

Leadership Academy

“Every generation gets a chance to change the world.” – Bono

The Valpo Chamber Leadership Academy was established in 2006 as a collaborative effort by the Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce staff, then Board Chair Todd Etzler, Division Chair John Scibert, and the Chamber’s Leadership Engagement Committee. In its short history, the Academy has become an example of quality and excellence common to Chamber programming.

“The Leadership Academy gives participants a realistic picture of what it means to serve on a board or high level committee - what is expected, what it will be like, the rewards of leadership, and more. It is a wonderful opportunity to connect emerging leaders with the different sectors of our community.” Melissa Westphal Benefiel, Resource Development & Marketing Director at Porter County Aging & Community Services, Inc. and Leadership Academy Sub-Committee Co-chair.

The Academy’s mission is to provide a growing leadership pool of willing and able leaders and volunteers for current and future civic, charitable, and governmental organizations in Valparaiso.

Leadership development focuses on the development of leadership as a process. This includes the interpersonal relationships, social influence processes, and the team dynamic.

The Academy complements other leadership organizations with focused skill building and the necessary knowledge to be an effective leader in the community; for example, the expectations of board service, governance, understanding financial statement, ethics, accountability, and time management.

The Leadership Academy program brings together business and community leaders to create a network of speakers and mentors who participate in coaching sessions, small-group discussions, and skill-building seminars with the program participants. Admission to the program is for Valpo Chamber members only and participants must have the full support of their employers.

“Leadership Academy creates a space both to learn and to make a commitment to developing our community through service,” adds Andrea Proulx Buinicki, Senior Director of Advancement at Opportunity Enterprises, Inc. and Co-Chair of the Valpo Chamber Leadership Engagement Committee.

The Academy is not just about training. From day one participants are encouraged to find their passion for service and act on it. The Academy’s dynamic curriculum not only exposes participants to pressing community issues, but also introduces them to key community leaders.



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Pictured (from left to right):

LaTosha Knight, Housing Opportunities, Inc.; Sandrah Combs, McDaniel Fire Systems; Natalie Wargo, Smiles by Arnold and Associates; Deeanna Leffert, Home Helpers; Phillip Ciotola, Scannell Wealth Management Group; Analisa Warring, REGIONAL Federal Credit Union; Laurie Griffith, United Way of Porter County; Kelli Ellis, Porter County Career and Technical Center; Kate Sorensen, Porter County Career and Technical Center; Juli Keppen, State Farm Insurance; Marsha Eriks, Ivy Tech Community College; Elliott Miller, Porter-Stanke Services, Inc.; Tom Cath, Valparaiso University; Laura Weaver, Purdue University North Central; Kathleen Neary, Valparaiso University; Natalie Connors, Purdue University North Central; Brandon Rudd, 1st Source Bank; Michael Haynes, Rhame & Elwood; Jennifer Nicksic, Pines Village Retirement Communities

“Valparaiso has a remarkable tradition of strong and effective leadership. Its citizens see themselves as stakeholders in the community, and they accept personal responsibility for its health and success,” says Jon Schmaltz, Partner at Burke Costanza & Cuppy, a 2009 sponsor of the Leadership Academy. “Leadership Academy strengthens that tradition by bringing together existing and emerging leaders.”

“Meeting with the leaders in the community has shed some light on being part of the community and confirmed my thoughts on understanding the limitations and the opportunities for me to investing in my community,” says Sandrah Combs, General Manager, Commercial

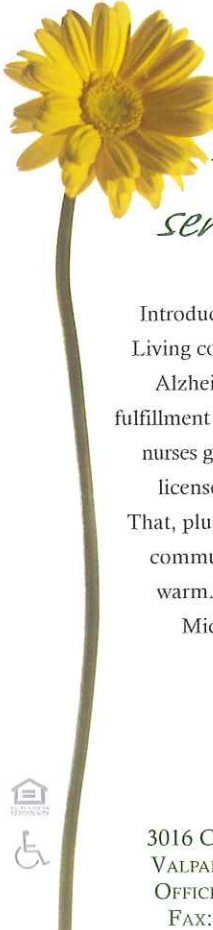
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Division of McDaniel Fire Systems and Leadership Academy Class of 2009 participant. "Valpo Leadership Academy is providing a great service to the community by reaching into the companies, organizations and groups to locate leaders for the future. The Chamber is providing the growth in leadership to allow Valparaiso to continue to blossom. Its mission to train, mentor, and raise spirited leaders will put Valparaiso ahead of other communities."

"Meeting current leaders helped me understand what is expected when accepting certain roles of leadership within the community... if you want to accept a leadership role, you must really commit to that role," adds Daniel Timm, Financial Representative at Northwestern Mutual Financial Network and 2008 Academy graduate. "Some of these roles seem to take more time than others, but each must be given 100 percent of the effort that you have. It was very inspiring to see how so many of our speakers have given of themselves and their family time to make this great community even greater."

During the focused six sessions, August through November, participants are infused in the community, exploring the public sector, city government sector, private business sector, and non-profit organizations that currently benefit from local leaders. Upon completion, participants are expected to take the insights, skills, and contacts gained in the Leadership Academy and apply them to community organizations.

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– Andrea Proulx Buinicki, Senior Director of Advancement at Opportunity Enterprises, Inc. and Co-Chair of the Valpo Chamber Leadership Engagement Committee.

The 2009 Leadership Academy is sponsored by Burke Costanza & Cuppy, LLP; Purdue University North Central; Sikorski Wealth Management; and in-kind sponsor United Way of Porter County.

“Leadership Academy is, at its heart, about connection,” states Buinicki, “...connection between young professionals and seasoned community leaders, and connection between an individual’s desire to serve and opportunities to demonstrate leadership that will make a meaningful difference in our community.”

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