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REVAMPED ‘LEADERSHIP FAYETTE’ LAUNCHES FIRST CLASS, BRINGS TOGETHER DIVERSE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Uniontown, PA – A leadership development program aimed at helping members of the Fayette County business community develop and enhance their potential has existed in some form for decades.

The Fayette Chamber of Commerce started Leadership Fayette back in 2000, striving to empower and encourage a diverse group of existing and emerging leaders committed to serving Fayette County.

“The initial program ran through several classes, and then another local organization offered something similar, so we put the original program on hiatus” Fayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Muriel Nuttall said.

A few years later, Fay-Penn Economic Development Council headed up its version of a program called Fayette Leaders Academy. This year, both joined together and with partner Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus, have rebranded under its former name, Leadership Fayette.

The newly revamped Leadership Fayette launched its first class in late August with a dinner and networking session held at the Fayette LaunchBox in the University Business Park.

“The partnership of the Fayette Chamber of Commerce, Fay-Penn Economic Development Council and Penn State Fayette is key to the implementation of Leadership Fayette. The broad scope and talents of these organizations have shaped a premier leadership development opportunity for Fayette County citizens,” Penn State Fayette Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Charles Patrick said. “We all already have strong connections to business and industry in the region. These connections guided our program planning for Leadership Fayette and will strengthen our efforts to provide an exceptional experience for participants. We’re excited about the future of this program.”

Local participants represent a range of organizations, such as Columbia Gas, Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, East End United Community Center, Fay-Penn Economic Development Council, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, Ford Office Technologies, Harmony Acres Farm, Hilton Farms, Penn State Fayette, Somerset Trust Company, and WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital.

Nuttall said the class, which will run through April, originally was limited to 15 but was expanded to include even more diversity.

“We have 17 participants in this year’s program from a number of different business backgrounds,” said Nuttall. “It’s not focused on one specific industry because Fayette County is wonderfully diverse.”

Fay-Penn Executive Director Laura Kurtz Kuhns said the significance of the program’s goal can’t be overstated.

"Fostering leadership in Fayette County is so vitally important for the continued success of our businesses," she said. "It's a great way for employers to recognize potential in their staff members and invest in them as future leaders of their organizations."

Among the new class of Leadership Fayette participants is Jennifer Orr who, along with her husband Jeff, owns and operates family farm Harmony Acres in Belle Vernon.

"Initially, I'm really excited," Orr said. "There's a really great group of people in there."

Orr said joining the program was an opportunity she couldn't ignore. She is enthusiastic about networking possibilities and to learn more about her own leadership and entrepreneurial style.

"I never got some of these opportunities when I worked in the corporate world," she said. "I want to make sure to take advantage of this chance now. I'm excited to see the organizing partners working together to provide this opportunity for local businesses and entrepreneurs like me."

Fay-Penn Business and Community Development Coordinator Lori Scott said. "This program is a great way to expose up and coming business leaders to everything wonderful Fayette County has to offer, as well as hone their leadership skills."

Fay-Penn Workforce and Business Service Manager Misty Hiltabidel said Fayette County's success depends in part on great leadership.

"It's exciting to see so many different industry sectors come together to learn more about themselves and how their skills will translate into a leadership role within their careers. Fayette County can't fully thrive unless all businesses are cultivating great leaders, and I believe that Leadership Fayette will prove that we as a county are on track for a bright future," she said.

As part of their personal and professional development, participants in Leadership Fayette have been given copies of "Strengths Based Leadership" by Gallup. Drawing on a landmark study of more than a million work teams and decades of research, the book provides insights into the most effective leadership practices. It focuses on the importance of knowing and leveraging individual strengths, assembling the right team, and understanding followers' needs. With firsthand accounts from some of history's most successful leaders, "Strengths Based Leadership" serves as a valuable resource, aligning with the core goals of Leadership Fayette to foster growth and innovation within the region's diverse organizations.

In addition, Leadership Fayette participants can expect tours of local businesses, interactive workshops, and discussions facilitated by seasoned professionals on topics like branding, business ethics and corporate culture.

"It's an exciting time for our county," said Nuttall. "We are poised for continued growth – especially within our local business community – and we can't wait to see how these leaders will impact Fayette."

To learn more about Leadership Fayette, visit www.leadershipfayette.org or follow them on Facebook.

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