

Celebrating Five Years of Riley Institute Diversity Leadership in the Upstate!

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On Thursday, August 28, 2008, over 130 business, civic and community leaders in the Upstate gathered to celebrate five years of diversity leadership development through the Riley Institute at Furman. The visual, auditory and olfactory treats were in abundance as the rhythmic sounds of steel drums and the Appalachian foothills provided a magnificent backdrop for a celebration at the home of Anne and Bill Masters, members of The Riley Institute's inaugural diversity leadership class.

Guests enjoyed reuniting with one another, reveling in the progress that has been made by so many on so many fronts. Graduates of The Riley Institute's Diversity Leaders Initiative (DLI) have created extraordinary community action projects, impacting our education system; housing and transportation issues; health; diversity awareness; financial services and societal infrastructures, among others. South Carolina looks and lives a little differently as a result. From creating re-entry programs for prisoners to targeting gang violence and homelessness, these diversity leaders are making significant contributions in their communities. This is just in the Upstate!

Since 2003, over 400 alumni in the Upstate, Lowcountry, and Midlands have graduated from this unique program created for business, government, faith-based and non-profit community leaders. The program works at the personal, institutional, and societal level. Chosen by nomination and application, participants in the DLI reflect all demographic groups and sectors of the state. As a community-based leadership development program, the Riley Institute's DLI is committed to equipping South Carolina's leaders with effective diversity management skills in an increasingly global world. As the talents and experiences of all South Carolinians are made available, diversity can be used advantageously to engender social and economic progress throughout the state.

Alumni of the diversity leadership program break down the barriers to social and economic progress, resulting in more inclusive and productive businesses and organizations in cities and communities. One such community action project, created by a group of Class VI members, is designed to effect positive change in four Upstate schools. Debbie Beers, Rob Clapper, Michael Cunningham, Gloria Graves, Curtis Harkness, David Moody, Grier Mullins, Terence Roberts, Steve Sinicropi, and Knox White raised over \$20,000 to bring Challenge Day, a youth-based national experiential learning program, to Greenville High School, Clinton High School, Spartanburg High School, and Westside High School next spring in order to work on diversity-related challenges. A unique experience through which students and community leaders become more meaningfully engaged in making campus life safer and interactions more productive, Challenge Day creates a positive learning environment and establishes better

communications among students and their teachers. Its goals are achieved through a day-long sequence of powerful, high-energy exercises and reflections in which participants discuss their values and aspirations, while setting new goals that will shape their campus life. Over 100 youth and at least 25 adult facilitators are taken through a guided journey of games, discussions, and exercises that reveal hidden stereotypes and break through social isolation students face daily. Youth from each school are selected based on their teachers' and counselors' belief that they are individuals who might most benefit from the transformational experience and will be able to share it with others. The vision of Challenge Day is to create a school environment where every child feels safe, loved, and celebrated.

The Riley Institute's DLI alums are making South Carolina a richer, more inclusive, and more competitive place to live and work. The celebration at Anne and Bill Masters' home was a fitting salute to their efforts!

This special alumni event was made possible through the generosity of Anne and Bill Masters, the Greenville Hospital System, and Greenville Forward. The DLI program is made possible with generous support from Wachovia Bank and Michelin, N.A., and in cooperation with AnMed Health, Greenville Magazine, Palmetto Health, the South Carolina Research Authority, and SC BIZ.

For more information on the Riley Institute's Diversity Leaders Initiative at Furman University, visit the DLI web site at <http://riley.furman.edu/diversity/> or contact Leigh Berman, manager of the Riley Institute's diversity leadership programs, at Leigh.Berman@furman.edu or 864.294.3253.