

2024

Annual Report

DEVELOP.

CONNECT. INSPIRE.





50th Anniversary Celebration



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



Columbus City Council Resolution honoring 50 years of Leadership Columbus



Carlie Boos, Signature Program Class Speaker



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



Columbus Chamber of Commerce Leadership Luncheon



50th Anniversary Celebration

A Letter from the Board Chair and Executive Director



Dear Friends,

This year has been a remarkable chapter in the story of Leadership Columbus. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we are reminded of the countless individuals and organizations who have contributed to building a stronger, more connected Central Ohio.

Together, we've created something truly special—a legacy of leadership that continues to shape our community. Over the past five decades, we've accomplished so much together:

- Developed more than 3,400 leaders who are making an impact across our region,
- Partnered with over 960 organizations to support and strengthen our community,
- Completed 450 community impact projects that have benefitted local nonprofits, and
- Awarded \$511,800 in scholarships, ensuring access to leadership development for all.

This year also marked a meaningful transition as we welcomed Kate Bauer as our new Executive Director. Beginning this role during our 50th anniversary has been both an honor and an inspiration; reaffirming the importance of our mission.

Your unwavering support – as funders, champions and partners – has been the cornerstone of our ability to continue creating meaningful impact in our community.

We are proud of our impact, but our work is far from finished. We are energized by the possibilities ahead and our next 50 years will be defined by bold steps, innovative programming, and a steadfast commitment to a better Central Ohio.

Thank you for believing in our mission, for celebrating this milestone year with us, and for being part of a legacy that truly matters. Your support makes it all possible, and together, we will continue to honor the past, celebrate the present and build a future full of promise.

With gratitude,

Handwritten signature of Kelly Clifford Riehl in black ink.

Kelly Clifford Riehl
Chair of the Board
of Trustees

Handwritten signature of Kate Bauer in black ink.

Kate Bauer
Executive Director

Leadership Columbus 2024 Board of Trustees



Kelly Clifford Riehl (SP '18)
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Fifth Third Bank



Rachel Heine (SP '22)
Columbus Metropolitan Library



Ralph Smithers, Jr.
Encova Insurance



Ryan Wilkins (SP '11)
Wilkins Collective

2024 IN REVIEW

Leadership Columbus is more than a collection of leadership programs. We create life-changing experiences. Our dynamic programming informs, equips, and inspires participants, preparing them to lead with impact.

No other leadership organization in our region has the people and the programming to help diverse leaders of all stages connect, grow, transform, and impact lives like Leadership Columbus.

For 50 years, Leadership Columbus has been the premier training ground to prepare individuals to become the current and future trustees in and for our communities. Our program offerings are designed to meet individuals wherever they are on their leadership journeys.



Signature Program Economic Development Program Day



50th Anniversary Celebration



50th Anniversary Celebration



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



Signature Program Quality of Life Program Day



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



50th Anniversary Celebration



Signature Program Class of 2025



Signature Program participants volunteering as part of their Community Impact Project

2024 BY THE NUMBERS



Central Ohio Leadership Academy

50
YEARS
of serving
Central Ohio's
civic leaders.



Central Ohio Leadership Academy Graduation

46
PARTICIPANTS
benefited from
leadership
programming
through
scholarships.

\$31,500
SAVED BY NONPROFITS
in volunteer consulting hours dedicated to
solving community challenges.

\$62,000

SCHOLARSHIPS
awarded to program participants.

75+

**CENTRAL OHIO
COMPANIES ENGAGED**
to develop programs and
address community
challenges.



Central Ohio Leadership
Academy Graduation



Signature Program Vibrant
Communities Program Day

220

INDIVIDUALS
participated in Leadership Columbus programs.



NxGen Class of 2024 Graduation



Signature Program Class of 2025
Opening Retreat

885

HOURS
of consulting, service, and volunteer work
through Community Impact Projects.

SIGNATURE PROGRAM

The Signature Program is a dynamic, experiential journey that equips people to lead from where they are, turning passion and knowledge into real-world impact where it matters most. Central Ohio is your classroom as you engage in immersive, experiential learning that challenges you to think bigger, connect deeper, and act bolder.



95%
OF PARTICIPANTS
have a better
understanding of
Central Ohio and the
challenges it faces .



86%
OF PARTICIPANTS
know how to utilize
leadership skills to
better the community.

100% OF PARTICIPANTS
are motivated to make positive change in their
workplace and community.

SIGNATURE PROGRAM CLASS OF 2024

Carla N. Adams
Jessica Armbruster
Stephanie Baker
Lindsay Barber
Meg Berno
Yugendra Bhide
Thad Boggs
Jeff Bolchalk
Carlie J. Boos
Rhonda E. Childs
Joe D'Andrea
Joe Denlinger
Kelsey A. Ellingsen
Tiffani Fischer
Jim Gehrt
Joseluis Guajardo
Kourtnei M. Hatton
Ben Heigel
Steve Hewitt
Jena Huffman

Allyson Irving
Marcus J. Jackson
Evan Kellett
Rob Kidder
Craig Long
Carl P. McCoy
Bethany McCurdy
Daphne McKinnie
Lucie McMahon
Chante Meadows
Kelly Merchant
Kasey Miller
Chris Mulherin
Tom Pannett
Jess Patterson
Tiffany Patterson
Anthony Perry
Kaileigh Pickett
Sarah Poe

Danielle N. Polak
Maggie Pope
John Popper
Brandt Quinn
Samantha Rainier
Arlene Reitter
Johnny Riddle
Mark Schierholt
Britt Schmidt
Stephanie K. Starks, LISW-S
Ryan Steele
Kristin Sutton
Jaime Swartzwelder
Ariana Tyler
David Uhlendorff
Julie Weeks, CSEP
Alice Wheeler
Brandi Whetstone
Rob Yurisko
Mark Zuzik



CENTRAL OHIO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (COLA)

Central Ohio Leadership Academy (COLA) is a **tuition-free**, high-impact leadership development experience designed for rising high school juniors and seniors throughout Central Ohio.



97%
OF PARTICIPANTS
know how to utilize
leadership skills to
better the community.



100% **OF PARTICIPANTS**
feel better prepared to lead individuals
on a team.

96%
OF PARTICIPANTS
feel more empowered
to use their voice to
contribute to positive
change.

COLA CLASS OF 2024



34

STUDENTS
in the COLA 2025
cohort.

16

CENTRAL OHIO
HIGH SCHOOLS
represented.



COLA 2024 Participating Schools

Big Walnut High School
Bishop Hartley High School
Columbus Academy
Columbus Africentric Early College
High School
Columbus Alternative High School
Dublin Jerome High School
Fort Hayes Arts & Academic High School
Gahanna Lincoln High School
Granville High School
Harvest Preparatory Academy
KIPP Columbus High School
Metro Early College High School
Ohio Construction Academy
Olentangy Orange High School
Upper Arlington High School
Whetstone High School



NXGEN PROGRAM

The NxGen Program is a 10-month leadership program supporting the learning and development needs of emerging leaders.



Congratulations to the NxGen Class of 2024!

Racheal Alcock
Austin Lefeld
Anisa Liban
Isoke Miller-Harris
Emily Morris
Alanna Stosic
Jennifer Sullivan
Ping Yin

Our NxGen Leaders...

- Recognize personal growth areas and how to improve
- Lead teams more effectively
- Understand their impact on team culture
- Drive positive change in their workplace and community

“
Because of NxGen, I can envision a successful career in management. I love the person I've become as a result of my growth with the help of NxGen!
”

“
NxGen's focus on emotional intelligence and navigating workplace challenges has empowered me to lead with confidence and purpose.
”



EXECUTIVE EDGE PROGRAM

The Executive Edge Program prepares senior leaders to step into executive roles, offering a holistic approach to leadership development.

Congratulations to the Executive Edge Class of 2024!

Randy Borntraeger
Justin Davis
Candace Frank
Mike Gersz
Allison Watters



Our Executive Edge Leaders...

- Leverage new leadership skills to enhance their workplace and community
- Gained a deeper understanding of their impact as leaders
- Feel motivated and equipped to drive positive change



“ Executive Edge taught me it is never too late to learn something new and grow professionally to adjust in an ever-changing environment. ”

“ Executive Edge provided an invaluable framework to refine my leadership approach. The program strengthened my ability to think strategically and navigate interpersonal dynamics with greater awareness. ”

50 YEARS OF IMPACT:

For half a century, Leadership Columbus has empowered individuals to grow as leaders, engage with their communities, and drive meaningful change. As we celebrate this milestone, we reflect on the people and experiences that define our legacy. In this year's Impact Report, we highlight **four unique stories** that showcase the depth and breadth of Leadership Columbus' influence.

These stories stand as a testament to our ongoing mission: to develop, connect, and inspire leaders who strengthen our community. Over the past 50 years, our alumni have become changemakers in business, government, and nonprofit sectors, and their impact continues to shape Columbus for the better. As you explore these stories, we invite you to celebrate with us, reflect on our shared history, and look ahead to the next 50 years of leadership and impact.

Inspired to Change More than Wardrobes.



Habiba Bankston (SP '20) cares deeply about her community and its people. It's a level of care that was amplified through her participation in Leadership Columbus' renowned Signature Program. As a Class of 2020 participant, she learned a lot about overcoming adversity, as she, her classmates, and the rest of the world were learning how to live, work, learn, and connect amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "Those circumstances really brought everything we were learning in the program full circle. It's all about people coming together to connect, collaborate, and take on challenges. And that year, there were many," she says.

"What I learned through the program, along with a new level of appreciation for the critical role of non-profits, inspired me to find a way to make an even greater impact."

Through her Signature Program experience, Habiba built a deep understanding of her community's needs and challenges and a desire to drive meaningful change. She also built strong relationships with people who became mentors and guides, encouraging her to follow her heart and recognize opportunities for increased civic engagement and personal growth. This led Habiba to her role at Dress for Success Columbus. "At the time, I loved the work I was doing supporting corporate community relations and volunteer efforts, but what I learned through the program, along with a new level of appreciation for the critical role of non-profits, inspired me to find a way to make an even greater impact." Habiba now makes that meaningful impact every day as Executive Director of Dress for Success Columbus, empowering women with a network of support, professional attire, and the development tools and guidance they need to achieve economic independence and thrive in work and life.



Community Impact Project: Painting a Brighter Future with ROY G BIV Gallery.

Each year, participants in Leadership Columbus' renowned Signature Program engage in a Community Impact Project, applying their leadership, management, and team-building expertise to support a local nonprofit in a meaningful way. In 2022, one group focused their efforts on ROY G BIV Gallery, a Franklinton-based gallery dedicated to championing emerging artists. The gallery is known for hosting thought-provoking exhibitions that not only highlight the artists' work but also enrich the cultural diversity of Central Ohio.

The group assisted ROY G BIV in developing and launching an artist residency program specifically for emerging BIPOC artists. Their efforts established a sustainable framework with long-term impact, creating opportunities for both up-and-coming BIPOC artists and Columbus youth. In doing so, they paved a small but significant path for individuals from historically marginalized communities to thrive in the arts.

The Community Impact Project not only made a difference for ROY G BIV and the community, it also left a lasting impression on Signature Program participants Kylie Whitman and Shey Jin. Both now serve on the board of ROY G BIV, actively advancing the organization's mission and shaping the future of its ever-evolving artist residency program. "The entire experience opened our eyes and inspired us to make a more meaningful, lasting impact," says Shey. Kylie adds, "We're helping to break down barriers for artists and creating a welcoming space to appreciate their work. It's incredibly fulfilling."

"The entire experience opened our eyes and inspired us to make a more meaningful, lasting impact."

Creating Connections and Learning to Lead: Raghava's COLA Story.



Raghava Deivanaathan (COLA '24) is a junior at Dublin Jerome High School. His school activities and societies include Speech and Debate, Model UN, Investment Club, and FBLA. He is also an AAU Volleyball National Champion. Raghava is highly motivated, competitive, and he's always looking for new growth opportunities. This desire for growth, along with a little nudge from his mom, led him to participate in Leadership Columbus' Central Ohio Leadership Academy (COLA), a tuition-free, high-impact weeklong leadership development experience designed for rising high school juniors and seniors throughout Central Ohio.

“The collaborative activities really bring the lessons to life in a way that sticks with you.”

With a curriculum centered on collaboration, personal growth, and purpose-driven leadership, the program offered even more than Raghava anticipated. “It was way more hands-on than I expected,” he shares. “The collaborative activities really bring the lessons to life in a way that sticks with you. And I connected very quickly with my cohort.” Those new connections and the valuable lessons he learned about taking initiative and learning to speak up paid off quickly, securing a valuable job shadowing opportunity at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. “I would definitely recommend the COLA experience,” he says. “It changes the way you approach problem-solving. The development of soft skills, time management skills, making connections...it's all so beneficial.”



Celebrating 50 Years of Impact. Paving the Way for 50 More.

For 30 years, Laurie Stein Marsh served as Executive Director of Leadership Columbus, spearheading three decades of change and evolution for the organization. A pivotal part of that evolution was shifting the organization's teaching approach from traditional classroom learning to a more immersive, hands-on experience. This new approach involved visiting communities, eating in soup kitchens, allowing aspiring leaders to not only learn about their communities, but to feel their struggles and pain points in a very personal way. Laurie passionately explains, "It's more than cognitively understanding the issues in the community. It's about feeling them." This approach ushered in a new, profound level of empathy and commitment to change from program participants.

One of those participants was Kate Bauer, a 2017 graduate of the organization's renowned Signature Program, who now takes the helm as the new Executive Director of Leadership Columbus.

Kate's expertise in leadership development and community engagement strategy, along with her love for the organization, make her a perfect fit. "For me, it wasn't 'I could do this job', it was 'I would love to do this job'," she says enthusiastically. Her goal is to build on the organization's legacy of engaged, real-world leadership development, emphasizing the vital role of nonprofits in the community, and nurturing the next generation of passionate leaders who truly understand, as she says, "A city is not its buildings or its jobs. A city is its people."

"It's more than cognitively understanding the issues in the community. It's about feeling them."



Signature Program Health & Human Services Program Day



COLA Leadership Luncheon



Central Ohio Leadership Academy



Central Ohio Leadership Academy Graduation



Signature Program Government Program Day



50th Anniversary Celebration



Kelsey Ellingsen, Signature Program-Class Speaker



50th Anniversary Celebration

CHEERS TO 50 YEARS



The Leadership Columbus 50th Anniversary Celebration at The Junto Hotel was an unforgettable evening filled with joy, connection, and inspiration. Alumni, community leaders, and supporters gathered to honor five decades of impact and reflect on the incredible legacy of Leadership Columbus. The room buzzed with excitement as old friends reunited, new connections were made, and shared memories brought smiles all around.

A highlight of the evening was the induction of Laurie Stein Marsh into the Leadership Columbus Hall of Fame. Laurie's nearly 30 years of unwavering dedication and service to the organization left a lasting impact not only on Leadership Columbus but on the countless individuals and communities she has touched throughout her career. Seeing Laurie surrounded by friends, peers, and alumni whose lives she impacted as she accepted this honor was a truly inspiring moment.





The Junto Hotel provided a stunning backdrop for the event, with its modern and welcoming ambiance setting the tone for an evening of camaraderie and celebration. Guests enjoyed delicious food, uplifting stories, and plenty of laughter as they reflected on the profound impact Leadership Columbus has had on the city over the years. It was an unforgettable evening that celebrated the past, honored the present, and inspired everyone for the future.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the sponsors, supporters, and volunteers who made this milestone event possible. Your generosity and dedication ensured the evening was a resounding success, and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to Leadership Columbus and its mission to develop, connect, and inspire diverse leaders who serve as catalysts in building a strong and vibrant community.

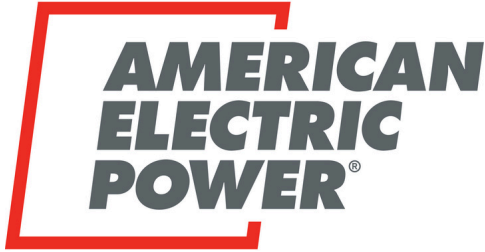


50th Anniversary Celebration Host Committee

Christie Angel | Cathy Blackford | Brad Campbell
Neal Cavanaugh & Roger Coulton | Josh Corna | Mike & Sharon Curtin
Mary Jo Hudson | Melissa Ingwersen | Janet E. Jackson
Tom & Mary Katzenmeyer | Jeff & Cathy Lyttle | Eddie & Lindsey Pauline
Susan Rector | Mark & Sue Real | Randy Schoedinger | Roger Sugarman

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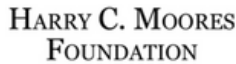


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Jennifer Peterson | Susan Rector | Mark & Sue Real | Randy Schoedinger
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\$500 to \$1,499

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Jamie Greene | Dale Heydlauff | Dianne Radigan | Deanna Stewart

Up to \$499

Laurie Aquilina | Erika Gable | Rob Leis | Michael Salvadore | Kevin Seymour



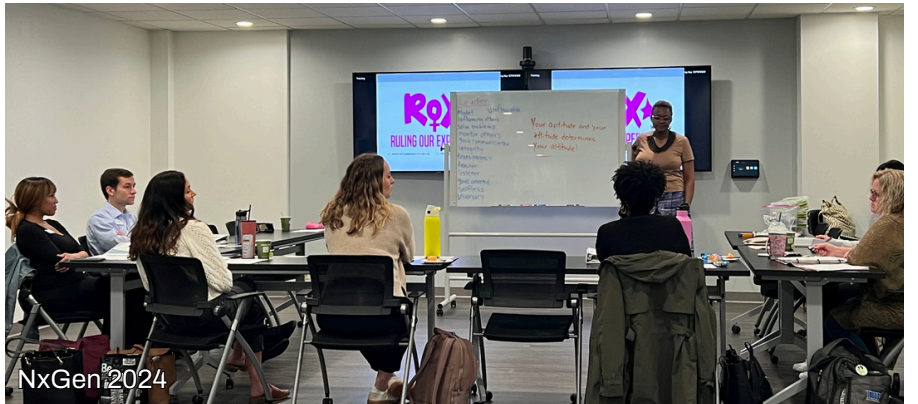
50th Anniversary Celebration



Signature Program Quality of Life Program Day



Laurie Stein Marsh inducted into the Leadership Columbus Hall of Fame



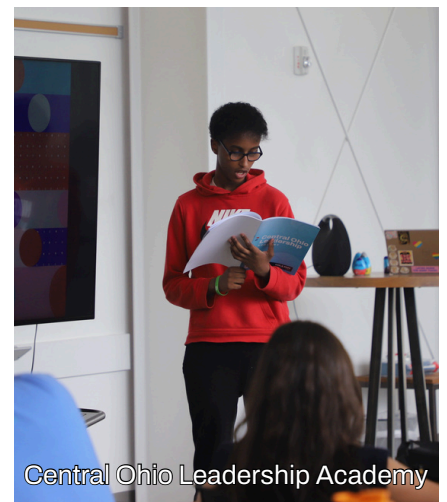
NxGen 2024



Columbus City Council Resolution honoring 50 years of Leadership Columbus



Central Ohio Leadership Academy Graduation



Central Ohio Leadership Academy