

# Leadership: A Life-Long Journey



By Philip J. Schworer

**A**t the core of our many social and professional development experiences has been a leader. Initially, children look to their parents and teachers for leadership. Then, the search for leadership expands to coaches, guidance counselors, neighbors, co-workers, supervisors and community volunteers. The need for leadership is boundless. Numerous books have been written about leadership development and topics such as: Who makes a good leader? What is the most effective style of leadership? How do you measure the success of a leader? I have been interested in the study of leadership ever since I participated in my first leadership training program hosted by the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

I had just about finished typing the previous paragraph when I took a break to read my morning mail. In what can only be described as a great cosmic confluence, I received a letter from none other than Harry Santen, who will be remembered as our 1990-1991 CBA president. The letter from Mr. Santen, it would turn out, was directly relevant to the topic of this article. I immediately called Mr. Santen and said, "We've got to meet." On a beautiful Friday morning Mr. Santen and I met to discuss leadership and how he is nurturing new leaders in an unlikely place.



Santen

The letter from Mr. Santen included an invitation for me to be interviewed by participants in a newly created leadership program for inner-city, primarily minority, children.

As I learned from Mr. Santen, he created the program. During our breakfast meeting, I learned that Mr. Santen did not move to an island oasis following his retirement from Santen & Hughes. Quite to the contrary, he became a volunteer teacher at St. Frances Seraph primary school. During his teaching experience, he learned that the students who were gifted academically were not receiving guidance and education on the interpersonal and leadership skills they would need to fully utilize their academic talents. To fill the void, Mr. Santen created the Leadership Scholars Program, with a mission to empower Cincinnati's inner-city youth to be agents of change in both their schools and communities by creating and developing their leadership abilities. The program is designed to instill values of confidence, trust and responsibility in the participants. The program is currently offered to seventh grade students who are mentored by high school students. Guided by adult vol-

unteers, the student teams meet weekly to discuss the core values of leadership and learn about our community. In the summer, the students participate in educational and personal development programs.

Mr. Santen's work to conceive of, and implement, the Leadership Scholars program is a perfect example of what can happen when a leader identifies an opportunity for our community and then takes charge to make the vision a reality. He created a corporate structure for the program and then quietly raised the necessary capital from community-minded individuals to fund the programs and hire an executive director. Two professors from Xavier University and high school guidance counselors attend all of the programs and consult on the teaching curriculum. Leadership Scholars will track the participants as they advance through college and into a career.

Bravo, Mr. Santen. Your vision and commitment to our community are inspirational. The rest of us encounter opportunities for leadership on a regular basis. We need only be alert to the possibilities and, like Mr. Santen, have the courage to make it happen. ■

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