



## **PAT'S HISTORY OF THE OVERLAND PARK ROTARY CLUB FOUNDATION'S YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

1. **The Beginning** - No 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of any program would be complete without a brief retrospect of the dates, events, names and places which have lead us to today's celebration. Permit me share with you some of the more important history of YLI.

- **3-10-93**, 16 members of our Club, acting as incorporators, caused Articles of Incorporation to be filed with the Secretary of State of Kansas for the purpose of organizing a Kansas not-for-profit corporation dedicated to "...assisting in the securing the charitable and educational needs of our Overland Park and Johnson County, KS community." The list of the incorporators reads like a "Who's Who" list of our Overland Park Rotary Club members.

Charlie Pearson, Bart Cohen, Mary Cohen, Jeff Ellis, Dale Flaxbeard, Jerold Hoerner , Joe Johnson, Art Kramish, Mick Learner, Ron Philgreen, Brad Plumb, Gene Troehler, David Stallings and Bob Wahlstedt.

If you know or recognize these Rotarians, pay a \$1.00 to our Sgt.-at-Arms.

- **07-12-93**, a foundation without funds is not useful. So our Club members set about to raise funds for their newly formed foundation. To help in this endeavor, our Club's Board of Directors committed to annually donate to the Foundation 50% of the net proceeds derived from its annual fund raiser. This commitment has been faithfully renewed throughout the years.
- Then, our Club fund raiser was an auction. ***If you ever donated and/or bought an item at the annual auction, please raise your hand.*** Thank you. Today, to raise funds, our Club, in cooperation with the City of Overland Park and Corporate Woods, co-sponsors an annual July 4<sup>th</sup> Star Spangled Spectacular for residents, visitors and friends of Overland Park. Corporate sponsors, who purchase ad in our program, constitute the primary source of funds, since there is no admission fee charged. Other monies are raised by our Club's Members selling beverages. This year's July 4th Steering Committee Chairman Larry Bigus, just last week, reported that the crowd attending this year's event was estimated to be around a 100,000 people. .
- **1-20-94**, Club Member David Stallings, CPA & a principal in a well known





accounting firm, advised us that the Internal Revenue Service had accepted the foundation's application to be treated as a s.501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. For those of you who don't stay up on the tax code, this determination extended 3 important characteristics to the newly formed foundation:

- Foundation income is exempt from income tax;
- Donations to the Foundation are deductible as charitable contributions; and,
- The Foundation will be treated as a publicly supported charity.

With this ruling, our Foundation was off to a sound start to raise money to further its charitable and educational tax exempt purposes.

- 09-13-94 - Even though a foundation has money, the foundation isn't useful until it begins to spend its monies in support of charitable and/or educational programs it sponsors or makes contributions to other s. 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations. To be sure our foundation would remain on sound footing, the Board of Trustees sought suggestions for programs it might initiate. Then Foundation Trustee Mary Cohen proposed the Foundation sponsor a Leadership Overland Park for Youth event.

"Leadership Overland Park is a program sponsored by the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce ..." for adults, according to the Chamber's webpage. "The program informs participants about the critical issues facing Overland Park, Johnson County and the metropolitan region, and helps develop leadership and stewardship skills necessary to resolve them. In doing so, the Chamber hopes to ensure the continuing vitality of the community by providing a solid source of motivated leaders who are educated about the community and its issues, as well as trained to accept future leadership roles in the Overland Park area."

Mary thought the Foundation should sponsor a similar program for high school youth. The program became known as "Youth Leadership Institute" or "YLI", with help from members of a 9 person YLI Steering Committee led by Chairman David Stallings. Our own Rev. Vern Barnet led the YLI Curriculum Committee. Both committees were populated with persons of broad business, professional and educational experience. Thus, was the very first Youth Leadership Institute was organized and conducted in early August, 2005 under the able leadership of Club Member David Adkins.

**IMPORTANT TO NOTE!** Then Foundation President Lynn Mitchelson saw YLI as an opportunity for the common membership of the Club and Foundation to





have an "on going, year to year, hands-on involvement with a program ... which we expect to become the primary project of the Foundation."

These two Foundation committees subsequently defined YLI as "A 1 week intensive leadership program for Johnson County, Kansas high school sophomores and juniors, having a grade point average of 2.5 or better. The curriculum would cover leadership training, communication skills, the value of community service, exposure to local issues of government and mentoring by Rotarians. The week began with a Sunday evening orientation bar-b-q at the home of David Adkins. On Monday, the group would motor off-site to an obstacle course to build self confidence and learn the concept of functioning as part of a team. On another day mid-week, the group would travel to Topeka to tour the state capitol and meet and discuss issues with current political leaders. Two days were to be spent on-site at Johnson County Community College in leadership training sessions. The program would conclude on Friday at JCCC with team presentations, interviews with local business, professional, political and educational leaders of the community, followed by graduation ceremonies with family and friends.

All of these program elements continue to this day, except there have been some important refinements along the way.

**2. Our First YLI Facilitator** - As mentioned previously, then Club Member and local attorney, David Adkins, accepted the role as our first YLI Facilitator in exchange for a flat fee of \$2,000 for the Week. David did such a good job, the Foundation rewarded him with a \$1,000 bonus. For 7 consecutive years, David led our YLI students through the Curriculum under the watchful and faithful eye of Vern Barnett and his Curriculum Committee. David's facilitating was entertaining, insightful, sensitive, skillful, informative, inspirational and downright fun, according to his students and members of the Club and Foundation who served as guest speakers or participated in Friday's "Many Faces of Leadership" so as to have occasion to see David in action.

**3. Next YLI Facilitator** - After YLI-2001, David Adkins ended 7 years of serving as YLI's Facilitator to campaign for Kansas Attorney General. The immediate question was who could ever replace David and would the YLI program not just survive, but would it thrive. The YLI Steering Committee, then led by Chairman Carl Barber with Co-Chairman Mike Johnson, decided that 2 facilitators should be engaged and the Foundation's Board of Trustees agreed that the successors needed to be: a) someone who the YLI students can identify with; and b) someone to secure speakers and administration. The answer came in the form of Ed O'Malley, Jr. and Wendy Wood. Ed, then a former Member of the Roeland Park Rotary Club, was Manager of Governmental Relations for the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce.





Wendy was a high school counselor and tennis coach at Shawnee Mission South High School. Both were persons who could readily be mistaken for a YLI student, but whose experience and personality were ideally matched so as to more than preserve our existing program.

**4. Self-Evaluation.** YLI would celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with YLI-2004. Foundation President, Terry Goodman expressed the Board's concern as to the continued relevance of our YLI Program. David Stallings and Christy Wineland, both candidates for Master Degrees in Public Administration at UMKC developed a Empirical Model for Evaluating the Foundation and its Youth Leadership Institute Program as their thesis. A series of focus groups with past YLI participants was conducted. The data was then presented to the YLI Committee, who after reviewing same, reported to the Foundation's Board that the program was not only relevant but needed by area high school students.

YLI incorporated the slogan, "Training Tomorrow's Leaders Today" and the call "We See great students who want to make a difference," into their marketing brochures. High schools were personally canvassed and recruiting efforts strengthened. Susan Keim, a former member of the Kansas City, KS Rotary Club, and Executive Director of Civic Leadership Training Council, Inc. for Wyandotte County, KS joined Ed O'Malley as a program Co-Facilitator. The engagements of Ed and Susan were reduced to written contract for the first time in YLI history.

Upon the conclusion of YLI-2004, more that 220 high school students had graduated from YLI. Several hundred business, professional, educational and political leaders had met with our YLI students.

- **News About Rotary** - For the first time, our YLI curriculum introduced students to the world of Rotary. We explained how Rotary seeks to "foster the ideal that service to others is the basis of worthy enterprise." Hence, Rotary's motto became "Service Above Self." We talked about the many service projects conducted by Rotary International around the world, such as the eradication of polio, bringing water, wheel chairs, medical supplies, books, school supplies, shoes, etc to children everywhere. Locally, we spoke of our Club and Foundation's provision for humanitarian relief to victims of hurricanes and tornadoes. Of contributing to the Overland Park Arboretum, building a play ground a Deanna Rose, supporting Literacy Kansas City, individual relief to local Afghan families, or providing tuition assistance to YLI grads to represent the state of Kansas at the National Student Leadership Conference in Washington D.C.
- **Rotary 4-Way Test** - We introduced the Rotary 4-Way Test as an ethical model by which our YLI students could seek to make thoughtful choices when confronted with difficult problems.





**5. College Scholarship Essay Contest** - To further the teaching of the Rotary 4-Way Test and to encourage students to participate in YLI, the Foundation inaugurated an annual Rotary 4-Way Test College Scholarship Test with YLI-2005. Only YLI grads were eligible to complete, so each contestant has an excellent chance to win one of 3 prizes, a \$3,000, \$1,500 or \$500 scholarship to the college or university of their choice. Our very first first place winner was Cailan A. R. O'Grady of Shawnee Mission East High School. Since we started this program, the Foundation has awarded \$20,000 in college scholarships. Later in this program, the Foundation will announce this year's contest winners.

**6. Overconfidence Sets In** - In 2006, we had but 12 high school students participate in YLI. And, even though this particular group was perhaps our most cohesive and over achieving group to date, we were highly disappointed at our turnout. Our new website, developed to capture the imagination of area students, came on sight late. We began to doubt whether our efforts were worth it. But, on closer examination, we concluded you just can't assign a cost benefit number to this type of program. We may never know which of our YLI grads hits that home run for our community. But, we are confident one will. And, the feed back we continue to receive from students, counselors, teachers and parents alike inspired us to rededicate our efforts at recruiting, marketing, etc.

**7. Don Wise - New Co-Facilitator** - Following YLI-2006 and after serving 6 years as Program Facilitator, Ed O'Malley, Jr. moved to Wichita, KS to become the first President & CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center. The center's mission is to "develop leaders who will mobilize and transform their communities, institutions and organizations. It will offer training in strategic planning, community organizing, facilitation and advocacy, as well as convene leaders around the state on important health and wellness issues." I believe Ed's experience at facilitating YLI has helped prepare Ed for this important role. Ed should prove to be a great networking source for our YLI grads of the future.

The YLI Committee was extremely fortunate to engage the services of Don Wise to fill Ed O'Malley's shoes as Susan's Co-Facilitator. Don is the Hauptmann School Fellow for Nonprofit Leadership at Park University, Co-Director of CORO, Inc., the former Executive Director of the Civic Leadership Training Council, a respected non-profit consultant. Don has helped us to turn our curriculum into a leading edge, objectives driven, leadership training program worthy of comparison to the finest youth leadership programs in the country. Just ask Don, if you need confirmation.

**8. Vital Statistics -**

- 386 graduates through YLI-2009 - 39 High Schools & 1 Home Schooled KS & MO; Johnson, Wyandotte and Jackson Counties
- 380+/- Community Leaders





- 30-35 guest speakers
- 10 - different Essay Contest Judges
- 75 different YLI Committee Members
- YLI-07, '08 and '09 averaged 36 students;
- YLI-2009 37 students from 20 high schools (most schools ever)
  - 11 high schools in Kansas ( 8 Johnson Cty., KS; 3 Wyandotte Cty., KS
  - 8 high schools in Missouri (all Jackson County - 1 Blue Springs, 1 Grandview, 6 Kansas City, MO.)

**9. Closing** - Some years ago, I ran across a definition of the term "leadership." The definition appears as an epitaph on the tombstone of a soldier with the British Grenadiers who participated in the invasion to liberate Europe from German occupation. Of course, we know the date as "D-Day", June 6, 1941. Many years later, I believe a journalist employed this definition was later employed to describe the actions demonstrated by President Lyndon Johnson in pushing Congress to enact the "1964 Civil Rights Act."

Here's the definition: "**Leadership is Wisdom, Courage and Carelessness of Self.**" May we at Rotary strive by our actions in supporting and conducting our own Youth Leadership Institute to inspire similar wisdom, courage and carelessness of self of the students we teach.

