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GL Homes Senior Director of Community Relations Sarah Alsofrom, GL Homes President Misha Ezratti and Leadership Florida President and CEO Wendy Spencer. Photo taken at the Palm Beach Yacht Club in West Palm Beach aboard the Barton & Gray Mariner's Club 40' Hinckley. [TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]

LEADING THE WAY

Leadership Florida® educates, inspires and engages Florida's best and brightest

Now celebrating its 40th anniversary, the community-focused organization has more than 3,100 graduates of its innovative training programs.

By Steve Dorfman • Notables Staff Writer

Some leaders are born that way.

Others learn to lead. But perhaps the best leaders are the ones who come by their leadership skills via both routes.

And no doubt that's why, in 1982, the Florida Chamber of Commerce created Leadership Florida® — an organization with a unique mission: to continually discover and convene committed people while

helping enhance and recharge their leadership skills by introducing them to other similarly motivated people from whom they can draw knowledge and inspiration.

The organization acts as a force multiplier for our state's best, brightest and most motivated business and community leaders.

Every year, Leadership Florida names its Florida

See LEADERSHIP, 2D



West Palm Beach Mayor Keith James, Michelle McGovern and Dennis Grady



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LEADERSHIP

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Impact Award recipient. The award recognizes a business or nonprofit organization that has created a specific body of work or project whose impact is currently transforming the future of its region or beyond and has the potential to transform Florida as a whole.

In 2021, GL Homes was the recipient of the award – an honor for which GL Homes President Misha Ezratti is justifiably proud.

“Our corporate philosophy is to make a difference in the communities where we live and work,” he said. “As a home builder with deep roots in Florida, we understand the importance of a strong economy, an educated workforce, and an engaged community. GL Homes knows the success of our state depends on a strong, unified voice of leaders, and that’s exactly what Leadership Florida brings to the table.”

Leadership Florida offers training programs to help people both improve their leadership skills and to increase the breadth of their professional networks.

Being selected to participate in Leadership Florida is an honor for participants, who can apply to be in one of three 10-month-long class programs – Cornerstone, Connect or Education – each of which has its specific area of concentration.

A fourth program – Executive – is by invitation only.

Those who are accepted into the training programs are given the opportunity to travel the state to learn about issues critical to Florida while also refining their leadership skills through sessions with recognized experts. They’re also exposed to relevant information on Florida’s history, demography, diversities, challenges and opportunities.

Sarah Alsofrom, Senior Director of Community Relations for GL Homes, is a graduate of the Cornerstone program. Her business responsibilities take her all over the state but she knows that no matter where her travels take her, she can always count on one thing – thanks to her longtime association with Leadership Florida®: “I always have a friend I can call upon in the Leadership Florida family.”

Indeed, for Leadership Florida



Kevin and Sarah Elwell with Ken Tuma

[TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY]



Sari Vatske, Noel Martinez and Morgana Nieves



Sophia Nelson and Alexcia Cox

graduates, course completion is not the end of their journey with the organization – but rather just the beginning. Ideally, the relationships forged among Leadership Florida grads evolve over the years and last a professional lifetime.

Of course, Leadership Florida understands that in a state as large and diverse as Florida, a one-size-fits-all approach to training its current and future leaders is not the best path forward.

Thus, it takes a more holistic view of the conditions and challenges facing communities and offers a continuum for expanding the impact of community leaders across the state.

Thanks to Leadership Florida’s approach, Florida’s some 21 million residents can rest assured that many of its leaders are dedicated to improving every day.