



LEADERSHIP FLORIDA®

e-Cast
September 2023

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In the aftermath of Hurricane Idalia, Verizon is contributing \$50,000 to aid the recovery and relief efforts in the impacted areas of Florida and Georgia. [Click here](#) to learn more.



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Greetings Leadership Florida Members,

It's Class Season! That's right, our three new Class Programs which include Cornerstone (over 40 years of age), Connect (25-39 years of age), and Education (Education sector professionals of all ages) will experience their very first Leadership Florida Class session in the next two months.

Connect and Education will enjoy the beauty and serenity of the Mission Inn Resort and Cornerstone will experience a bit of "old Florida" at the River Ranch Resort which will include a prize-winning Rodeo! Some of the Class members will even stay overnight in teepees!

Do you remember your first Class Session? I remember mine as if it were yesterday. It was at the 4-H "camp" in central Florida. I believe we were the last Class to stay there. 😊

The beginning of fall is also the time when the annual dues requests are sent to you. Thank you in advance for renewing your dues. If you want to forgo paying dues for the rest of your life, then become a Lifetime Member! See more details [here](#). You would join the other 516 Lifetime Members who enjoy all of the benefits of this membership while assisting Leadership Florida in financially sustaining our future.

Look for an announcement soon for an event in your Region to meet the new Class members from your Region! These events will take place in October, November, or early December. Please attend your Region's New Member event and welcome all of these wonderful new members to our Leadership Florida family!

Warmest regards,



Wendy Spencer
Cornerstone Class 24
President & Chief Executive Officer

LEADERSHIP FLORIDA NEWS & UPDATES

It's Class Session Season!

We can't wait to kick off this year's class sessions! Be sure to mark your calendars for the Welcome Receptions in your Region!

- November 13, 2023 – Tallahassee
- January 10, 2024 – Ft. Lauderdale
- January 31, 2024 – Pensacola
- February 21, 2024 – Orlando
- April 18, 2024 – Miami



JONATHAN SCHWARTZ
CONNECT CLASS 13 CHAIR
IT'SUGAR
Connect Class 7
Gold Coast Region



KAREN ARNOLD ▲
CORNERSTONE CLASS 41 CHAIR
Tampa Bay Chamber
Cornerstone Class 36
West Central Region



BRANDON JOHNSON ▲
EDUCATION CLASS 8 CHAIR
Sarasota County Schools
Education Class 6
Calusa Region



JENNIFER VIGNE ▲
2023-2024 EDUCATION CLASS 8
CO-CHAIR
Education Foundation of Sarasota County
Education Class 4

Connect Class 13



Cornerstone Class 41



Education Class 8



North Carolina Trip Recap

Leadership Florida members and guests had a fabulous “*but for Leadership Florida*” experience in North Carolina this past weekend! During the trip, they enjoyed dinners and tours of beautiful member homes, shopping and hiking in the cool weather, and a high-stakes game of croquet! Thank you to all our wonderful hosts for helping to make the trip a success! Check out our video recap below!



Not only was this a fun trip for all attendees, but it was also an opportunity to promote the [La Florida Society](#) by encouraging our members to name Leadership Florida as a beneficiary in their personal estate plan. 17 members joined the La Florida Society during the trip! It's easy to enroll, and participation begins with a minimum of \$5,000 in assets committed. Will you support Leadership Florida as part of your legacy through a planned gift? [Click here](#) to learn more and join today!



Learn & Lead



What types of professional growth opportunities would you like to see from a Leadership Florida-hosted program? [Click here](#) to give us your ideas!

2024 Viking Cruise to Portugal

Only NINE cabins left! Let's book the rest of the ship!



September 30 - October 9, 2024

The River of Gold itinerary on this cruise includes stops in Lisbon, Porto, Régua, Pinhão, and Barca d'Alva, as well as an excursion in Salamanca, Spain, for an unforgettable tour of the Iberian Peninsula!

[Click here for more information.](#) To book your cruise, please contact Renee Bookout (Cornerstone Class 36) at reneemajestictravel@gmail.com or (850) 293-9776 .

WELCOMING OUR NEW LIFETIME MEMBERS



Thank you for your support of Leadership Florida!



Deborah Curry

Cornerstone Class 32 & Executive Class 7
Chief Financial Officer
Emerald Coast Association of Realtors
Northwest Region



LaShawn Frost

Education Class 5
Principal
Sarasota County Schools
Calusa Region

BECOME A LEADERSHIP FLORIDA

LIFETIME MEMBER!

Joining as a Lifetime Member is a significant commitment that yields great dividends for the future of Leadership Florida - **516** Leadership Florida Lifetime Members agree!

- **No more dues for life!**
- Unlike annual dues, this gift is entirely tax-deductible
- Invitation to a special Lifetime Members-only Reception for you and a guest for all future Annual Meetings
- Special recognition at each Annual Meeting
- Special recognition in our e-Cast newsletter
- Social media posts announcing your new Lifetime Membership
- Future social media shout-outs indicating Lifetime Member status
- Introduction at the next Leadership Florida Board of Directors Meeting
- Prominent listings in the Annual Membership Directory, including name, photo, information and special icon indicating Lifetime Member status
- Early registration opportunities for the Annual Meeting
- Occasional advance notice to "but for Leadership Florida" offerings, including trips and exclusive events
- A special Leadership Florida Lifetime Member lapel pin

Lifetime Membership Gift: \$5,400

Payment plans are available in the amount of \$6,000

Learn more about becoming
a Lifetime Member at
leadfla.com/lifetime



Ready to join?
Scan the QR code
to submit your
Lifetime Member
Pledge Form



Click to learn more about Lifetime Membership!

LIFETIME MEMBER FEATURE



**SOPHIA NELSON**

Cornerstone Class 35

President & CEO

S.A. Nelson & Associates

Lifetime Member

Gulfstream Region

As a Lifetime Member of Leadership Florida, what are some of the ways you enjoy your membership the most?

As a Lifetime Member of Leadership Florida, I have enjoyed an array of exceptional benefits that have enriched my leadership journey. I relish the unparalleled networking opportunities, connecting with a diverse and influential group of leaders across various sectors. I also find great value in the continuous learning experiences and accessing events and workshops that fuel my growth as a dynamic leader. Additionally, engaging in impactful community service projects allows me to make a tangible difference, while interactions with my peers further cultivate my leadership prowess. Through Leadership Florida, I have found a platform that not only empowers me but also offers a unique avenue to contribute meaningfully to my community and the larger society.

What are some examples of how becoming a Lifetime Member has affected your career?

Becoming a Lifetime Member of Leadership Florida has significantly transformed my career trajectory. Through this membership, I've had the privilege of engaging in impactful collaborations with fellow members on special projects that have not only expanded my skill set but also elevated my professional reputation. The close-knit community has enabled me to forge meaningful relationships with influential leaders, fostering opportunities to collaborate on community events that contribute positively to our region. One of the most invaluable aspects has been the mentorship I've received from industry peers who have graciously shared their expertise, guiding me toward best practices and offering insights that have undoubtedly accelerated my growth as a leader. My journey as a Lifetime Member has not only enriched my career but also empowered me to contribute in a profound way to both my field and the community at large.

Have you experienced a “*but for Leadership Florida*” moment, in which the experience could not have happened without Leadership Florida?

Wow... Every moment stands out. Every opportunity that I have participated in has been impactful. These impactful “*but for Leadership Florida*” moments have indelibly shaped my time in Leadership Florida. These unique instances, brought to life, have left an indelible mark. Each moment stands out as a testament to the transformative power of Leadership Florida. The cumulative effect of these moments showcases the profound influence, underscoring how it has consistently empowered me to achieve and contribute in ways that would have been unattainable otherwise.

Do you have a favorite memory from your class year?

This is a loaded question as our class had so many cool "*but for Leadership Florida Class 35*" moments within the moments. I would say the activity that made me say, "I love these humans," was during the Miami session when we were tasked with planning and performing skits in teams. I remember the thrill of witnessing my classmates' incredible creativity, openness, and humor – the skits were genuinely on par with Saturday Night Live's level of funny. This experience solidified that our Class 35, affectionately known as #NoNameNeeded, was not only incredibly close-knit but also a force to be reckoned with. The exercise showcased our exceptional qualities and confirmed that we were united in our journey. I hold a deep affection for my classmates and am proud of the strong connections we've maintained. #BFFsforEver

Thank you, Sophia, for your support and commitment to Florida!



Bank of America thanks Leadership Florida's Lifetime Members

RETIRED MEMBER FEATURE



PAM TRUITT

Cornerstone Class 26
Calusa Region

In general, how are you spending your time during retirement?

Retirement implies finished, which I am not. I call it my "Next Chapter," and I envision subsequent chapters to follow as my interests and focus evolve. I'm involved in a few

nonprofit organizations, work to improve my photography skills and stay physically active, including golf, sporting clays, and pickleball. My husband, Cliff, and I are creating our own American the Beautiful tour, full of explorations and adventures in Silver Sands—an RV that is our little home-away-from-home.

What was the most valuable thing you learned during your career that prepared you for retirement?

I'm driven by purpose, so creating a new purpose(s) in my Next Chapter made the transition a bit easier. That said, I spent 48 years in the workforce and thrived on making a difference. Now I define "making a difference" in

new/different terms that fit my current situation and that feed my purpose drive.

Are you involved in activities to support anyone or any group from a younger generation?

It is a privilege to be a member of the Women's Resource Center Scholarship Committee. In our role, we review applications, provide guidance, and award scholarships to non-traditional female students who are largely one or two generations younger than I am. Scholarships may be used for college, trade/industry schools, or training certifications. These women largely have the same goal: to make a better life for themselves and their children. I was also a non-traditional student at that age. Being involved gives me purpose and helps these women make a difference.

Have you experienced a “*but for Leadership Florida*” moment during your retirement (i.e., something that would not have occurred without your engagement as a Leadership Florida member)?

A few members of Cornerstone Class 26 and more than a few members of my Calusa Family are in their Next Chapter. We are connecting, sharing, and supporting each other in our hopes, dreams, and challenges. "*But for Leadership Florida*" I would likely never have known these fabulous "difference makers!"



AARP proudly recognizes Leadership Florida's Retired Members



If you are retired or planning to retire soon, [please let us know here!](#)



TOM ICARD
Cornerstone Class 2
Vice President/Shareholder
Icard Merrill Cullis Timm Furen &
Ginsburg
Army



When were you enlisted?

I enlisted in June of 1970.

Why did you choose the service branch you joined?

I chose the Army and had my Quartermaster Branch School training at Ft. Lee, Virginia, which was the same post where my father was inducted before serving in the Army Combat Engineers in the Pacific in WWII.

How did your service and experiences affect your personal and/or professional life?

In addition to Branch School, I had brief tours at Ft. Knox, Kentucky and Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. My last active duty tour in 1980 was in an aircraft requisition office in St. Louis. The structure, appreciation of the chain of command, and work as a team to accomplish a mission have all benefitted me both personally and professionally.

What was the most valuable thing you learned during your service?

Although none of my active duty tours were long, I learned personal discipline, leadership skills, the value of camaraderie, and a lifelong appreciation of all those that have served and that continue to serve.



Truist proudly honors Leadership Florida's Veterans and Military Members



If you are a veteran or active duty member and are not listed in our [directory](#), please let us know [here](#).

MOVERS & SHAKERS



Check out the latest news from your fellow Leadership Florida members on our blog [here!](#)



Karen Moore
Cornerstone Class 14
Northwest Region
Lifetime Member

Karen Moore became the founding chair of the Board of Directors for the newly created Tallahassee Collegiate Academy.

[Read more](#)



Sean Pittman
Cornerstone Class 21
Northwest Region
Lifetime Member

Sean Pittman is among the founding members of the school board for the newly created Tallahassee Collegiate Academy.

[Read more](#)



Cathy Atria
Education Class 5
Northeast Region

Cathy Atria began a new position as deputy superintendent of Alachua County Public Schools.

[Read more](#)



Kari-Jo Koshes
Connect Class 12
Calusa Region

Kari-Jo Koshes was named a Furniture Today 2023 40 Under 40 award winner.

[Read more](#)



Kelli O'Leary
Cornerstone Class 40
Northeast Region

Kelli O'Leary was appointed as deputy chief administrative officer for the City of Jacksonville.

[Read more](#)



Jonathan Osborne
Connect Class 11
Gold Coast Region

Jonathan Osborne began a new position as Fort Lauderdale office managing shareholder at Gunster.

[Read more](#)



Cotrenia Hood
Cornerstone Class 40
Southwest Region

Cotrenia Hood was named the interim president and CEO of the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce.

[Read more](#)



Michelle Dennard
Cornerstone Class 39
Northeast Region

Michelle Dennard began a new position with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

[Read more](#)



Aundra Wallace
Cornerstone Class 34
Northeast Region

Aundra Wallace was named to the Cathedral Arts Project board of directors.

[Read more](#)



Nadine Ebri
Education Class 7
Northeast Region
Lifetime Member

Nadine Ebri began a new position as global Minecraft Education community manager at Microsoft.

[Read more](#)



Ellice Martinez
Connect Class 10
Gold Coast Region
Lifetime Member

Ellice Martinez was selected as one of the 2023 Emerald Award Honorees for the Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida.

[Read more](#)



Alan Borden
Connect Class 11
West Central Region

Alan Borden was appointed as a board member of the Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa.

[Read more](#)

HAVE NEWS TO SHARE?

Let us know!



leadfla.com/submit-news

Have news to share? [Click here](#) and let us know! You could be featured in next month's Movers & Shakers blog, our social media channels, and our e-Cast newsletter!

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