

A Brief History of Leadership Roane County

In 1983 Ken Yager created the Roane Technology Task Force. Its 12 members were charged to make recommendations for progressive change in Roane County. The Task Force report was completed in 1984 and endorsed, in total, by the Roane County Chamber of Commerce.

One suggestion included in the Task Force report was to explore the possibility of developing a Leadership Program. Louise Greene, a member of the Task Force, asked a fellow coworker at Roane State Community College, Paul Goldberg, to work with her to develop a proposal to present to the Roane County Chamber of Commerce. Upon receipt of the proposal, the Chamber appointed a Leadership Steering Committee consisting of Louise Green, Paul Goldberg, Larry Byrkit (CEO of what was then the Bank of Roane County), Hank Cooper (Chairman of the Chamber), Joel Pearman (an Attorney at Law), and Ken Beauchamp (the former CFO of Chamberlain Memorial Hospital) to create what would eventually be known as Leadership Roane County. The Committee completed its job by creating a leadership program that would be cosponsored from its inception by both Roane State Community College and the Roane County Chamber of Commerce. A program that would enroll 15 to 20 persons each year to learn about issues, to develop an esprit de corps with fellow participants and to consider seriously how we could use our resources to enhance the lives of our fellow citizens.

The basic premise of Leadership Roane County was to be that the future of our County is not a vast unknown over which we have no control, but rather it is a product of how community leaders manage circumstances and choices. It was understood that responsible, well-informed leaders, armed with a broadened perspective, could influence the course of events. With these thoughts in mind, the first Leadership Class was started and completed in 1985.

The program objectives continue to be the same even after 15 years. They are:

1. To develop a common understanding among leaders of the broad issues facing the county.
2. To create a relaxed, neutral environment for problem solving.
3. To provide opportunity and an informational base for thoughtful study relating to some of the compelling concerns of Roane Countians.
4. To create a forum in which significant dialogue can develop between present leaders and future leaders.
5. To develop a sense of total community among the various constituencies in Roane County.
6. To form a network of committed and trained leaders who can collectively encourage and support each other in community service.

The Leadership Roane County program has continued to offer classes in a similar format for the last 15 years. The current Class is no exception. Generally, class components spread across eight months and include eight seminars (usually from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) which are built around such topics as leadership skills, city and state government, economic and industrial development, quality of life/environment, health

care, education, and the law. Every class includes discussions with area and/or state leaders in the topic under discussion. Individual classes often include tours of various local business, local government facilities and community educational facilities. A trip to Nashville is always included so participants can visit our political leaders & view our political system in operation. The class always completes one or more Study Group Projects which, like Character Counts!, often have a lasting impact on the community. Then, usually in April, the classes conclude with a graduation ceremony.

Hopefully, Leadership Roane County will continue to provide a valuable service for years to come through its ability to develop a cadre of informed leaders who will be active in community life and who will support a volunteer program dedicated to the positive growth of Roane County.