



Mark and Liz Davidson
Jaye and Brent Powell



DOUBLE DUTY

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Since launching in 1984, more than 1,600 community leaders have participated in Leadership Winston-Salem—and many of them have been couples. With Valentine’s Day approaching and relationships on the minds of many, we talked with two LWS couples about the merits of sharing the experience.

Mark Davidson, airport director of the Airport Commission of Forsyth County, applied to participate in LWS because his wife, Liz, encouraged him.

“Liz shared her experience with the program, and I decided that it would be a great way to get involved and learn about the community,” Mark says. “I moved here in 2010, and the contacts I developed were mostly in transportation and economic development. Leadership Winston-Salem changed that quickly; my network of business associates and friends grew dramatically.”

Liz, who works at RockTenn Merchandising Displays, says LWS also impacted their family.

“By serving together, our love grows for each other and others,” she says. “Committing together also holds us more accountable. The program reinforced my commitment to volunteering in the community.” She adds that the experience also encouraged their daughter to start volunteering, primarily through Crosby Scholars.

Another couple, Jaye and Brent Powell, say that Leadership Winston-Salem expanded the depth of their community view and helped them step outside of their own “bubble.” Both of them work in marketing at Hanesbrands.

“Watching Jaye go through it, she would come home from her community days and want to sit down and share all of the things she had learned—all of the good stuff going on, but also all of the

Local couples discuss sharing the Leadership Winston-Salem experience

challenges,” says Brent, who is participating in LWS now. “I don’t know that we had taken a very active role in our community to that point.”

The Powells, who have two young children, say their passion is education and ensuring all children are prepared for school.

“Everywhere I went, I asked, ‘What can I do to help?’” Jaye says. The first answer was usually money, but she also heard about the importance

of being involved, being an advocate, and helping with projects. “There’s so much good going on in so many places, but there’s still such a need. They’re really complex issues that are going to take a lot of help from a lot of different avenues.”

Brent appreciates the diversity of expertise represented by his classmates in LWS.

“Everybody’s coming at the challenge from a different place,” he says. “It allows me to have more informed conversations and see through different lenses what, to me, may be very black and white.”

Ultimately, Leadership Winston-Salem has helped the Powells target their efforts to benefit their community.

“We knew we wanted to be involved but didn’t know where our skills would help and where we were most needed,” Jaye says. “The one thing I walked away with is that it’s time to stop talking about it and time to start doing something. It may not be the final be-all end-all, but it’s a start.”

—KATHY NORCROSS WATTS

This article is the ninth in a yearlong series on Leadership Winston-Salem as the program celebrates its 30th anniversary. For more info on LWS, go to leadershipws.org.