

Leading Edge Institute



LEADING EDGE

Volume 1, Issue 3

CHANGING THE FACE OF LEADERSHIP IN ALABAMA

Fall 2009

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A Word from the Interim Executive Director



Dr. Suzanne
Martin
Interim ED

Change is the only constant, and that's a good thing for the Leading Edge Institute. If you live on the EDGE, more often than not, you are creating change not just reacting to it. The news in this volume reflects change on several levels...within LEI, as a byproduct of alumni efforts, and efforts to create change that will grow and sustain our organization through these turbulent economic times.

In July, we said good bye to Bonycle Thornton, former Program Coordinator. From all we've heard, Bonycle loves living into her dream of going to law school. We celebrate her sense of calling and we look forward to the day she returns home to Alabama and LEI. The flip side of letting Bonycle is welcoming a new staff member, Jilleyn Foley and three new Board members, Kathryn Dietrich, Jeris Burns, and Donna Gerold in September.

Pursuing change means joining a conversation with like-minded local non profits to explore how we can work smarter by working together. Pursuing change involves identifying the current needs of our alumni. Pursuing change means producing a DVD to tell our story, preparing web lessons on personal finance, and developing a set of best practices for the establishment of a statewide network of community councils.

This summer I had a chance to eat my own words, which, now that I think about it would not qualify as a change, but the story reflects changes in the relationship between LEI and our alumni. Sabrina Ussery, a self-described "proud LEI Class VIII graduate" sent me an email that started, "I remember you telling us as a class that if we ever needed anything, to think of LEI as a network of opportunity, which is why I'm coming to you first for a favor." I said that? If you are curious about what kind of favor Sabrina wanted, keep reading.

A couple of weeks prior to Sabrina's email I received a request from a Class 5 graduate and Advisory Council member Melanie Ervin. Melanie was the volunteer accountant for a new nonprofit and she asked for our support, assuming we would want to support something she believed in. We did.

These two stories are just the tip of the iceberg of what we believe many LEI alumni are doing – using their gifts to work for positive change in their communities. We expect to uncover more of these great stories through the alumni phone survey. As you read each story in this newsletter, I hope you'll experience once again, or for the very first time, a connection with the Leading Edge, a connection so deep that the story of one becomes the story of us all.



"...being a part of LEI has helped me embrace who I am. Because of Leading Edge I understand who I am, my purpose in life, and how to get started down that path. It's amazing how you can be confused and within a week find so many answers to the questions you've been asking yourself for years."

Kathryn Bowers, UAB

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Welcome New Staff!

Jilley Foley recently joined LEI to help with marketing, communication, fundraising and other administrative processes. We “share” Jilley with Alabama Possible where she is currently employed part-time. Jilley’s positive spirit, energy, and sharp mind have already added value to the Leading Edge Institute!

Is your Alma Mater not listed? Give us a call at 205.879.9045 and let’s see if we can get them for Class X!



Leading Edge Institute

From the Board Chair, Teresa Zuniga Odom

People learn to lead because they care about something. These words, spoken by Charlotte Burch, Founder of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, take on a whole new meaning in these tough economic times. At Leading Edge Institute (LEI), we’ve seen our board, our alumni, our community councils and our community partners come together to ensure that our organization thrives in these difficult and challenging times. In addition, Dr. Suzanne Martin who has served as LEI Program Director since 2005 has agreed to take on the added responsibilities of Interim Executive Director. And if you were to ask “why” they do this, the immediate answer is because they care about LEI and have witnessed the impact this organization has had on our alumni and our state.

One of the most exciting goals we’ve set for our organization this year has been to build our alumni network. The call went out this summer to LEI’s nine classes and the response has been tremendous. LEI alumni are energetic, eager and equipped to help this organization move our state forward and to encourage the upcoming classes to do the same. This is exactly the energy we need to create the change we

all desire in Alabama! I look forward to bringing you more information about our amazing alumni in future newsletters.

Our promotional DVD is complete and ready to roll! It comes with a warning too: “If you’re not living on the edge, you’re taking up too much room.” The DVD features many of our organization’s women telling the LEI story. I can’t wait for you to see it and to hear what you think! And last but not least, we are planning our 10th Anniversary Summit for early 2010. This will be a celebration of our alumni and an opportunity for all our women - from board members to community council members - to gather and celebrate the uniqueness of LEI and make sure our message is spread to all corners of our state. Look for more information about the Summit in the next few weeks.

Meanwhile, I hope you will enjoy this issue of our newsletter and the emphasis on financial literacy. At this critical time in all our lives, this information is more important than ever.

Welcome New Board Members

Kathryn Dietrich, Class I is an attorney with Bradley, Arant, Boulton and Cummings. Kathryn also serves on the Committee of 25 for Girls, Inc., is a member of the Women’s Section of the Birmingham Bar, a junior patron of the Birmingham Museum of Art, and on the Defense Lawyer’s Research Institute. Kathryn is the Class Captain for Class I.

Jeris Burns, Class IV is a partner with Burns, Jones and LeCompte Financial Advisors joined the Leading Edge Board of Directors. Jeris serves on the Norton Advisory Board for the Hess Center for Leadership Studies at Birmingham-Southern College, is the State Chair of Financial Literacy for AAUW, and a member of the Birmingham Rota-Club.

Donna Gerold is an Account Executive with Design Display an exhibit and design house specializing in trade show exhibits and permanent installations in corporate environments, universities and museums. Donna was on the Advisory Council and will now serve as the Chair for the 10th Anniversary Celebration.

Women and Wealth: The focus of our inaugural web lessons

The women of Leading Edge are learners and leaders, hungry for knowledge to meet today’s challenges. In order to meet the ongoing needs of our women we are developing web lessons that will provide knowledge and skills relevant to their daily work and service. Web lessons will cover topics related to women and wealth, effective communica-

tion, and establishing mentoring relationships. Future web lessons will address relevant social issues that disproportionately affect the status of women and children such as constitutional reform and universal pre-K.

“How to Manage Your Money” and “Using Credit Wisely” are the titles of the first two web lessons. They

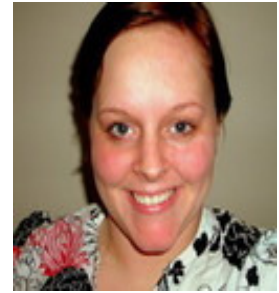
feature Amber Renda, an Advisory Council member and the branch manager at a local RBC bank. Amber is committed to empowering young women so that they can build wealth, become self-reliant, and avoid common money traps.

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Alumni Creating Change

Sabrina Ussery, Class VIII spoke to seniors at her alma mater, Lanett High School in Chambers County about the possibilities beyond high school graduation. Students at this small, low-income school often cannot afford the fees associated with the ACT, SAT and college applications. Sabrina contacted LEI for financial support so that she could “offer hope” to students who could not afford to take the ACT exam. That hope would be in the form of money for ACT application fees. Sabrina’s sought to inspire students to consider college by sharing her journey from Lanett High School to Jacksonville State University to Georgia Tech where she is pursuing a degree in aerospace engineering. Mrs. Alethea King, school counselor commented, “Sabrina did an excellent job talking to our seniors about setting goals, going to college, paying for college, taking the ACT, and doing well on the ACT.” The Leading Edge sponsored two students and LEI Board members Jenny Smith, Sallie Bryant, and Kathy Boswell sponsored seven students. Sabrina described the experience as “amazing, she felt like her words “resonated” with the students who were surprised that Sabrina faced and overcame the same economic barriers and struggles. “I believe I left with 65 students being more confident in themselves and more motivated than ever before to be everything they have always aspired to be.”

Melanie Ervin, Class V served as the volunteer accountant for the Empowered to Conquer Youth Conference (ETC) held on September 18-19 at Central High School of Coosa County. 175 youth, ages 10-18 attended the inaugural gathering. The conference kicked off with a Friday night concert. Saturday featured sessions such as *The Importance of What You Listen To*, *Living Purposefully*, *Going Against the Odds*, and *Embracing Your God-Given Leadership*. The Leading Edge Institute was one of the community sponsors. The conference leadership team was impressed with the quality discussion and the kinds of commitments to positive change made by many participants. Brittany Leonard, conference founder concluded that ETC “proved to be a conference that will be anticipated for years to come.”



Sabrina Ussery
Class VIII



Melanie Ervin
Class V



SAVE THE DATE

*A Celebration of
Ten Years of Living on
the Edge*

**Summit and Gala
March 5-6, 2010**



“Leading Edge helped me find my strengths and showed me how to use those to help me be an effective leader.”

Olivia Bailey, Class IX

Mission:

To inspire, prepare and empower young women of Alabama to lead our state to a more equitable and prosperous future.

Leading Edge Alumni Phone Survey

“Hello...may I have a few minutes of your time?” Have you ever picked up the phone and hear that? For many of us, our response is “No, you may not...I don’t even know you.” We assume that whoever it is wants money that we don’t have and if not, will waste our time. Rest assured, that won’t be the case with the Leading Edge Alumni Phone Survey.

This fall ten LEI alumni serving as Class Captains for classes 1 – 7 will be calling and reconnecting with the members of their respective Leading Edge class to gather all sorts of great information about our alumni and what matters to them. The survey seeks three types of information – alumni lifestyle and current personal and professional development

needs; the impact of their Leading Edge experience; and demographic data. This data will directly impact the plans for the 10th Anniversary weekend, help us connect our alumni with one another, and provide a clearer picture of our statewide presence and collective impact. We are thankful to our captains who want to reach out in such a personal way.

Would you like to receive our e-newsletter?
Just send your e-mail address to suz@leadingedgeinst.org or sign-up on our website!



LEADING EDGE

Changing the Face of Leadership in Alabama

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About Us

Leading Edge Institute is a dynamic leadership development program for college women across the state of Alabama. We bring collegiate women together to help develop their leadership skills, expose them to critical issues facing Alabama and inspire them to make a difference in the state.

Thank-You

Leading Edge Institute operates due to generous donations from the following sponsors:

Alabama Civil Justice Foundation * Alabama Federation of Republican Women * Alabama Power Company * Alabama Power Foundation * Alabama Power/East Alabama * Alpha Kappa Alpha * B.R. Williams Trucking, Inc. * BAE Systems * Birmingham Civil Rights Institute * Blue Cross Blue Shield Caring Foundation * Bradley Arant Rose & White * C. Eugene Ireland Foundation * Cedarholm -Eugenias * Central Alabama Community Foundation * Clarus Consulting Group * Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham * Daniel Foundation * Energen/Alagasco * ERA King * Faith Chapel * Gadsden Regional Medical Center * Hackney Foundation * Hess Foundation * Honda Manufacturing of Alabama * Lowe-Devan * McCartney Construction * Noble Bank * Protective Life Foundation * Regency Pointe * Regions Bank * San Francisco Foundation * Southern Company * Southern Nuclear Operating Company * Southern Progress * Southwood Partners * The Development Group * Trinity Medical Center * Vulcan Materials * Wachovia Bank/East Alabama * Wachovia Foundation * Wal-Mart * Webb Concrete * Westinghouse * White Arnold & Dowd * Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham * YMCA * and many individuals

FREE FINANCIAL ADVICE, \$100 FOR LEI

Have we got a deal for each one of you—an opportunity to feel good about your financial future and to give financial support to the Leading Edge Institute at the same time.

Jeris Burns, Class IV, and a financial advisor with Burns, Jones & LeCompte, a financial advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc., is giving you an opportunity to show your support for LEI by contributing \$100 when you attend a complimentary initial meeting.

Whether you're new to financial planning or are an experienced investor, taking the opportunity to meet with Jeris may help you feel more confident about your financial decisions, goals and plans. Just for attending the complimentary meeting, Leading Edge will receive a \$100 donation.

Ameriprise Financial is a financial services and planning company built on a heritage of more than 110 years. Ameriprise Financial focuses on creating personalized financial plans, cultivating on-going relationships, and helping clients take steps toward their financial future.

How does a complimentary meeting work? It's simple. The first meeting with Jeris is a no-pressure get-to-know-you session. During this meeting you'll review your financial situation and be introduced to the unique and collaborative Dream > Plan > Track >® approach to financial planning developed by Ameriprise Financial.

To find out more or to schedule your complimentary initial meeting contact Jeris Burns at 205.909.3123 or jeris.m.burns@ampf.com. Jeris' website is www.ameripriseadvisors.com/Jeris.m.burns.

The initial consultation provides an overview of financial planning concepts. You will not receive written analysis and/or recommendations. The Ameriprise Financial advisor will help you determine if these financial planning services are right for you. You should make investment decisions based on your investment objectives, risk tolerance and financial portion and not on the basis of this offer.

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