



LeaderReader

DECEMBER 2022 EDITION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ricky Butler '15

It's hard to believe that there are just a couple of weeks left in 2022. As the holidays barrel toward us, we're often inclined to reflect on our personal and professional trials and triumphs. I could write paragraphs about the methodical work going on behind the scenes by board and committee members, but I'd rather reflect on someone that embodies what we do: Sallie Parks.



I didn't have an opportunity to personally work with Sallie until later in her life, but I volunteered with organizations in her orbit and knew who she was because, well, who didn't?

About six years ago, she cold-called me because she heard that I was "her guy" if she needed a presentation from the sheriff's office for her beloved Dunedin Rotary Club. She wanted "one of the puppies" and insisted that I be her guest as well. You just didn't say "no" to Sallie Parks. Since then, I could count on hearing from her regularly for speakers or just to let me know she really liked a story she read in a sheriff's office publication.

One day following a luncheon, the conversation turned to Leadership Pinellas and she lit up. If you don't know her story, her mother's inspiration, and time she lost during her childhood due to illness was the launch pad for how she lived her life of service. So by the time she graduated from Leadership Pinellas in 1982, she was an emerging leader armed with a new perspective on her community. She credited her LP experience with empowering her to better navigate the ins and outs of Pinellas County. The rest is history.

I believe that the fuel to serve others or make the world better is within every single person – it's just a matter of igniting that fuel. The ignition point could be a single act of kindness, a mentor, an injustice in the community, wanting a sidewalk in your neighborhood, or simply gaining a new perspective.

As Leadership Pinellas Alumni, we all have unique experiences and the same appreciation for perspective that Sallie did. I won't call it "a resolution" because we all know how those end up, but as we move into 2023, think about how you can use your experience and network to ignite that fuel in others and launch a life of service. Find ways to do what our organization sets out to do every day: develop leaders to make our community better. You just might know the next Sallie Parks.

On behalf of the board of directors and all of our alumni, I wish you happy holidays and a prosperous new year.

LEADERSHIP PINELLAS CLASS OF 2023 CLASS PROJECT

David Vann

LP Class of 2023 (Best Class Ever!) completed their class project on Saturday, Dec. 10 at the Clearwater Historical Society in downtown Clearwater. The building went up in 1902 and became the first Clearwater High School in 1912. In the 1950s, an addition was built, but it hadn't been painted since! The painting project included a prep-and-prime day the week prior. The two-day event afforded class members to pick between the two dates or attend both for maximum fun. For the first time, the Youth Leadership Pinellas Class of '23 joined our group, earned volunteer hours, and made a significant contribution to the project. Nate Cocco is the leader of YLP and managed the coordination of their participation.

Both days started around 8 AM and ended by 1 PM. We had mixed teams from both Leadership programs cutting, rolling, and managing paint, scaffolding and ladders. The weather was perfect, and the painting project was a huge success. We provided breakfast, lunch and beverages for both days. Thanks to the board for reimbursement on lunch costs! Troy Friedlander, Evon Hampton, and David Vann did a wonderful job of organizing and communicating with the class. They met with the volunteers at CHS and generated a detailed plan to get the job done. Congratulations to all members of our fine classes on great attendance and excellent work!



YLP: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DAY

Emma Hughes- Saint Petersburg Catholic High School

On Nov. 2, Youth Leadership Pinellas got to participate in an eye opening community service project. Most of my fellow classmates and I have been fortunate enough to grow up in a home where food, clothes, a roof over our heads, and other basic human needs are just overlooked. The Health and Human Services day opened our eyes to the people in our community who are not as fortunate, that we didn't even know about.

We started our morning at Hope Villages food bank which was personally one of my favorite stops of the day. Hope Villages is dedicated to serving those who are hungry in our community and helping assist them to get back on their feet. At this location, we participated in an activity called hunger 101 where we were given a situational lifestyle and had to work with the resources given to get 2,000 calories of food for the day. This activity really showed me how much of a challenge it can be for impoverished people to find nutrition if they don't know where their next meal is coming from. Through this experience I also learned the importance of nutrition for all because nutrition is what sets the stage for success. Nutrition is what fuels our brains and bodies which is vital for impoverished people so they are able to grow and create opportunities for themselves.

Another one of my favorite stops from the day was Clothes for Kids. As a class, we all came together to gather donations of clothes, shoes, etc. to contribute to the Clothes for Kids initiative. This organization targets helping set children up for success through confidence. Clothes for Kids serves children from kindergarten through 12th grade who fall below the federal poverty line. Clothes for Kids is set up as a department store, stocked with clothes for all ages and genders from donations by the community. When children go into Clothes for Kids, they are given a unique shopping experience to make them feel special and they can pick out a full wardrobe free of charge. Clothes for Kids is so passionate about making sure children have enough clothes to go to school with confidence and be able to get an education, so they can be successful in life.

All of the organizations we visited filled me with happiness because I was never aware of just how many places there are in our area that are committed to closing the poverty gap in our community. Now that I have been educated about all of these resources, I look forward to giving back to our community and volunteering with these organizations on my own.



YLP: ENVIRONMENT DAY

Nate Cocco



Today's Youth Leadership Pinellas day embodied the environment. We started the day by visiting Pinellas County Solid Waste Disposal in St. Petersburg. This facility is the hub for all discarded matter in the county and is responsible for the sorting, reducing and recycling of waste. The "reusing" aspect is up to us, as we discussed the importance of limiting our personal waste for the ultimate goal of keeping our earth clean for as long as possible.

Our next outreach was St Pete Youth Farm, a farmstead that harvests and grows their own produce due to two surrounding grocery stores closing and a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables. The garden is open to all and relies on community members to encourage stability and fight food insecurity. Here, we tried various in-season leafy greens and redefined the word "fast food," as there is nothing faster than eating fresh produce straight from a garden.

From here, we went to Moccasin Lake Park to learn about Raptor Rescue and rehabilitating birds of prey. The organization relies on full-time volunteers to care for, nurture and feed their birds. Lastly, Keep Pinellas Beautiful hosted a presentation informing us on microplastics and their lasting effects on our waterways, in the air, and how we can do our part to use less single-use plastics. Inherently, today's lesson followed the common theme that many believe one person's actions cannot change our environment, but if this mentality were flipped and everyone did their part, so much good could come of it.



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