



A Historical Overview of the Greater Mankato Leadership Institute

Compiled by Sandra Woods, Diane Berge, Steph Stoffel and Shannon Gullickson – Spring 2016

Past participants and volunteers are encouraged to contact sgullickson@gretermankato.com with additional information and history.

In 1982 a group of community leaders realized that there was a need to engage new leader in the Greater Mankato community. According to KEYC-TV manager, Hap Halligan, “we were tired of looking at the same old faces sitting around all the board tables.” To address this need, Halligan and other members of the Mankato Area Foundation (MAF) worked with the Greater Mankato Chamber of Commerce to form a leadership program, which was named Leadership Mankato Area. MAF provided start-up funding and direction for the program, while the Chamber of Commerce provided space for a volunteer director.

An executive committee of Doug Johnson, Bill Webster, Robert Brown, Ann Stewart and Roger Nygaard was formed to create a program to educate and engage younger leaders and new members to the community. Bill Webster described the program plan, “Leadership Mankato Area was designed and is supported as a community building endeavor. Its methodology focuses on building networks and on cooperative problem solving. Its graduates will make a difference as they join with others in the achievement of a vision of making a very good community better.”

Thirty-three individuals were selected to participate in the program. The steering committee sought to get a broad mix of individuals from diverse aspects of the community. Particular attention was paid to including faculty and administration from Minnesota State University.

The program’s curriculum was the history, current concerns and future promise of the community. The first year consisted of six sessions: Area History/Leadership; City & County Government; Business/Economics; Education/Media; Health Service/Arts; and Social Services. Each session was led by a day chair who was a current community leader. Besides community leaders, thought leaders such as Bob Terry from the Humphrey institute provided leadership training.

The volunteer steering committee continued to provide leadership for annual programs with past participants becoming day chairs and steering committee members. Because of the influx of new leaders, support for the program continued to grow. In 1989, the steering committee led by Max Tjaden, determined that the program needed to grow. They hired Sandra Woods as executive director and began seeking broader community support.

The program began to incorporate experiential training, starting with a two-day retreat that included the MSU ropes course. The program expanded to nine days with and each day involved creating opportunities for participants to be involved in activities that reinforced the concepts of the day.

In 1991, Leadership Mankato Area formally became a part of the Mankato Chamber of Commerce. The steering committee chose to form a partnership with the chamber in order to support the organization’s growth.

Besides continuing to provide nine-month-long leadership programs, LMA added an Alumni component. Because of the impact Leadership Mankato was having on the community and the number of graduates who had gone on to leadership roles in the community, the board determined that it was time to recognize their contributions by creating the Hap Halligan Alumni Award. The purpose of the Hap Halligan award is to recognize and honor an individual whose participation in the Leadership Mankato program has helped provide an impetus for his/her outstanding, creative or innovative contributions to the greater Mankato Community.

In 1992 the Alumni Committee added mini days for Leadership Alum. Each program addressed a current topic and followed the format of a normal leadership day. Topics such as "Austerity in the 90s: How will we manage our resources" were offered. Since then various professional development and alumni networking events have been held.

In 1993 there were key leadership changes within the community. MSU, South Central, Mayo, and Hickory Tech all had new top leaders who would benefit from learning about the community. Leadership Mankato Area held an Executive Leadership program to introduce these new top leaders other leaders in the community and to help them quickly learn about the Mankato area.

In 1994 Trusteeship was introduced as a major component of the program. The founding member's vision that graduates of the program would become stewards of the community was woven through all parts of the program.

In the mid 1990's Lori Hood took over as a staff person for the program and was succeeded by Carrie Schill. They were followed by Shannon Gullickson in 1999 who, together with several Steering Committee members developed the current Greater Mankato Leadership Institute curriculum. The new curriculum combined components of the existing program together with specific Leadership training in areas such as communication, finance and ethics in addition to an overnight Government Advocacy session in St. Paul. Gullickson staffed the program until 2006 when she left the Chamber of Commerce for other employment. Kate Loging, Brian Stempka, Sara Buchholz and Barb Embacher contributed their leadership to the program from 2006 until 2012 when Gullickson returned to Greater Mankato Growth as a staff member. She continues to lead the program today.

With direction from Steering Committee members the program has changed and evolved over the years. This has enabled program planners to make sure the curriculum is relevant to the issues being faced in workplaces and our community. Focus has been placed on personal and professional development that has a community awareness component unique to other leadership and training programs. The program continues to be suitable for new community members and employees as well as long-standing citizens who wish to further enhance their leadership skills and awareness of community issues.

We are grateful to the following community members who had the vision to start the Mankato Area Leadership Program:

Ann Stewart
Anne Latsch
Arline Brown
Bill Webster
Bob Barrett
Raymond Rapp

Bob Brown
David Brune
Doug Johnson
Elaine Peterson
Hap Halligan
Robert Meyer

Judy Brandon
Judy Mans
Kathy Sheran
Mary Lofy
Mickey Croce
Sue Chesley