Leadership Academy Quotes from Past Participants
Updated 9/12/19

2016-17 Class

The Leadership Academy far exceeded my admittedly high expectations because of the high quality of engaged speakers, the wonderful attention to detail in planning the sessions by the State Bar staff and planners, and the willingness of my fellow participants to so fully engage with one another. I highly recommend the Leadership Academy to anyone, at any stage of their career. Kathy Charlton

The G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy was a great opportunity to learn skills for managing others and excelling in leadership. It also provided the added benefit of being able to network with other attorneys who practice in different areas of law, in different geographical locations, who are also motivated to be leaders in the legal community. - Elizabeth Constable

The G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy was a spectacular opportunity to understand best practices in the various facets of leadership, to evaluate and focus on my own leadership development, and to connect with an inspiring group of dynamic lawyers.

Clyde W. Tinnen
Foley & Lardner LLP

"The Leadership Academy really showed me how to recognize that everyone has different leadership styles and learning styles. Once you recognize that fact, you are better equipped to capitalize on critical leadership skills to successfully work with others whether in a professional or personal setting."
Renae Flowers

This program was life and career changing. Coming in, being a "leader" was something that felt nebulous and tedious. Leaving each of the sessions and the program as a whole, I felt a new sense of energy and confidence that maybe I really do have what it takes to be a great leader. I have implemented many of the strategies we discussed and seen benefits in my personal and professional life already. I feel a renewed sense of purpose in my work. It was truly a privilege to participate in this program. It is my sincere hope that my classmates and I use the tools and inspiration from this program to make a mark on our communities and the legal profession.

Katie Kegel
State Public Defenders Office

The G. Land Ware Leadership Academy provided an excellent opportunity to connect and reconnect with peers in the legal community, all while expanding our leadership and professional skillsets in an effort to be impactful in our respective communities. It was inspiring to be in the room with so many interesting attorneys in various stages of their careers. It was meaningful to hear from an impressive list of professionals [from Judges to professors to psychologists] on a range of topics that we can all put into practice, regardless of our practice areas. And finally, it was fun to participate in the various activities that followed each topic. The intimate class size and interactive sessions helped us to learn more about our peers, ourselves, and ultimately, served as good starting points for us to grow as professional leaders. If you are considering participating in the next Academy, I strongly encourage you to do so - you will not regret it!

Kristen D. Hardy
Briggs & Stratton Corp.
I think that the Leadership Academy was an amazing opportunity to consider what good leadership is and what skills need to be practiced and used on a regular basis to be an effective leader in your community, whether it is in the private, public, or non-profit sector. One of the greatest things I came away with was a network of other attorneys practicing across a wide variety of areas in Wisconsin. The seminars were run by charismatic, entertaining, and down-to-earth attorneys and other professionals who emphasized a hands on, participative approach to really drive the lesson home. I use something I learned in the Leadership Academy every day – just this past week, I used tips from the networking session when I attended a fundraiser, time management skills to wrap up all the important tasks at work before I leave for my honeymoon in 2 days, and active listening to help identify issues with a colleague. While it can be hard to carve out time from work and weekends, the days spent in the leadership academy have proved invaluable to me.

Lindsay Fedler
Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions

The G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy focused on the type of skills that I practice every day as a lawyer but are often overlooked in the typical CLE: for example, communication and active listening, public speaking, conflict resolution, time management, and self-care. It was a privilege to learn from and interact with leaders in our profession from across the state, and I’m very excited to have added each of them to my career "jungle gym."

Stacy A. Alexejun
Quarles & Brady LLP

The creators of the Leadership Academy put considerable thought into the design of the program, incorporating different perspectives on leadership and communication. The program effectively combined practical tips with more abstract and theoretical concepts, providing us holistic guidance on what it takes to be an effective leader at work, in the community, and socially. In my 15 years of practice, this was the most effective and engaging program I’ve ever attended.

David J. Turek
Gass Weber Mullins LLC

“My participation in the G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy gave me the great opportunity to meet and network with a diverse group of attorneys from all over the state with varying practices. The Leadership Academy not only enhanced my communication skills, but inspired me to increase my involvement with the State Bar of Wisconsin. I absolutely recommend lawyers from all backgrounds to consider participating in the Leadership Academy.”

Makda Fessahaye
Wisconsin Department of Corrections
2017-18 Class

The G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy exceeded my expectations. I was given tools for each session given to actually bring back lessons learned to my professional and personal life. You didn’t solely learn the skills at the academy, you got to practice with your academy colleagues and with the entire group.

The network of professional friends was extremely rewarding. It was beneficial to learn from other leaders in the legal profession and community. I highly recommend this academy and the leadership teachings.

Whitney A. Ederer, JD, MPH
Wisconsin Department of Health

“Participating in the academy reawakened my motivation for becoming an attorney, and reminded me I had the skills to improve the legal community and the confidence to take a role in shaping the common good.”

Andrew Franklin
Franklin Law Office LLC

“What is unfortunate is that we do not have enough true leaders – those people who show respect, thoughtfulness, and have the ability to carry a team,” says Vincent Kurta of Haukaas Law Office S.C., Ashland, and a participant in the 2018 Leadership Academy.

“Often, instead, we see ‘anti-leaders’ or ‘contrary-leaders’ – those who let their own voice of ego drown out the voices of others,” says Kurta “We know these people when we see them. They are often the loudest, because they do not let others speak. And while the loudest, they often really say the least.

“What is fortunate is my decision to be a part of the 2017-18 G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy,” says Kurta. “I saw a group of people who push themselves to be better listeners, better people, and better leaders. In this push, they can be heard speaking, ‘I can do more. I can be more. I can do and be more for others.’ These are the voices of leaders. These are the people who will lead the way in the future, because they should. The academy gave us tools for proper leadership, and it is time to put those tools to use.

Vince S. Kurta
Bad River Indian Tribe Chief Blackbird Center - Legal Department

What was interesting to me was the amount of personal growth experienced, well beyond skill building and information about "leadership." Several of the closing talks really moved me when the speakers revealed significant personal breakthroughs. I am greatly heartened that this program will help the community at large, as each of us goes forth and spreads "good leadership" in our communities, whether through modeling good leadership behavior or increasing our involvement.

K. Bartlett Durand, Jr.
Durand Law LLC
I got so much more than I expected from the Leadership Academy. Not only did I obtain tools, that unlike other CLE programs, I actually use often, I obtained a greater sense of my own purpose and ability to succeed. Most importantly, I feel connected to a great group of lawyers from all different practices from all over Wisconsin that I know I can call if a need arises or just need someone to back me up if I am lacking self-confidence.

So thank you to the State Bar and to my fellow participants!

Elizabeth Ruthmansdorfer
Moertl, Wilkins & Campbell SC

The Leadership Academy not only helped me identify areas in which I could improve my communication and leadership skills, it also helped me recognize my own strengths and trust myself more as a lawyer and a leader. The best part about it, though, was being in a room full of people who all wanted to learn and grow in our personal and professional lives and lift each other up to meet our goals. I now have a great group of people that I can reach out to if I have doubts or questions about anything.

Polly Shoemaker
ABC for Health Inc.

I wish all CLEs followed the curriculum of the G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy. You meet with a small group of committed professionals and learn the material together over a few sessions. It was the closest thing to law school as I've experienced since graduation - but none of the stress. We all learned together, supported each other and graduated as a group committed to helping each other achieve their goals.

Chad A. Lanning
Lubar & Lanning LLC

As someone who loathes “networking” and public speaking, I highly recommend the Leadership Academy because it gently pushed me to voluntarily step outside of my comfort zone. By the end of the Academy I was volunteering to speak first in front of my colleagues. It helped increase my confidence and offered tips to make networking less terrorizing for me.

The speakers were informative and engaging which is really helpful when we are stuck in one room for many hours per day.

It’s also great that I was able to make so many professional connections. Just this past week I attended the State Bar’s Annual Conference and Meeting and it was comforting to see a few familiar faces from the Academy.

Jennifer L. Johnson
Legal Action of Wisconsin Inc.
I can’t say enough about the Leadership Academy. It goes beyond the traditional CLE—which focuses solely on teaching you a skill or providing some bit of knowledge that serves to make you a better lawyer—by also providing you with the skills to make you a better leader. Regardless of the situation you find yourself in, you will find yourself using what you learned in the Academy.

But, the Leadership Academy isn’t just different in that it gives you more than the traditional CLE, the process is also unlike any CLE I have ever attended. The curriculum was so collaborative, and the environment so supportive, that I found myself excited to attend the next session. Over the course of the Academy I made connections that I know will last throughout my professional career.

Lance Leonhard
Marathon County Administration

I loved the Academy and I am so grateful to have been a part of it.

It was a safe environment to stretch ourselves. To move outside our “comfortable every day” approach - to everything and anything. We learned how to communicate more effectively, to become more confident when talking to our peers and mentors, to lead meetings, to take chances,— and so much more.

I, too, wish more CLEs were able to capture the “small group” atmosphere that was nurtured at the Academy. I wonder how we became such a cohesive group. Was it the guidance of the State Bar staff who manages the program? Was it the speakers who challenged us to be our best? Was it blind luck? — Or was it us? At first, we were merely a committed, disparate group who wanted to become leaders. Over the course of the Academy we found our similarities. We supported each other. We became resources, sources of referrals, and most importantly friends.

Rhonda K. Frank-Loron
2018-19 Class

My experience with the Leadership Academy was eye opening and beneficial because it enabled me to recognize leadership attributes I already possessed and identified leadership attributes that I need to work on as part of my personal journey to become a better leader and a better lawyer.

Dawn N. Klockow  
Green Lake County Corporation Counsel

“The G. Lane Ware Academy was an invaluable resource for developing my understanding of what it takes to be a leader in the legal community. I have already benefited from many practical aspects of the presentations and hands-on training provided. I highly recommend the program to any attorney looking for guidance on how to manage the daily stresses of a legal career while creating a vision for their future role in the Bar.”

Eileen I. Dorfman  
Bell Moore & Richter SC

I have been an attorney for 30 years. Attending the G. Lane Ware Academy proved that a person is never too old or too experienced to learn many new things. The Academy offered new perspectives and taught me many fresh and innovative principles on leadership, conflict management, networking, public speaking, and time management. I walked away from each session with very practical information that I have been able to use in my workplace and in my practice. I also met some of the best people in the program and look forward to long-lasting relationships with all of them. I cannot say enough about the outstanding quality of the Academy, and would encourage any attorney to take advantage of the learning and the experience.

Lisa M. Bergersen  
Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet LLC

I can’t say enough about how much I enjoyed the G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy. It is such a great atmosphere not only to learn about leadership but to learn about yourself. I was surprised by the diverse group of attorney attendees and to see that despite the diverse background and practice areas that we shared many of the same struggles in our development as attorneys. This is not your typical CLE where it’s a race to get through the slides. It is interactive, enlightening, and entertaining. You develop relationships with the presenters and the attendees, which is incredibly unique and so valuable. We were already talking about when we can get together before the Academy had even finished!

Jonathan H. Klock  
Gundersen Health System, Inc.

The G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy provided an invaluable opportunity for me to not only learn new leadership skills, but also to be introspective and honestly identify and assess the leadership skills I already possess. The faculty and my fellow attendees created an environment where we were comfortable to take risks and grow both as individuals and leaders. I am honored to have had the opportunity to learn, network, and grow with colleagues that I now consider friends.

Melissa A. Spindler  
Smith Keane LLP
“Participating in the G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy was a life-changing experience. It gave me the opportunity to develop my leadership skills and unearth skills I did not yet possess. I appreciate the academy's diversity both in private and public sector attorneys but also in culture. My colleagues were some of the most engaging and thought-provoking people I have been around and I’m a better listener, leader, and attorney because of our various interactions. I would highly recommend the Leadership Academy.”

Saveon DuBois Grenell  
Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet LLC

"For the majority of my professional life, I have maintained the belief that there is so much that I don't know, that surely I cannot possess any leadership traits. The G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy opened my eyes to discredit that belief. Through my participation in this program, I gained a new sense of professional self-worth, was able to recognize leadership attributes I already possessed, and allowed me to find a creative way to combine the skills I had with the skills I learned. It has been a very satisfactory journey. Kudos to the Leadership Development Committee for creating a practical and fun program to teach is how to be better lawyers"

Cynthia Herber  
CRH Legal LLC

"The Leadership Academy provided useful written resources that I was able to share with my leadership in developing our office culture. We didn't have to reinvent the wheel which is incredibly helpful for anyone with a small practice. Apart from tangible resources, I was able to meet industry experts, judges, and other lawyers that have helped expand my network outside of my area of practice and into other parts of Wisconsin. I can now tap a greater and stronger network and bolster my practice."

Asma Imtiazali Kadri  
ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation, Inc.

“The Leadership Academy provided me with the confidence and tools to become a leader at my law firm and in my areas of practice. I’m already seeing the benefits of the program in my career as it has helped me see my potential, pursue opportunities for leadership and more effectively network.”

Claire E. Hartley  
Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet, LLC

“The skills I learned during the G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy have enhanced my practice as Deputy District Attorney in La Crosse County by strengthening communication skills, boosting confidence in public speaking and networking, and giving strategies to enhance my productivity. I learned at least one thing in every session that I could implement to develop my leadership skills, both within my office and in my community. This was one of the most practical CLE programs I have attended.”

Jessica Skemp  
Deputy District Attorney, La Crosse County