LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Focus on Leadership: Servant Leadership for the 21st Century
By Larry Spears and Michele Lawrence, editors.

This book offers a selection of writings from some of the leading thinkers on servant-leadership and management culture, including Stephen Covey, Margaret Wheatley, Ken Blanchard and Warren Bennis. It also highlights excerpts from Robert Greenleaf’s seminal essay, “The Servant as Leader,” introducing the principles and essentials he first set forth.

Quotes

“The essence of leadership is not giving things or even providing visions. It is offering oneself and one’s spirit.”
—Lee Bolman and Terence Deal

“Responsible people build: they do not destroy. They are moved by the heart. The prime test of rightness of an act is, how will it affect people; are lives moved toward nobility?”
—Robert K. Greenleaf

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1800 Preston Park Blvd., Suite 101
Plano, TX 75093
www.cmanagement.com
Please direct all inquiries to Ann Lau, at the above address or call 972-943-2200.
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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Servant-Leadership
Judd M. Phares, President and CEO, RTI/Community Management Associates, Inc.

Dear Leaders:

Our theme for this issue is servant-leadership simply because I truly believe this leadership style resonates with the mission of HOA boards. We’ve gathered the key concepts of this approach to give you a preview of CMA’s upcoming Association Leadership Forum on February 24, 2007.

We are delighted to have nationally acclaimed speaker and former Disney head trainer, Doug Lipp, who will be joined by Catherine D. Weber, J.D., professor in the Cox School of Business at SMU, and Dean Lindsay, internationally recognized sales and service expert. Each of these guests will explore aspects of servant-leadership. We hope you can take advantage of this truly exceptional opportunity for personal growth and development.

The servant-leadership style can be identified with a transforming journey. Begin the journey by taking the self-test in this issue. I hope you find it revealing, as I did. As part of its mission and values to serve communities, CMA aspires to many of these leadership traits. We, too, are striving to become servant-leaders by developing and encouraging these characteristics in our own leadership team.

Sincerely,

Judi M. Phares, CMCA®, PCAM®
Publisher

Applied Servant-Leadership
Meet Board President Jill Sullins

One of the original owners in this West Plano community, Jill Sullins is passionate about Plano Trails, her home for the past 12 years. The residents of these attractive zero-lot line homes represent a mix of first-time and “last-time” community-minded homeowners with differing expectations of association membership.

Early on Jill produced the HOA newsletter, and she has resumed it in response to the board’s decision to replace its website with printed newsletters. Continuing her volunteer service, Jill has served as a board member of the HOA three years and was recently re-elected to a second 3-year term, and her third year as its president.

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Leading by Serving Others

Philosophers and sages throughout history have pondered the meaning of leadership. Their teachings influenced cultural and religious traditions with the notion that the great leader is a servant first, subtly pointing out the contradiction with the tyrannical, dictatorial leaders of their eras.

In modern times, Robert Greenleaf is credited with coining the term servant-leader, taking two concepts usually thought of as opposites, and bringing them together in a creative and meaningful way. Having spent most of his organizational life in management research and education at AT&T, Greenleaf experienced a leadership “epiphany” and spent the remainder of his career writing, teaching and seeking to influence business and institutional leaders.

Echoing Eastern and Western philosophy, he concluded that true leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others. The statement calls to mind exemplary leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and Coach Bear Bryant. However, it can be applied across a spectrum (Please see “Leading by Serving” — page 2).

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of leadership roles, from the coach of the Little League team, to the Fortune 500 CEO or to the board member of homeowners’ associations.

As you may have concluded from the quiz, servant-leadership is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior. Those who model this leadership style seek to enhance the personal growth of people while improving the quality of organizations. The servant-leader practices teamwork with a heightened sense of service to others, which consequently promotes a sense of community and the sharing of power in decision making.

While some may think of these traits as natural tendencies, Greenleaf believed they could be taught and enhanced through learning and practice. Through the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership (www.greenleaf.org) and other leadership organizations, his ideas have been formalized and propagated in management and leadership circles worldwide.

Much as other great leaders have under- stood the lessons from the past, the realities of the present and the consequences of a decision for the future, association boards, too, can attain great leadership when they serve others. Following, then, are some key characteristics of a servant-leader, especially as they apply to leadership in your HOA.

Listening: A good place to practice and learn the value of listening is at the annual meeting of your HOA. A lot of people want to be heard, but is anyone listening? A list- ening leader wants to identify the will of the group and help to clarify what someone has said. Experts in listening teach a technique to repeat and rephrase what someone has said. This con- firms the message and communicates to others that they have been heard.

Empathy: Compassion is a scarce commodity and the demand frequently exceeds the supply. Does your board demonstrate this trait? Consider that a servant-leader would not personally reject a resident who fails to correct CC&Rs violations. Even though you may be forced to apply the rules and reject certain behaviors, empathy yields understanding and often results in better solutions.

Awareness: Are board members sensitized to issues involving ethics, power and values? Servant-leaders are “sharply aware” of what is happening around them, not just details in common area maintenance, for example, but picking up on subtleties in social interactions with owners.

Persuasion: A wise board member doesn’t sway decisions because of his authority, but because he has convinced instead of coerced others to his point of view. Reasoning, teaching, informing, and sharing experience are powerful persuasive tools to win the hearts and minds of fellow members.

Conceptualization: Is the board thinking beyond day-to-day operations? Whether yours is a young association still in its development phase, or a mature community looking to maintain its owners’ long-term investments, a leader’s vision helps the association stay on track in its mission to enhance and pro- tect its property values and quality of life.

Building Community: Board members build community by sharing their vision and sense of purpose, communicating and interacting with residents, being present at community events, and being good neighbors. Serving in HOA leadership misses the mark if your neighbors aren’t also engaged in the life of the community.

Commitment to the growth of people: Servant-leaders enlist others to share the vision and serve the community as volunteers. “Pay it forward” by nurturing the personal growth of fellowship association members, who may step in to fill your role in the future. Take a personal interest in ideas and sugges- tions from everyone.

Stewardship: As a board member, you hold the tangible assets and intangible values of the community in trust, now, and for the future. Serve the needs of current owners, but also realize that your decisions influence potential owners who will reap the rewards of your work and choose to make your community their home.

Servant Leader (continued from page 1)

A Ford Club of America and is president of the Model A Ford Youth Scholarship Fund. She sees the fund as a means to secure the future of the hobby by growing the interest of young people.

In describing servant leadership charac- teristics, Jill identified persuasion as an important skill to build board consensus, find a compromise and move forward.

“As president of the board, I know what I want to happen, but I have to be able to com- municate my reasons, and motivate others to buy in,” she said. “I’m one of five board members, and the board is the decision-maker.”

Jill also pointed to awareness and caring as vital leadership traits, which can be demonstrated by knowing your neighbors and having your “antenna” attuned to community happenings. For example, a community leader would want to find out about who is the fire truck or ambulance in the neighborhood and offer help to a neighbor. They would exhibit their concern by noticing that the common area lights are not working and not by taking the initiative to report it. Jill seeks out prospective board members who demonstrate these characteristics.

Readily acknowledging that some people don’t necessarily exhibit servant-leader traits in the beginning, she believes one of her roles is to draw these behaviors out with encour- agement and reinforcement.

Fellow board members who express differ- ing opinions earn Jill’s respect, and sharpen her skills because they force her to look at all sides of issues. She praises her board for taking bold actions to preserve the neighborhood’s character, and cites the low rate of delinquency assessments as one indicator of homeowners’ approval of the association’s service.

Her caring attitude is evident when Jill speaks of her neighborhood. “I want my neighborhood to continue to be a place where people want to live,” says Jill, “a place as wonderful as when I first found it.”

COMING EVENTS

Are you looking for more fresh ideas to help you serve your community? Attend the CMA 2007 Association Leadership Forum on February 24. The paradox of servant-leader- ship holds great potential to transform your thinking and performance as a leader.

Servant Leader (continued from page 1)

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Legislative Advisory

As we go to press, the Texas House docket lists two significant pieces of legislation affecting HOAs.

District 65 Representative Burt Solomons has introduced HB #822. This pending state legislation potentially may encroach on your association’s rights and could limit boards’ ability to manage the financial affairs of their associations.

Professionals in our industry are concerned that associations potentially may lose their rights to collect debts, to control architectural compliance, and to oversee ownership transfers, as well as suffer increased exposure to fines and legal liability.

This legislation also removes liability from owners, title companies and realtors; indeed, everyone involved in the ownership transfer process EXCEPT the association, on which it imposes sole legal liability and penalties. HB #849, introduced by District 58 Representative Rob Ortez of Burleson, would legalize how associations apply payments to an owner’s debt and could potentially impede collection procedures.

On your behalf, CMA will continue to evaluate legislation and monitor its progress through the legislature. As we become aware of hearings and opportunities for testimony, we will alert you, so that you can voice your opinion with regard to these bills.

To read the full text of the bills, go to:

HB #822
http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/Text.aspx?LegIso=80R&Bill=HB822

HB #849
http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/Authors.aspx?LegIso=80R&Bill=HB849

Did you know…

that CMA handled an average of 1884 calls per day in December?

That’s nearly 38,000 calls for the month.

Are You a Servant-Leader?

If you can check more than 7 of these boxes, you may be well on your way to becoming a servant-leader.

Read the related article to discover how to apply these principles in your owners’ association.

1. Do people believe that you are willing to sacrifice your own self-interest for the good of the association?
2. Do people believe that you want to hear their ideas and value them?
3. Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them and their relationship to the community?
4. Do others believe that you have a strong awareness for what the entire community needs?
5. Do others follow your requests because they want to, as opposed to because they “have to”?
6. Do others communicate their ideas and vision for the association when you are around?
7. Do others have confidence in your ability to anticipate the future and its consequences?
8. Do others believe you are preparing the community to take positive steps forward to keep it a desirable place to live?
9. Do people believe that you are committed to helping them develop and grow and keep them informed?
10. Do people feel a strong sense of community in the association that you lead?

Adapted to associations from the NebGuide, published by the University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. John E. Bartels, Jr. and David W. Whewell, Extension Leadership Development Specialists.