

“Where Will Our New Leaders Come From?”

Award Acceptance Remarks

EXCERPT 1

We must develop new leaders by inviting people to be servant leaders in our community.

Never has this been as profoundly important as it is today. And let me tell you why.

We're living in a time of public policy challenges, partisan politics and stripped-down government funding.

So we face a new reality.

Yes – government indeed has a role in our society.

But – as citizens – we have a role, too.

So we cannot – and should not – expect government to solve the problems we face in our community.

Instead – we must solve them ourselves.

And we can.

We **can** come up with solutions ourselves, on our own – perhaps using the government and public funding as resources – but our approach should be homegrown, because we know our issues better than anybody else.

Can we do it?

Of course we can! In fact, we already have.

Just look at the Schuster Performing Arts Center.

Back in 1995, some people said, “You’ll never be able to raise that much money!”

But we did. Because downtown Dayton was in decay – badly in need of a jump-start – and a performing arts center was exactly what we needed to get things moving again.

We got private money first and proved we had community support, the right vision, the right design and the right leaders – people like Steve and Lou Mason, Tom Danis, Pete Horan and others.

We had a great team. And what happened? Money followed: from Montgomery County, the city of Dayton, surrounding municipalities and the state of Ohio.

They **didn’t** say no!

We even got a federal grant through the RTA.

Our public-sector partners really stepped up. And so we raised the money we needed – and we built a world-class performing arts center in Dayton.

Is our community better off for the Schuster?

You bet it is!

All because servant leaders in Dayton put the needs of our citizens **first**.

This year, the 10th anniversary of the Schuster, I learned that *not one private pledge went unpaid.*

Every single supporter in our community came through!

And that tells me one thing: If you ask people to get involved in our community, they **will** take ownership, they **will** be accountable, they **will** be empowered to serve – and to solve problems.

It works.

EXCERPT 2

The problem of education in Dayton is a problem we have to solve ourselves.

And we're making strides with programs like DECA and now Learn to Earn Dayton, which is building a **system** to ensure that every child in our community is ready to **learn** by kindergarten, and ready to **earn** by graduation.

Behind Learn to Earn Dayton are passionate leaders like Tom Lasley and his super staff plus a whole cadre of servant leaders – working with child care programs, preschools, schools, colleges, businesses and faith-based organizations – all aligned around a common objective: to develop the human capital we need for economic growth in our Greater Dayton region.

Strength – through unity. A collective impact that brings terrific power.

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So many times I'm asked, "What are we going to do for future leaders in this community? Where will our new leaders come from?"

Here's my answer.

Our leaders are already *right here*. We just need to *ask them*.

They *will* step up – and they *will* succeed.

I've watched it happen – over and over, time and time again.

At first people say, “Oh my gosh, not me! I don't have the talent to do this. I can't lead this!”

And then I say, “Just think about it. Think about what you **can** do. And then ask others to help you.” **And people will.**

For everyone, at every age – young people, middle-aged people, older people – we **all** have something to contribute.

It is **our people** who make the difference – and **that difference** is what makes our community **go.** ◀