

Collaborations make Collier County a better place



Your Turn

Jean Foster
Guest columnist

This column is the second of a two-part series on the Greater Naples Leadership (GNL) organization. My earlier column focused on GNL volunteerism; this article addresses collaborations.

Greater Naples Leadership (GNL) is uniquely positioned to initiate and facilitate collaborations: our members possess the experience, talent, leadership skills, community knowledge, connections, and passion to ensure successful outcomes.

Since GNL was founded in 1999, more than 800 have completed our Masters Class Program, which educates high-achieving men and women about issues in Collier County through nine in-depth, full-day sessions that address all major aspects of community life and introduces them to the opinion leaders, “doers”, and “players”.

A major component of GNL’s mission is to encourage our graduates to use the knowledge they acquire, as well as their skills individually and collectively, to better the community. Today, GNL has 496 alumni and 46 members of the current Masters Class. Our members are in-

involved in hundreds of non-profit and civic organizations and currently serve on numerous boards and committees.

GNL collaborative partnering

A recent example of community-wide collaboration is the Richard M. Schultze Family Foundation’s Collier County Community Assessment. Greater Naples Leadership joined an advisory group of more than two dozen organizations, including The Community Foundation, area non-profits, private businesses, schools, colleges, and government agencies, to assist with collecting and disseminating information about the conditions, needs, and assets of Collier County ranging from education to the environment to arts and leisure. Results of this large study led to a better, more detailed understanding of the strengths and challenges in Collier County and suggested strategies for organizations committed to helping.

GNL regularly collaborates with The Community Foundation to identify non-profits seeking new board or committee members, and then matches GNL alumni to fill these openings based on skills and experience. In the past three months alone, nearly a dozen GNL members have found new board and

Guest commentaries

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committee opportunities.

GNL recently launched a pilot project, the ConsulTeam, to provide confidential short-term consulting services at no charge to smaller non-profits. Our teams have been asked to consult on strategic planning, branding, marketing, media relations, and event management for organizations whose missions range from childhood education to services for senior citizens. The ConsulTeam brings much-needed, high-quality assistance to organizations with limited budgets, helping them achieve their goals.

GNL also conducts “Done-in-a Day” (DIAD) Projects with various partners to assist with simpler priorities. For example, for Earth Day, GNL members pro-

vided the “manpower” at the Naples Botanical Garden to plant trees and spread mulch. Our members also assisted The Shelter for Abused Women and Children with painting, storage organizing, and outdoor projects.

GNL’s ConsulTeam and DIAD programs not only greatly expand the traditional model of one-on-one volunteering, both also demonstrate that collaborating with local organizations can help them meet their objectives and needs.

Public information forums in the civic arena are another avenue for GNL collaborations. We have co-sponsored non-partisan community forums with others (e.g. Collier Citizens Council, League of Women Voters, Naples Press Club), such as candidates for County Council, sales tax initiative, fire district candidates, school board candidates, and constitutional amendments.

GNL’s collaborations with non-profits, foundations, government agencies, education institutions, and private business clearly and consistently demonstrate that by working collectively, we make Collier County a better place for all residents.

For more information, please visit GNLwebsite.org.

Jean Foster is president of Greater Naples Leadership.