



NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER

Neighborhood Leadership Institute *Greater Cleveland's Connection to Neighborhood Leadership and Community Engagement*

Spring 2005
Volume I, Issue 1

NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP CLEVELAND CLASS 21 BEGINS

The twenty-first class of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland (NLC) began in January with a new group of 36 grassroots leaders recruited from neighborhoods throughout Greater Cleveland. More than 600 people have taken part in the program since its inception in 1994.

The 13-week program includes class sessions on leadership topics ranging from setting personal goals to building community consensus. A strong roster of guest speakers—including researchers, city and county officials, and previous graduates of NLC—lend their perspectives to the topics being studied.

Though the curriculum has experienced minor changes over the past decade, the program's most popular features remain: an opening two-day retreat, group projects, and neighborhood tours.

Class 21's group projects focus on a number of areas critical to the future of Greater Cleveland: jobs, education, neighborhood safety, affordable housing, and race relations. Previous graduates of NLC have been enlisted to provide assistance with the projects.

NLC is offered through a partnership between the Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI) and the Center for



Photo by Jeffery Ivey, Class 21

Neighborhood Development at Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs. NLI handles the recruitment and screening of applicants and pays Cleveland State to provide meals and administrative support. Cleveland State donates classroom space and the time of Professor Phil Star, who co-facilitates the class with NLI's Jacquie Gillion. Curriculum development is a joint effort guided by feedback from previous class participants.

Funding for NLC is currently provided by Cleveland City Council, The Cleveland Foundation, and United Way Services of Greater Cleveland.



Photo by Jeffery Ivey, Class 21

The graduation ceremony for Class 21 is slated for Thursday, April 28, 2005 at 7 p.m. If you would like to attend, please contact NLI at (216) 812-8700.

Grassroots Leadership



Don Slocum
Executive Director

Leadership Link

As many of you know, I had the good fortune to receive a Kellogg Fellowship several years ago. Through the fellowship, I had wonderful opportunities to travel, including trips to Zimbabwe and Ecuador. Those experiences taught me that ordinary people all over the world are facing similar challenges in trying to build and maintain their local communities.

I was reminded of those experiences when I read "The New Amazon," an article in the January/February edition of *Orion Magazine*. It's an inspiring story of the Sarayacu people of Ecuador, who have come together as a community to protect their ecosystem and to preserve their traditional way of life.

You can stop by the office and borrow my copy, or you can read an abridged copy online at <http://www.oriononline.org/pages/om/05-1om/Handler.html>.

GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP: IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE AND COMMON SENSE

Dear Neighbor,

When we started Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland (NLC) back in 1994, we did so with the goal of developing and supporting "grassroots neighborhood leaders." Over the past decade more than 600 such leaders have graduated from NLC.

Why do we focus on grassroots neighborhood leaders? First, there's the issue of justice. Ordinary citizens have the right to participate in decisions that affect the quality of life in their neighborhoods. As citizens in a democratic society, they should expect no less.

Second, there's the issue of common sense. The people who live and work in a neighborhood know that neighborhood better than anyone else. They know the history, the culture, and the assets of the neighborhood. (Yes, the assets—even the most "disadvantaged" neighborhood has them.)

Yet how many times have we seen developers, governmental bodies, and social service professionals make grand plans for improving communities without consulting the people who live in

those communities? Sure it's unjust—but it's also impractical. Neighborhood history is disregarded. Collective wisdom is ignored. And community assets remain untapped. It's no wonder that "professional" solutions imposed on communities from the outside fail time and time again.

As we begin the twenty-first class of NLC, we need to re-commit ourselves to justice and common sense. Justice demands that grassroots leaders have access to the information and the resources that ordinary citizens need to participate in democratic decision-making.

Common sense demands collaboration between neighborhood residents and the institutions that serve them. Neighborhood improvement strategies should build upon a neighborhood's assets—the greatest of which are the collective skills, wisdom, and aspirations of the people who live there.

Each new class of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland humbles and inspires me. They step forward to participate, to learn, and to lead.

Their commitment renews my faith in the power and the promise of democracy.

Warmest regards,

Don

The Neighborhood Leadership Institute exists to develop grassroots leadership that will contribute to rebuilding the bonds of community and improving the quality of life for neighborhood residents throughout the Greater Cleveland area.

Meet NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP CLEVELAND Class 21

They are men and women, city residents and suburbanites, East Siders and West Siders. They come from 9 different municipalities and from 14 different Cleveland neighborhoods.

They are corporate employees and social workers. They are unemployed. They are poets, ministers, and entrepreneurs. They are ex-offenders. They are high school drop-outs and law school graduates. They range in age from 26 to 71.

The twenty-first class of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland (NLC) continues the tradition of diversity that has been the program's hallmark since its inception in 1994. No other leadership program in Greater Cleveland brings together such a wide range of people.

Despite their differences, the class members share several important characteristics, including a passionate commitment to their communities and a demonstrated willingness to take on responsibility.

Markietta Stevenson (NLC Class 11), who chairs the program's Recruitment and Screening Committee, points out, "Being a leader doesn't necessarily mean you have to be the head of something. You have to be a doer—to be able to get things done."

You also have to be open-minded, Stevenson emphasizes: "If you go in with a closed mind or are not open to other people's ideas, you won't learn."



Photo by Jeffery Ivey, Class 21

No one understands that lesson better than previous NLC graduates. That's why they conduct the interviews of applicants. As Stevenson puts it, "It's very hard to articulate the bonding that you experience in your class. If you haven't experienced that, you just don't get it."

That's just the kind of experience that Class 21 member Gina Washington is seeking. Says Washington, a resident of Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood, "I love the fact that Cleveland is loaded with so much history and untapped energy. We are in a perfect position to be greater than we are if we learn from our mistakes and inspire people to use their talents here in Cleveland."

For the twenty-first time since 1994, Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland is tapping that energy for the good of Greater Cleveland's neighborhoods. When Class 21 graduates on April 28, they will join the previous NLC graduates in a growing network of grassroots leaders who are working to improve the quality of life in their communities.



Photo by Jeffery Ivey, Class 21

"It's very hard to articulate the bonding that you experience in your class. If you haven't experienced that, you just don't get it."

"If you go in with a closed mind or are not open to other people's ideas, you won't learn."

NLC Class 22 is scheduled for September. Planning will begin this spring. NLC graduates are needed to:

- recruit and interview applicants
- review the NLC curriculum
- make presentations to the class
- help with group projects

If you are interested in helping in any of these areas, please contact NLI at (216) 812-8700.

What's Inside

Neighborhood Leader

- NLC Class 21 Begins
- Meet Class 21
- Grassroots Leadership

SUPPORT FOR NLI IS PROVIDED BY:

CITY OF CLEVELAND
CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL
EVA L. & JOSEPH M. BRUENING FOUNDATION
KNOWLEDGEWORKS FOUNDATION
THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION
UNITED WAY SERVICES OF GREATER CLEVELAND

The 2004-05 program year for Schools As Neighborhood Resources (SNR) is wrapping up. SNR features recreational and educational programming at six Cleveland Municipal School District sites. The program is open three nights a week from October through April. This year's program included a new tutoring service organized by NLC graduate Michael Matthews (Class 19). Several NLC graduates served as tutors. A special summer edition of SNR will operate at Collinwood High School beginning in June. For more information, call Jason Lewis at NLI.

More than 100 people attended NLI's second annual holiday gathering at Mather Mansion in December. NLI's next alumni gathering is tentatively scheduled for this summer. Graduates interested in volunteering to work on the event should call Jacquie Gillon at NLI.

Neighborhood Leadership Institute
1761 East 30th Street, Suite 200
Cleveland, OH 44114

Phone: (216) 812-8700

Fax: (216) 812-8709

Email: lee@nli.intranets.com

Web: www.nli.intranets.com