

PHOTO BY HUGH QUINN



IGNITING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

For 30 years, Leadership Winston-Salem has connected, engaged, and transformed local leaders.

BY KATHY NORCROSS WATTS

When community leaders launched Leadership Winston-Salem three decades ago, they set what seemed like a simple goal: they wanted people to talk to each other.

“A leadership transition was stirring,” says Ed Pleasants, one of the founders of Leadership Winston-Salem (LWS). “The Old Guard, the ‘keepers of Winston-Salem,’ was old and tired. I, and my age group of 40 somethings, were told, ‘You need to step up and make things happen in this city.’”

“There was a movement in the neighborhoods,” he adds. “They were tired of the so-called Old Guard running things, and they wanted to be involved. It still seemed we were a really divided community: racially, economically.”

Leadership Winston-Salem began in 1984 after a series of

strategic efforts. Before 1982, the late Julius Corpening, development director at Wake Forest University, recognized the need for Winston-Salem to have a community leadership program and contacted the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce. A year later, Pleasants, then president of the Chamber of Commerce, appointed a task force to study existing leadership programs in Nashville, Greensboro, Atlanta, and Birmingham.

In fall 1983, the late Tom Hearn became the new president of Wake Forest. Hearn had started the leadership program in Birmingham, and he became the first president of Leadership

Winston-Salem. Pleasants was appointed as vice president and Corpening as head of the first program committee.

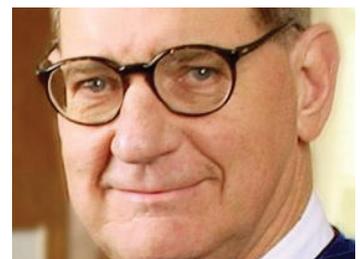
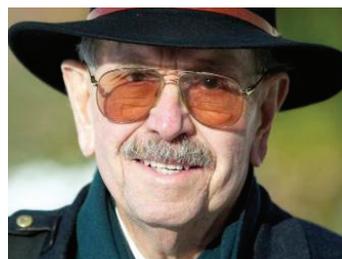
“This was sort of radical,” Pleasants says. “We were going to attempt to identify leaders throughout the community—black and white, male and female, religious and union—and put them all together.”

Their thinking was, “Why don’t we see what’s going on in our community and solve some of these problems. Maybe some of these relationships can help people trust each other when heretofore they had not,” Pleasants adds.

The nonprofit organization celebrates its 30-year anniversary

Celebration 2014

The induction of the class of 2014 will be held June 11 at the Benton Convention Center, beginning with a reception at 5:15 p.m. followed by dinner. Don Flow, chairman and CEO of Flow Companies Inc., will be the keynote speaker. Cost is \$55. For more info, go to leadershipws.org.



FROM LEFT: Ed Pleasants, Julius Corpening, and Tom Hearn