Community service is a way to build business leadership

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Community service is way to build business leadership

Twin Cities area chambers believe encouragement of volunteers is important goal

"One is not born into the world to do everything, but to do something."
—Henry David Thoreau

By Rebecca Erchild

Minnesotans know that our quality of life is not a matter of serendipity. It happens here because we expect it of our businesses and community institutions. It happens here because we expect it of ourselves. It exists because we make sure that the right people come together at the right time to do the right things.

Perhaps this is best illustrated by the fact that the two largest local business organizations in the state—the Minneapolis Area Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce—are the driving force behind community leadership as top priority.

Cultivating leaders

In the 1970s and 1980s, both chambers realized that something as important as the Twin Cities' future vitality could not be left to chance. They understood that we needed to cultivate leaders to take on the challenges of the future.

As a result, the Leadership Minneapolis program was founded in 1976 and Leadership St. Paul came along in 1980. Their missions are the same: to identify, cultivate and inspire successive generations of community leaders—by examining critical issues and resources—to ensure the social, cultural and economic prosperity of the Twin Cities. Today, those programs count among their graduates some of the most prominent business and community leaders in the region, including Paul Citron, president of science and technology for Medtronic Inc.; Robert Meggison, chief of the Minneapolis Police Department; Richard Hanson, vice president of the 3M Foundation; (and Jim Gray) Whittall, president/CEO of the St. Paul/South Metro Minneapolis district for Verizon Bank.

Each year, both Leadership St. Paul and Leadership Minneapolis bring together emerging leaders from the private, nonprofit and public sectors to study issues such as economic development, health care and criminal justice. Participants explore leadership and organizational development and visit facilities throughout the Twin Cities to gain first-hand experience.

They emerge prepared and committed to making a difference.

Community service is a key component of Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and is vice president of community relations & diversity for the Pillsbury Co.

Mary Schmidt, vice chair of community leadership for the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and is vice president of community relations & diversity for the Pillsbury Co.

For more information on Leadership Minneapolis, call (612) 947-6400. For information on Leadership St. Paul, call (612) 624-3366.