

IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

September 2008

By Kate Breck Calhoun

Five years ago I accepted a sales and marketing position at the Tucson Convention Center. I made the bittersweet decision to leave my promising hotel career with one of the most successful hotel companies in the world for a challenging and potentially rewarding public sector job. It was quite a change for me. I was used to working in the private sector and now needed to make the adjustments to that of a public servant. I was on board, wanted to be part of the team and wanted to do well.



First, I met with several community leaders including my mentor, Rick Vaughn, Sr. Vice President of Sales and Marketing with the Metro Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau, to seek guidance. Rick immediately recommended that I "connect with our community." A broad statement yet, as I look back, I understand his recommendation was encouraging me to use the supportive approach adapted from Hershey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model. As an apprentice it was my responsibility to make use of my abilities and established commitment to my new job.

To enhance that fit, I took the advice of another community friend who suggested I apply for Greater Tucson Leadership's Adult Leadership Program. She had just completed the Adult Leadership Program and felt the program was a great benefit both personally and professionally. Essentially, the program teaches the history and present services available in our community as well as outlines the many issues the Tucson community faces. Many prominent leaders in a variety of fields present timely and relevant subject matter. I appreciated getting to know the next generation of leaders who were in the class with me and many of them have become close and trusted advisors.

As I put together the documents required for the program, I learned that The Adult Leadership Program is not unique to Tucson. There are similar programs throughout the United States; programs in Chicago,

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Denver, Phoenix, Washington DC, to name a few. As a matter of fact, Michelle Obama is a 1993 graduate of Leadership Greater Chicago

program. Our own state senator, Pete Hershberger graduated from our program in 2000 while city councilman, Rodney Glassman was a graduate of the class of 2007.

Greater Tucson Leadership is not just for us public sector types either. Jannie Cox, Foundation CEO Emeritus at Carondelet Foundation graduated in 1981 and Bill Holmes, VP/Community Relations Manager of Wells Fargo Bank graduated in 2003. Maricela Solis de Kester, Tucson's 40 Under 40 winner, and President/CEO of Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce graduated with me in the class of 2005.

I recently read that effective PR practitioners need to be at the table in real time, know the issues, and understand the big picture. I refer to the Adult Leadership Program on a daily basis. I understand the current marketing conditions in education, arts, environment and economics. I had the opportunity to follow a juvenile judge for a day and understand issues of our youth. I was able to meet twelve health care leaders in our community in one day.

If you look at our Alumni list you will see a diverse "who's who" of Tucson's leaders. The Adult Leadership Program provided me the opportunity to truly connect with the community as Rick Vaughan had instructed me to do. These Leadership Programs around the nation are sort of a fraternal organization, sprinkled with networking opportunities and education which provide community knowledge.

Greater Tucson Leadership Adult Leadership Program began way back in 1980 and is well established. Our graduated list includes over 300 Tucsonan's who have been given the foundation to launch into public office or into "C" status.

Three years later after graduating from the program, I continue my involvement with Greater Tucson Leadership. Public relations is about relationships and this organization offers me the opportunity to stay connected, meet new people, and learn about real issues in our community. The relationships I built during the Adult Leadership Program help me to do my job better.

As I grow into my position at the Tucson Convention Center, I have learned that Sales and Marketing is about Public Relations. In order to

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be successful I connect with my community, know the issues, and know the leaders.

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