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Two Riley Institute leadership programs expand

BY CINDY LANDRUM – UPDATED JULY 9, 2015
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Duke grant designed to develop leaders of diverse communities

After a black man was gunned down by a white police officer in North Charleston, no riots followed.

After a white gunman opened fire in Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, killing nine at a Bible study, black and white came together in a historic, and until then unthinkable, effort to remove the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds.

Some of the people involved in mediating those events, and other efforts statewide to increase opportunities for success for all ethnicities, were graduates of two leadership programs at the Riley Institute at Furman University: Diversity Leaders Initiative, aimed toward community leaders, and the Emerging Public Leaders program, geared toward youth.

"We know from what we hear from our graduates that DLI has changed the way they think and work, and we know their DLI experience has subtly or dramatically shaped the way they respond to these events," said Jacki Martin, director of Riley Institute operations.

Thanks to a $100,000 gift from Duke Energy and a matching grant program for Duke employees, those two programs will be expanded. The gift was prompted by the Charleston tragedy and discussions across the state with stakeholders by Duke's leaders about how the company could best make an impact.

"In face of this tragedy, it is important to come together to help our fellow citizens persevere and move forward. I believe these programs will be an important step forward in doing just that," said Clark Gillespy, Duke Energy's president in South Carolina, in a news release.

The expanded Diversity Leaders Initiative will target leaders in education and law enforcement, Martin said. "We aim to get on the ground. Principals set the culture in their school. Law enforcement is comprised of people who help shape what happens on the ground. This allows us to get deeper into the ground."

The Emerging Public Leaders program is designed for rising high school seniors. Martin said the problems being seen on the national and state level have "very deep roots. Our approach is a long-term systemic approach. We're working on real, lasting change."

The Diversity Leaders program will expand in the spring, while the expanded youth leadership program will happen next summer. The goal is to have the expanded programs reflect the demographics of the state.

"We want it to look like South Carolina," she said.

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