to take part in a variety of activities to start off their year with LEADERSHIP Ashtabula County. Schools from all over the county were represented, including Grand Valley, Pymatuning Valley, A-Tech, Jefferson, Edgewood, Lakeside, St. John, Geneva and Conneaut.

Juniors in the Youth LEADERSHIP program spent the day engaged in a variety of activities, from a Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience (COPE) Course to talking about leadership and the Ashtabula community. Director of Camping Services at Beaumont Scout Reservation, Phil Williams, provided trained COPE course staff to guide the junior participants through a team building, low ropes obstacle course and activities.

Youth LEADERSHIP Program Manager Kelli Jones said the juniors would start participating in their monthly learning days in October when they will begin to travel around the county, learning more about their community, developing their projects and building their leadership skills.

"The retreat was time spent learning more about themselves, each other, and developing teamwork skills while having some fun. We're looking forward to an exciting year with this great group of Juniors and can't wait until October!" Jones said about the opening day retreat.

Juniors also worked together to create categories of possible team projects for the year and exercised some of those team building skills during an exciting game of capture the flag.

Seniors took part in a similar day of activities as part of the LEADERSHIP LAUNCHpad program. This group of participants completed the Youth LEADERSHIP program last year as juniors and opted to continue on with another year of leadership programming.

LAUNCHpad participants were taken through a high ropes COPE course where they had to work through challenges individually while receiving support and safety assistance from classmates on the ground. The seniors climbed over 30 feet up to navigate a variety of roped obstacles and then were launched down a zip line.

“We weren’t kidding when we said ‘LAUNCHPAD,’” program manager, Stacy Stevenson said about the retreat day. “I think this was a great start to the programming year. For the seniors, they have a very full year ahead of them with lots of decisions and important milestones so we are really excited to have over 25 returning Youth LEADERship participants who have chosen to spend part of their senior year with us.”

Seniors also listened to guest speakers Trevor Sprague, CEO of the Ashtabula County YMCA and LEADERship Ashtabula County Executive Director Laura E. Jones who both shared their own personal leadership stories with LAUNCHpad participants.

Jones and Stevenson were also joined by some community volunteers. Both Stephanie Corlew of Wychock Physical Therapy and Ashtabula City Councilman and Chalk Box owner, Michael Speelman accompanied participants to the ropes courses. As a retired Marine, Speelman was excited to see students have this opportunity to work through the challenges and then discuss together how the lessons could be applied to their lives.

LEADERship Ashtabula County Board member Andrew Misiak from the Juvenile Resource Center and local business owner Rachael Merlene also stopped in to talk with the Youth Leadership participants and get to know them better during some of their activities. Merlene is also volunteering on the LEADERship Ashtabula County Youth Advisory Group throughout the year to offer support to students in the program who are working on a variety of community-minded projects.

LEADERship LAUNCHpad and YOUTH LEADERship is supported by many local companies, organizations, foundations, and donors who generously give of their time and resources. Scholarships are available for the YOUTH LEADERship program so that tuition does not act as a barrier for students that wish to participate. LEADERship Ashtabula County is thankful for this tremendous support as it continues on its mission dedicated to developing people who improve the quality of life in Ashtabula County.

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