

Young Leaders Society: 10 years of driving change

An important and recurring conversation that we hear in our community is how to attract and retain young professionals. In fact, the Greater Dalton Community & Economic Development Strategy Community Assessment addresses this issue. The assessment found that young professionals increasingly want social opportunities and to feel connected.

I am proud of the work that United Way is doing with our Young Leaders Society (YLS) to help attract and retain young professionals and help them feel connected. People want to live and work where they feel a sense of community and experience a good quality of life. We enjoy a strong sense of community here, in large part, due to the generosity of the people who live and work here. Let's start sharing the positive message of our community with the next generation!

In 2004, United Way's strategic plan identified the need to identify and develop future community leaders. Out of this, the Young Leaders Society was born in 2006. YLS is an organization of leaders age 40 and under who care about what happens right here where we live. Through the investment of time, talents and treasure, YLS members partner with United Way to help make our community the kind of place we all want to live, work and raise our families.

If you're looking for a group of young people who are passionate about their community and who have the power and motivation to affect change, you'll find them at a YLS event. YLS is designed to further philanthropy and volunteerism but it goes farther than that. It offers a place to belong, a place to connect with like-minded individuals, and social, educational and service opportunities for all of its members. YLS members understand the importance of giving, advocacy, and volunteerism to create a healthy, vibrant community.

Charlie Bethel and Bill Davies decided to take action in 2006 and co-founded YLS. Today, 10 years later, United Way's Young Leaders Society continues to serve as an economic development tool for companies looking to attract and retain young professionals and to promote Whitfield and Murray counties as an attractive live/work community. Several dedicated co-chairs have led YLS over the last ten years.

Charlie Bethel is a judge for the Georgia Court of Appeals. He earned his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Georgia. Charlie chose to be a part of YLS because he believed in the need for young leadership development and connectivity as well as the mission of United Way.

Bill Davies is a graduate of Georgia State and is the market president at BB& T. He is still actively involved by volunteering on the Campaign Cabinet and served as a board member from 2011-2016. Lunch with Leaders is one of his favorite YLS events.

Matthew Moore attended Furman University and earned his law degree from Mercer University. He became involved with YLS through the Shaw Industries United Way Campaign. Matthew has continued his volunteerism with United Way and now serves as the board chair. His favorite YLS event has been the agency scavenger hunt! He has seen over the years how YLS creates a group for people who want to get involved and network, learn about our community, and be a part of something that has a huge impact on people in need.

Amy Cole graduated from the University of Georgia. She is a realtor at Coldwell Banker Kinard Realty. Following the leadership of her mother, Dixie Kinard, Amy became involved with United Way. She has enjoyed all of the fun events for young professionals to meet and network. Rule of 3

has been her favorite social activity. She enjoys working with people new to the area and showing them what our community has to offer.

Curtis Callaway earned his bachelor's degree from Furman University and a master's degree from University of South Carolina. Curtis works at Shaw Industries as the director of associate communications. He moved to Dalton in 2006 and looked for a place to connect with people similar to him, who were career and community focused. He found that immediately when he plugged into YLS. The lip sync battle this past spring has been his favorite YLS event, but Rule of 3 is a close second. Curtis is hoping that through the efforts of YLS, young professionals will realize that our community is a great place to work and live.

Jill Schubert is a graduate of Central Michigan University and is the purchasing director at Mohawk Industries. After relocating to Dalton from Michigan, Jill joined Young Leaders. YLS gave her the opportunity to meet others who share the same priorities and passions in life. Her advice to young professionals looking to get involved is join! It is a great way to meet people, network, learn about and advocate for the surrounding community, she said. Of all the YLS events, Jill enjoys Rule of 3 and Lunch with Leaders the most. In addition to giving monetarily, providing inclusion and camaraderie go a long way.

Vance Embry graduated from Furman University and works at Shaw Industries. A friend introduced him to YLS. He currently serves as one of the co-chairs and actively volunteers on the Campaign Cabinet. He enjoys Lunch with Leaders the most; however, he has a blast at all of the events!

Landon Hair is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and is the general manager at Marketing Alliance Group. He joined YLS to give back and help raise awareness of all the great work United Way does in our community. In addition to serving as a current co-chair, Landon also volunteers on the United Way Campaign Cabinet. His advice for young professionals looking to network is join YLS and become involved with United Way.

Young Leaders are there first — to volunteer, to engage, to take action. They are the hand raisers and the community changers. They are blazing new trails and creating a better community. It's a privilege to watch YLS members make great things happen in our community. I look forward to the next 10 years of impact!

Amanda Burt is the president of United Way of Northwest Georgia.



From left are current and former Young Leaders Society co-chairs Matthew Moore, Curtis Callaway, Jill Schubert, Vance Embry, Landon Hair and Bill Davies. Not pictured are Charlie Bethel and Amy Cole.

Contributed photo



Amanda Burt

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