

EDITOR'S NOTES



Editorial Comments by
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Leadership SouthCoast Worth the Experience

First, I want to thank my boss, Jim Mathes, for relinquishing his column to me this month so that I can share my personal experience with the Leadership SouthCoast program with all of you. (Of course, I probably shouldn't mention that Jim was only too eager to do this - it got me off his back for one month because I didn't have to "hound" him for his column. It's okay, Jim - there's always next month!).

I am proud to be one of 26 business men and women who are among the very first Leadership SouthCoast class. I am honored to be in this group with some outstanding and prominent business and community leaders from both the New Bedford and Fall River areas. My fellow classmates come from all walks of life throughout the SouthCoast but we all have one thing in common - we love the SouthCoast and we want to be involved in ways to make it a better place to live, work and play.

Leadership SouthCoast's mission is to "provide our region with an ongoing source of diverse leaders, who are prepared and committed to serve as catalysts and sustainers of positive change for the quality of life on the SouthCoast of Massachusetts". Leadership SouthCoast was developed to shrink the leadership gap that is plaguing the SouthCoast. Many of you probably are or know someone who serves on a Board of Directors of a local organization in our region - one that, I am sure, does really good work. Those same individuals are often asked to serve on multiple boards (you know the way it is - ask a busy person to do something because they know how to get it done), committees, chair fundraisers, and so on. The idea of cloning ourselves in these cases can be appealing. There is always a need for more leaders and more people to become active in the nonprofits of our community and to lead us in other, positive ways. And, we need to foster and develop emerging leaders so that they can and will be ready to take the lead in the foreseeable future. Hence, Leadership SouthCoast was born.

The Leadership SouthCoast program involves a commitment of a two-day retreat (In September we went to Newport, RI) and then one day a month for the next 9 months. In our monthly sessions, we have heard guest speakers and had some pretty intense group discussions on issues that affect the SouthCoast including leadership; education; health care; science, technology and environment; economic development; and non-profits and the arts. We are going to be talk-

ing about government, justice and media in our upcoming sessions before graduation. We have had an opportunity to go into dozens of organizations and entities throughout the SouthCoast in a concerted effort to educate us about our communities. This experience has opened my eyes further to the great things being done on a daily basis in the SouthCoast and to the many needs that exist to do even more.

Considering myself as an emerging leader seemed a bit of a stretch to me and I wasn't really sure if I belonged in this program, but I have really enjoyed it for several reasons. First, I have met several people I didn't know, some were key people in the New Bedford area and some were from the Fall River area. This alone was and will remain invaluable to me. I know that I will be able to call on any of my fellow classmates now or in the future for advice, help with a particular project or issue, or for just about any reason. I know that I can count on them and I hope they know that they will be able to count on me. I believe that we have formed a bond that will last the test of time. We will always be there for each other. It is just the way it is, without question. Next, we all had the opportunity to learn more about our respective community and, in my case, our sister city to the west. This information is also priceless. As General Manager and a 15-year veteran of the Chamber, I felt that I was pretty knowledgeable about my community before I began this program but the Leadership SouthCoast program showed me that there is still so much to know.

Seriously, there are several benefits to participants and their employers to get involved in Leadership SouthCoast.

You, too can benefit by participating in Leadership SouthCoast. It creates opportunities for contact with influential leaders and provides experience in critical thinking, group dynamics, team leadership, presentation skills, ethics, and decision-making. Participants grow as individuals and gain a better understanding of their community, learn cutting-edge leadership skills, and enhance personal relationships. Most importantly, Leadership SouthCoast motivates and builds the confidence needed to become actively involved in promoting positive change for the SouthCoast.

Employers benefit by sponsoring and allowing their employees to participate in the program. Leadership SouthCoast develops the organizational, leadership and problem solving skills of its participants. In addition, Leadership SouthCoast offers new insights into the community and helps participants identify where strategic alliances might be forged and provides organizations unique perspectives on the behind-the-scenes workings of our state.

Participating in Leadership SouthCoast costs \$4,000. This covers all program costs and materials, including meals and all expenses associated with the retreat. Sponsoring organizations (your employer, sponsor, etc.) are asked to cover \$3,700 with the additional \$300 paid by each

participant, demonstrating a personal commitment to the program. Limited scholarships are available. Tuition is non-refundable.

The excitement and enthusiasm of my classmates in this first Leadership SouthCoast will be hard to beat. However, the need for more

leaders and business and community representatives to step up to the plate, be willing to make a difference in our communities and to make positive change in our communities will continue to exist.

So, won't you take that first step today and sign up for the next Leadership SouthCoast class.

Application deadline is June 30. Anyone who is interested in the program, can contact me at the Chamber at 508-999-5231 and I would be happy to spend some time sharing in more detail my experience with the program. Visit <http://leadershipsouthcoast.org/> to download an application today. The SouthCoast needs you and Leadership SouthCoast is worth it!