

**Association of Leadership Educators National Conference**  
**Memphis, Tennessee**  
**July 14-17, 2004**

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It was my pleasure to attend the Annual National Leadership Conference held in Memphis, Tennessee and sponsored by the Association of Leadership Educators (ALE). This conference provided this agent with an opportunity to share Juneau County's Advanced Leadership Programs (ALP) successes, challenges and technological developments by way of an hour and a half presentation by this agent and a Juneau County Advanced Leadership Program Board Member. It was an even greater reward to experience the many other leadership programs that attendees from 23 other states shared at the conference. The goals of the ALE Conference were to:

- Identify and share recent research, cutting-edge technology, best practices, new methodology and programs in leadership education.
- Identify through sharing, networking and discussion groups, critical emerging issues, which need research, further study, program or curriculum development or expanded delivery methods.
- Gather tools, learn to tap resources and identify applied programs and practices that will enable leadership educators to function more effectively.
- Showcase and share leadership education models, techniques and strategies in multi-cultural settings.

The target audience was educators, consultants, researchers, practitioners and other leadership education professionals interested in leadership education, studies, practices, principles and research.

We were encouraged to submit proposals related to research findings and application, program development, innovative practices, technological applications, career development and professional growth and strengthening, supporting and promoting the field of leadership education. (A copy of our proposal is included).

Thanks to this conference, not only did our Juneau County Advanced Leadership Program become recognized, but the University of Wisconsin-Extension Desire2Learn Program did also. We shared the Desire2Learn technology during our presentation.

Due to presentations by other state leadership programs, our Juneau County Advanced Leadership Program decided that they needed to include more soft skills. Previously I had convinced our County Leadership Board to hold back on teaching soft skills and deal more with hard facts. I came to that opinion after attending a seminar of Wisconsin County Leadership Program discussions held by UW-Extension. I now believe more soft skills need to be included because our participants know well the issues facing Juneau County, but have not gained the needed skills to be effective leaders in dealing with these issues. We have added a number of soft skill educational moments to our program since the conference. Further, my fellow presenter and I adopted several useful demonstrations into our curriculum by way of the interesting presentations given by other attendees in order to enhance those soft skills.

Another unexpected result from our attendance was the selling of a parables leadership book that our Juneau County ALP Board Member and fellow presenter had developed after coming on to our local board. We sold 19 of those books at the conference and the profits were then donated to our county program. After we returned home, the University of Minnesota Program Leader for their leadership program called and asked if they could use our book. This was quite an honor, as they will give all credit to the Juneau County Advanced Leadership Program.

The ALE Conference also inspired and motivated this agent to encourage the development of a Wisconsin Education Leaders Association. I have selfishly recruited colleagues, Annie Jones and Sarah Burgert, to lead the way due to their ongoing supportive efforts to organize leadership program materials statewide. It also provided an opportunity for this agent to share several ideas with the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program (WRLP) in developing its next Wisconsin Leadership Annual Summit. Recommendations I have made to some of their board members is to limit the Annual Conference to one day rather than two; to drop the fee from \$130 down to \$25 at most; to encourage presentation of county and campus programs; to include campus, private consultants, specialists and county leadership educators; to not use a keynote speaker that might cost money. I also recommended that they make available a maximum 30-minute presentation allowing three separate presentations at the same time for attendees to choose from. It seems that having only 30 minute presentations are too short, but it is amazing how much you can share in that time. Also by allowing the choice of three separate programs during those presentations allows more choices and more valuable experiences.

In conclusion, the very positive experiences we had at this Association of Leadership Educators National Conference were many. Not only did Juneau County and the University of Wisconsin-Extension gain vital exposure, but it also inspired this agent and my County Leadership Board Member and fellow presenter to recommend and initiate several useful changes to our county leadership curriculum.

I want to thank Sue Buck the Central District Director and the WACNREDP Association for financially supporting this agent. Without their support this agent would not have attended this National Leadership Conference and would not have gained so many vital, valuable and inspiring experiences. The Juneau County Board of Supervisors does not approve of the use of county funds to attend any out of state conferences, so your support was much appreciated.