

BUSINESS

Leadership Overland Park celebrates 25 years

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STAFF WRITER

What do several CEOs, Kansas legislators and bank presidents have in common?

They are all graduates of the Leadership Overland Park program offered by the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce.

The six-month leadership course informs participants about issues facing Overland Park, Johnson County and the metropolitan region and helps them develop leadership and stewardship skills.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Leadership Overland Park. The program has more than 450 graduates in Overland Park's private, public and nonprofit sectors.

Some prominent graduates include Shawnee Mission Medical Center CEO **Sam Turner**, Metcalf Bank President **Jon Stewart**, KSHB-TV NBC Action News reporter **Mark Clegg** and state Rep. **Sheryl Spalding**.

The Overland Park Chamber and Johnson County Community College established the program in 1983.

Overland Park Chamber of Commerce President **Tracey Osborne** said the program encourages future leaders.

"I think leadership development is one of the most important missions for a chamber of commerce," Osborne said. "I think it's a great milestone for the program to graduate its 25th



LEADERSHIP OVERLAND PARK class members participate in a mock city council meeting in the Overland Park City Council Chambers at City Hall, 8500 Santa Fe Drive.

class. For a quarter century, people in the program have discovered opportunities to serve, network with other leaders and discover other ways in which to serve."

Osborne said participants learn about a variety of topics.

"We cover social services, health care, how the government works," Osborne said. "We bring together a combination of people, long-term residents and brand-new people, regardless of their experience level. It's neat to see people have a whole new-found interest in being engaged in an area that they never would have discovered on their own."

Osborne said the program encourages volunteering and

getting involved in the community.

A "green" element has been added to the program, Osborne said.

"We have added environmental issues," she said. "We think it's important to learn about how we can help the environment right here in Overland Park."

County Manager **Mike Press**, class of 1997, said he learned more about government through the program.

"(The program) teaches awareness of the various roles of government and how they work together to provide services for citizens and community," Press said. "It has the state,

CLASS OF 2009

Nominations for the 2009 Leadership Overland Park class are now being accepted.

About 30 participants are chosen by a selection committee made up of program graduates and chamber staff.

Cost is \$800 for members of the chamber and \$1,000 for nonmembers.

Attendance at all nine sessions is mandatory.

county and city perspective. I learned some of the behind-the-scenes requirements that are necessary for government to effectively serve us."

Press said he enjoyed meeting his classmates and has many friends he met through Leadership Overland Park, which he said gave him an appreciation for different aspects of the community.

"I'm more aware of the role that other entities play, including the private sector, in building community," Press said. "It's an excellent program. I have encouraged many co-workers to participate."

Overland Park City Councilwoman **Terry Happer Scheier** said the program gave her confidence.

"It was neat to meet business leaders from all walks of life," Scheier said. "(The program) broadened my horizons and I'm grateful for the opportunity to touch base with the people in the program."

Scheier graduated in the 1996 class with fellow council member **George Kandt**.

Lisa Tomlinson, president of the Lenexa market for Bank of Blue Valley, said she learned more about herself while participating in the program in 2004.

"One session concentrated on understanding the four working, thinking and learning styles," Tomlinson said. "Many of us have been exposed to these types of personality profiles and how we work together. Not only was it a good reminder but it gave me additional insights and skills in which I have continued to refer back so as to build positive and productive professional relationships."

Tomlinson said she applies the skills she learned to her career.

"(The program) taught me that the ideas for meeting these issues head-on are varied and each has its own merit," Tomlinson said. "I believe that leadership begins with listening

to others and carefully considering all points of view before making decisions. Building consensus is a goal of leadership which I try to apply in my everyday life."

The 28 members of the Class of 2008 will graduate at a luncheon on June 24 at the Doubletree Hotel, 10100 College Blvd.

Johnson County Community College President **Terry Calaway** will be the keynote speaker and will discuss the importance and value of leadership.

Osborne said the residents of this area make the program work.

"Our area is great because of the commitment of ordinary citizens and the commitment to leadership and ethical governance," Osborne said. "The business community is committed as well. It's a great program."

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