



Amanie Isaac (right) discusses a training issue with, from left, Will Quick, Jason Walters and Nikki Feliciano.

TAKING THE LEAD

Innovative Young Lawyer Training Program Offers Lessons Not Learned In School

By Russell Rawlings

It's 8:30 on a Saturday morning at the N.C. Bar Center and 16 young lawyers are filing in promptly for day two of this year's Leadership Academy.

Jason Walters normally spends this time playing with his 1½-year-old son so Mom can sleep in. Isaac Linnartz typically makes his weekly trip to the local farmer's market, washes clothes and spends quality time with his daughter.

Lisa Arthur will have to find another time to satisfy her "minor obsession" with running. Hayley Wells is also missing her Saturday morning run and, even worse, blueberry pancakes with her son.

Sidney Minter's basketball team will have to do without him, and Hilary Ventura will have to find another time to hike the mountains surrounding Morganton.

But no one is complaining. To the contrary, this highly motivated group of young lawyers readily traded the better part of their weekend for a chance to participate in the sixth year of the North Carolina Bar Association's groundbreaking leadership training program.

They come from cities and firms large and small, having been selected from a pool of applicants who have practiced law for at least two years and no more than 10. Although they have already distinguished themselves professionally, as evidenced by their selection for this year's class, they have every right to be a little nervous.

"I was apprehensive about applying," reveals Nikki Feliciano, who comes across as someone who never met a stranger. It took her a while to find her comfort zone.



The 'charismatic' Ruth Levy has the floor as the 'dynamic' Alston Ludwig listens intently.

"It definitely did not happen before lunch yesterday," she said. "Sometime after lunch I settled down once I realized that no one is judging here. I started to let my guard down, and I was definitely OK by the time we went to dinner."

Joy Ruhmann, founder and president of Level Up Leadership, directs the training program on behalf of the NCBA. She is joined by Terri Maultsby of Think.Eat.Grow, who provides instruction on nutrition and healthful living.

The sixth annual Leadership Academy is funded by Lawyers Mutual Liability Insurance Co. of North Carolina in honor of NCBA Executive Director Allan Head.

Two NCBA past presidents, law partners Norfleet Pruden and Gene Pridgen of K&L Gates, guided the program through its early years. Two former and recent chairs of the Young Lawyers Division, Patti Ramsey and Roberta King Latham, now fill the volunteer leadership roles.

Following a review of Friday's highlights, which included a round of 4ALL Statewide Service Day calls at WRAL-TV in Raleigh, the conversation turns to their personality assessment tests. Ruhmann utilizes the DISC assessment tool, which scores individuals according to their propensity for Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness.

There are no right or wrong answers, Ruhmann assures the young lawyers.

"The world would be an awful boring place if we did not

have diversity," Ruhmann says. "Wherever you fall on one of these profiles, it's a beautiful profile."

"You're here to learn how in every aspect of what you're doing to get what you want. As a leader, you need to make sure that it is also what the people you are leading want.

"Because you're young, it's easy to think you can do it all. I'm sorry to burst your bubble, but you can't."

"It was encouraging to listen to (President) Shelby Benton and (Past-president) Janet Ward Black yesterday," says Wells. "Everything seems to come so naturally to them, but they work at it."

Achieving what they have achieved, she adds, now appears to be an attainable goal.

"I don't know if I would have seen that before yesterday," Wells concludes.

Ruhmann presents the young lawyers with a scenario.

"It's 3 a.m. and you're driving around town, and there is not another car in sight. You have not been drinking. You stop at a stoplight and it doesn't change. Are you ever going to run it?"

"After a couple of cycles," answers Will Quick.

"I did it this morning," quips Paul Griffin.

"That's how these things play out in life," Ruhmann says. "You can't answer all of your clients' questions ... not on the spot."

"We were reminded of that yesterday," injects Wells in reference to her 4ALL experience.

The Power of Assessments in Leadership Development

Research from Harvard Business School has identified three core strengths that all highly effective leaders possess. One, they know themselves; two, they understand and read other people well; and three they know how to adapt to others.

The three personal assessments used by Level Up Leadership, Inc. as part of the North Carolina Bar Association Leadership Academy are designed to ensure the participants leave with a clear understanding of all three of these core strengths.

Level Up believes you need to use a combination of highly effective profiles that support and relate to one another in order to gain clarity of your core strengths and maybe even some vulnerabilities that, when not properly managed, can and often do become a formidable weakness.

The three profiles used in the NCBA Leadership Academy are:

The DISCcompass: The DISC profile helps leaders explore their natural response to the environment and potential emotional trigger points that may interfere with their effectiveness. It also helps leaders identify ways to better relate to others and improve their communication skills.

The Passioncompass: People who do what they love are more engaged, motivated and satisfied at the end of each day. With the Passion profile, leaders are able to give language to the passions that drive them, how their passions help them relate to others with similar or different passions and gain deeper insight into why people do what they do.

The Judgmentcompass: This report helps leaders understand how they process information, what their potential judgment biases and blind spots might be and what they can do to counter any blind spots to improve their performance as a leader.

When used in concert, this suite of assessments helps leaders increase their self-awareness and their understanding of others and learn the ways in which adapting can help them get more of what they want in a highly enlightening and insightful way.

Source: Joy Ruhmann, *Level Up Leadership*.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Amanie Isaac is glad she came.

“My law partner, Brandy Milazzo, told me about it,” Isaac says. “I’m like her little protégé. She told me, ‘you have to do this.’”

“She’s very involved in the community. She was like the 19th person I met. In Charlotte, if you don’t do an internship, sending out resumes is not going to do it. You have to get in front of people.

“I hate to say I was selling myself, but that is what it is like. It’s all about your personality: Can you integrate into that culture?”

Isaac can’t wait to get back to her firm to share what she’s already learned.

“It’s OK if we think differently, so long as we have the same goal,” Isaac said. “We will have a better outcome if we work together at it.

“I’m here because I want to be a better attorney, and in order to do that I have to be a better person. This will help me be a better attorney because this is a holistic approach that you do not learn in law school.”

Ruth Levy feels like she has what it takes to be a good leader.

“I just have never been told what five things I need to do to get there,” Levy said. “One of the women who practices in our firm, Elizabeth Scott, encouraged me to apply for this. She is the head of the women’s initiative at our firm, and she takes it very seriously.

“She is a cheerleader for us in a firm that is made up mostly of men. She wants us to grow as attorneys.”

Levy is doing just that, but it didn’t happen overnight, as evidenced by her response to being asked if she’s glad she went to law school.

“I am now,” Levy said. “It took a while to come to fruition, but there is nothing I would rather be doing. I wish I was better at it, but that will come in time.”

Tom Kelly received his nudge from law partner Noah Huffstetler, founding chair of the NCBA’s Health Law Section. For Griffin, encouragement came from Mital Patel, a graduate of the Leadership Academy’s Class of 2014.

“It’s great to meet all of these other young lawyers,” Kelly said. “And I have never had a DISC assessment. It has been very illuminating.”

“It’s a great opportunity to learn more about what is going on between these ears,” added Griffin. “I’m eating this up. I love finding out more about what makes me tick.”

KNOW THYSELF

The session shifts into a conversation regarding “The Power of Understanding Passions.” The categories are Aesthetic, Altruistic, Economic, Individualistic, Political, Regulatory and Theoretical.

“My Economic is high,” said Minter. “I’m not sure how to take that. I want to help people and I want to make a good living.”

Ruhmann encourages further comment: “Did you grow up poor?”

“No,” Minter responds. “We were probably lower middle class, and I had everything I ever needed, but I grew up around people who did not.

“Am I a bad person?”

“No,” Ruhmann quickly responds.

Griffin’s Regulatory score was low.

“I hate rules,” he proclaims.

“Why,” Ruhmann asks, “did you go to law school?”

“Because no one talked me out of it!”

“My Altruistic was the lowest of the group,” adds Jane Paksoy. “I was worried about that.”

“My Aesthetic was low,” ponders Levy, “and I love art.”

“How many of you are millennials,” Ruhmann asks. “How many of you were born after 1982?”

Think Eat Grow: Strategies For Healthy Living

Prolonged stress is linked to numerous physical and mental afflictions including depression, heart disease, obesity, ulcers and more. For those of us who find the demands of our careers inevitably create stress, it's especially important to have tools that promote wellness.

Eat With Intention

Eating habits are now killing more Americans each year than smoking habits. It used to be common to hear that a healthy weight was a simple matter of a calories-in minus calories-out equation, but evidence demonstrates the quality of food we consume determines much more than our weight.

Healthful food choices turn on genes that keep you healthy and turn off genes that promote disease. For a healthful approach to eating you might begin with advice from acclaimed writer Michael Pollan, "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants."

Simple steps to improve your diet:

- Eat raw fruits or vegetables at every meal, and a salad every day
- Drink half your body weight in water daily
- Keep snacks on hand such as nuts, apples and citrus so when you can't get away from work there's wholesome food available

Move Naturally

A little exercise is good and more exercise is better. An American Cancer Society study tracked 100,000 Americans for 14 years and found that sitting six or more hours a day is associated with increased mortality in both men and women.

Interrupting sitting time throughout the day, if only

to walk to another floor to refill a water bottle or use the restroom, makes a difference. When you have a quick question for a colleague, try walking across the office or, better yet, outside.

Exercise isn't just important to your physical health—it also rewires your brain. Studies show increased blood flow from exercise sharpens your thinking. A short run at lunch improves your processing speed and cognitive flexibility—traits that correlate with high performance levels in intellectually demanding jobs.

Getting more movement in your day can start simply:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Plan walking meetings
- Schedule your workouts the same way you schedule other appointments

Mindful Moments Matter

Meditation is a powerful tool to combat stress and develop an increased sense of calm. Its impact on our physiology and psychology is quite remarkable. Cultivating sustained attention to sit in meditation maximizes our potential to think clearly in times of stress. Thanks to functional MRI technology we know now that mindfulness meditation trains the brain for optimal productivity. It increases stimulation in the prefrontal cortex of the brain, resulting in increased focus and performance. Meditation reduces stress and alleviates depression.

If you're curious about starting a meditation practice, there are plenty of apps to guide beginners. Try one of these:

- Headspace
- Stop, Breathe & Think
- Calm

Source: Terri Maultsby, *Think.Eat.Grow*

Leadership Academy 2015

Lauren Arnette, New Bern
Jennifer Blue, Raleigh
Kris Cook, Ahoskie
Julie Cronin, Raleigh
Charles Cushman, New Bern
Whitney Frye, Greensboro
Jeff Goss, Sylva
Brooks Jaffa, Charlotte
Dionne Jenkins, Winston-Salem
Corinne Jones, Greensboro
Jesse Jones, Raleigh
Leslie Lasher, Wake Forest
Justin Lockamy, Clinton
Lauren Page, Wilmington
Zeb Smathers, Canton
Bryan Starrett, Greensboro

Leadership Academy 2014

Christopher Anglin, Raleigh
Todd Billmire, Charlotte
Daniel Bowes, Durham
Zeke Bridges, Raleigh
Karen Chapman, Charlotte
Mark Cummings, Greensboro
Milind Dongre, Winston-Salem
Amber Duncan, Charlotte
Sonny Haynes, Winston-Salem
William Oden, Wilmington
Mital Patel, Raleigh
Erin Reis, Greensboro
Deanna Thorne, Raleigh
Justin Truesdale, Raleigh
Hannah Vaughan, Greensboro
Melissa Walker, Cary
Jon Ward, Greensboro

Leadership Academy 2013

Lucy Austin, Apex
Heather Bankert, Lincolnton
John Blair, Charlotte
Ann Cospier, Raleigh
Sarah Crotts, Winston-Salem
Michelle Denning, Smithfield
Damon Duncan, Greensboro
Andrew Freeman, Winston-Salem
Nicolette Fulton, Raleigh
James Hash, Durham
Benita Jones, Raleigh
Sarah Phillips, Davidson
Faison Sutton, Wilmington
Colin Tarrant, Wilmington
Michael Wells, Winston-Salem
Mica Worthy, Charlotte

Leadership Academy 2012

Ryan H. Blackledge, Durham
Ivey L. Brown Jr., Winston-Salem
Matthew A. Cordell, New Bern
James R. DeMay, Concord
Samuel A. Forehand, Raleigh
Samuel B. Franck, Wilmington
Hunter Eddins Gentel, Zebulon
Dorrian H. Horsey, Raleigh
Mark A. Jones, Winston-Salem
Amily K. McCool, Durham
Abigail E. Peoples, Greensboro
Meredith O. Priestley, Claremont
Richard A. Prosser, Rocky Mount
Ciara L. Rogers, New Bern
Stuart L. Russell, Winston-Salem
Katherine D. Young, Raleigh

Leadership Academy 2011

Dennis L. Boothe, Raleigh
Alison G. Bradshaw, Clinton
Niya T. Fonville, Morganton
Benjamin M. Gallop, Elizabeth City
Chelsea B. Garrett, Boone
Edward W. Griggs, Winston-Salem
Jason T. Grubbs, Kernersville
Hilton T. Hutchens, Fayetteville
Frankie T. Jones, Jr., Greensboro
Amily K. McCool, Durham
Harrison A. Lord, Charlotte
Charlotte A. Mitchell, Raleigh
D. J. O'Brien, Greensboro
Stacy M. Race, Raleigh
Robert C.M. Rountree, Wilson
Caitlin A. Ryland, Raleigh
Sarah Grace Zambon, Fletcher

Wells is the only one who does not raise his or her hand.

"I'm the old lady in the group at 36!"

Paksoy, Gwendolyn Lewis and Patrick Pait have unique profiles for young lawyers in general and Leadership Academy participants in particular. Paksoy practices in-house with inVentive Health, Inc., Lewis is Elon University School of Law's first alumni director, and Pait is the county attorney for Robeson County.

"I was clerking at the North Carolina Supreme Court," said Paksoy. "Another clerk's husband had left the company, and he told his former boss to hire me.

"I took a job as a contracts associate, which was J.D. preferred but not J.D. required. It was a bit of a risk. I had a chance to join a law firm, which would have been a lot more predictable, but one of the people I had met through networking helped me decide to take the risk."

A year later she was offered the counsel position.

Lewis graduated from Elon Law School in 2013 and took the alumni position a year later.

"This is helping me gain a deeper understanding of who I am as an individual and how I can partner with our alumni," Lewis said. "It is showing me a lot about how our alumni engage with me and helping me rethink how I engage with them."

At 30 years of age, Pait is probably the state's youngest county attorney.

"I did not expect to have this opportunity so early," Pait said. "It was not on my radar. I was somewhat recruited.

"In my work, I have to work with leaders. This will help me guide those leaders. One of the things I hope to improve on is my ability to be effective. This puts one more arrow in the quiver to get the job done better."

GAME ON

Maultsby takes over after lunch and divides the young lawyers into groups of two. The attorney deemed to be the most charismatic of the two faces the attorney who considers themselves to be the most dynamic.

The charismatic attorney is ordered to start talking and not stop for three minutes. The dynamic attorney is not allowed to respond.

The exercise proves entertaining and enlightening. The eight lawyers tasked with talking are finding it difficult speaking to someone who is not allowed to speak back. The dynamic lawyers, on the other hand, seem to enjoy the tranquility of their roles.

"Charismatics," Maultsby asks, "did you have their atten-

tion? Was it worth the \$375 an hour you are charging them?"

Mid-afternoon arrives and it's time to depart. Will Quick is headed downtown to put in a few hours in his Raleigh office.

"I have a deposition on Monday and Tuesday," Quick says, "so I need to do a little more prep work. And I have to be home by 6 because my wife has dinner plans with her girlfriends."

At least you'll get to see the Duke-Carolina game?

"I'll be watching our 5-month-old, so I'm not sure if we'll be watching Teletubbies or basketball."

Alston Ludwig has the longest drive.

"We're in Asheville," he said. "We were in Atlanta, but when my wife, who is a dentist, had an opportunity to move there, I

Leadership Academy Class of 2016

Lisa Arthur, Smith Moore Leatherwood, Greensboro

Nikki Feliciano, Pinto Coates Kyre & Bowers, Greensboro

Paul Griffin, The Select Group, Cary

Amanie Isaac, Milazzo Schaffer Webb Law, Charlotte

Tom Kelly, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, Raleigh

Ruth Levy, Williams Mullen, Raleigh

Gwen Lewis, Elon University School of Law, Greensboro

Isaac Linnartz, Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell & Jernigan, Raleigh

Alston Ludwig, McGuire, Wood & Bissette, Asheville

Sidney Minter, Fisher & Phillips, Charlotte

Patrick Pait, Robeson County Attorney, Lumberton

Jane Paksoy, inVentive Health, Raleigh

Will Quick, Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey & Leonard, Raleigh

Hilary Ventura, Legal Aid of North Carolina, Morganton

Jason Walters, Davis & Hamrick, Winston-Salem

Hayley Wells, Ward and Smith, Asheville

rode her coattails to Asheville. It was an opportunity we did not want to pass up.

"We're expecting our first child in June."

Sixteen young lawyers who represent the future of the legal profession in North Carolina depart the Bar Center. Any uncertainty they may have harbored about this new experience and the people with whom they are sharing it has long since given way to a sense of calm and confidence.

They are looking forward to their next session and taking their next steps toward becoming better leaders and better lawyers.

They're looking good on both fronts. *WLL*