

Duck Out Early draws strong support for Leadership Tomorrow program

By Robert Pore

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For nearly 30 years, Leadership Tomorrow has become an important part of Grand Island by providing training to people wanting to be part of the community's leadership structure.

To help underwrite the cost of the Leadership Tomorrow program, which over the last 29 years has trained more than 800 people for leadership roles in the community, each year it holds the Duck Derby fundraiser. This year's Duck Derby will be held Saturday, Aug. 15, at Island Oasis Water Park.

In a prelude to the Duck Derby, Duck Out Early, a Grand Island Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event, was held last night at the Barn Bar at Fonner Park.

Leadership Tomorrow alumni were at the entrance selling ducks.

"We hold the event to bring awareness to our event and give people another opportunity to purchase ducks," said Brenda Branstiter, executive director of Leadership Tomorrow.

There were food and refreshments from Qdoba, Quaker Steak & Lube and H & H Distributing. A DJ from Complete Music provided the music.

Branstiter said the event is a reminder to the public about the importance of community support for Leadership Tomorrow.

"Leadership Tomorrow provides individuals with a commitment to our community, training to improve their personal, professional and community leadership skills," Branstiter said. "By investing in people, they become engaged in helping improve our community."

Leadership Tomorrow alumna Amber Gerdes, who works at Wood Brother's Realty, attended the event.

"It is a really amazing program," Gerdes said. "I have really taken what I have learned from Leadership Tomorrow and applied it to this organization."

Gerdes has been active on the Grand Island Board of Realtors, where she now serves as vice president.

"I feel like I have a lot more to offer because of Leadership Tomorrow," she said.

Hall County Leadership Unlimited, Inc. is a non-profit corporation formed in 1986 under the

auspices of, and with the support of, the Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce. A 21-member board of directors develops program policies and oversees four divisions governs the organization.

Leadership Tomorrow identifies adult men and women in Hall County with leadership talent and interest and prepares them to assume leadership responsibilities in Hall County. The class is open to all who either live or work in Hall County. Approximately 35 people are selected each year to participate in the class, which runs September through May. The 30th class will be held later this year.

The Leadership Tomorrow class is for nine months and it meets once a month for guest speakers or tours of Grand Island businesses and industry.

“It is an education program for people interested in learning new skills and have a strong commitment to our community,” she said. “We work on personal, professional and community leadership.”

During its nearly 30 years, there have been nearly 800 alumni that have graduated from the program.

“It has inspired many people to take the lead,” Banstiter said.

Along with the adult Leadership Tomorrow, there is also a Youth Leadership Tomorrow that was added in 1999 to present leadership skills, interaction with leaders and knowledge of community needs to high school sophomores. The format is similar to the adult program except with more interactive projects. Approximately 38 high school juniors are selected each year.

LT-2 is a program open to all alumni of Leadership Tomorrow. The goal of the program is to provide activities throughout the year to help graduates keep abreast of current issues, maintain contacts with class members, and learn new skills.

Leadership Tomorrow Foundation was established by Leadership Tomorrow Class No. 10 to ensure the availability of funds to support alumni events and scholarships for participants.

Andy Hanquist, who works as a lawyer at the law firm of Leininger, Smith, Johnson, Baack, Placzek & Allen in Grand Island, signed up for the 30th class of Leadership Tomorrow. Hanquist is a Grand Island native who returned to the community after earning his law degree from UNL.

“I am interested in joining Leadership Tomorrow because it will allow me the opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals who will help me become and learn to become an effective leader in our community,” he said.

Since returning to Grand Island, Hanquist said he has wanted to become more involved in the community and said that Leadership Tomorrow is the best opportunity to do that.”

“It will open a few doors for me that I might not have been opened for me otherwise,” Hanquist said.

This year's Duck Derby will start with a free kids festival at 8:30 a.m. with the Duck Derby beginning at 10 a.m.

Ducks can be purchased at Roy's Grand, Leadership Tomorrow office and at the Grand Island Independent.

Branstiter said they hope to raise \$27,000 with this year's Duck Derby and sell 8,000 ducks. Ducks are \$5, but there's a discount cost when they are bought in volume.

To learn more about Leadership Tomorrow and the Duck Derby, visited the website at www.leadershiptomorrow.com. Leadership Tomorrow also has a Facebook page.