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Leadership Tennessee Announces Class X as It Celebrates 10 Years of Addressing the State's Largest Issues

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (June 30, 2023) – Leadership Tennessee, a collective with a mission to foster non-partisan dialogue on issues of state importance, today announced 48 individuals named to its 2023–2024 Signature Program Class X.

The cohort includes representatives from 14 Tennessee counties with diverse professional experience in the business, government, education and nonprofit sectors.

Over the course of 10 months, the cohort will visit all corners of the state, analyzing challenges that Tennessee faces, and will work together to identify the best solutions and opportunities. The statewide study will result in concrete plans to continue dialogue and actions addressing the most serious issues uncovered.

“Collaboration is critical as we continue to work together in moving Tennessee forward,” said Alfred Degrafinreid II, president and CEO, Leadership Tennessee. “Tennessee looks starkly different today compared to when this program began 10 years ago, and every year, we face new and challenging issues. I’m confident in the diverse makeup of this class and know that these are the right individuals to create meaningful change across the state.”

The group was chosen by a selection committee co-chaired by Valoria Armstrong (LT Class IV) and John Tolsma (LT Class VIII), both graduates of Leadership Tennessee’s Signature Program. Candidates were evaluated based on the following criteria: leadership experience, a history of addressing statewide issues in both a personal and professional capacity, and a strong understanding of what challenges Tennessee faces today.

Individuals named to the cohort, alphabetically by county, are:

Carroll County

- **Joseph Butler**, Mayor, Carroll County

Carter County

- **Patty Woodby**, Mayor, Carter County

Davidson County

- **Adrienne Battle**, Superintendent, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
- **Stephen Bland**, Chief Executive Officer, WeGo Public Transit
- **Jennifer Brantley**, Managing Partner, MP&F Strategic Communications
- **Teresa Broyles-Aplin**, CEO, Nashville Electric Service
- **David Steele Ewing**, CEO, Nashville History On Tour
- **Shan Foster**, Co-Founder/CEO, Fostering Healthy Solutions; Executive Director, AMEND Together
- **Charlane Oliver**, State Senator, Tennessee General Assembly
- **Margie Quin**, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Children's Services
- **Brian Straessle**, Executive Director, The Sycamore Institute
- **Deborah Hennessee Thomas**, Executive Vice President, Pinnacle Financial Partners
- **Troy White**, Executive Director, Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency

Hamilton County

- **Demetrus Coonrod**, Councilwoman, City of Chattanooga
- **Cory Gearrin**, Deputy Mayor, Hamilton County
- **Lynda Hood**, Executive Director, Chattanooga Bar Association
- **Aaron Melda**, SVP Transmission and Power Supply, TVA
- **Todd Ray**, SVP Government Programs, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee
- **Shalin Tejani**, President/Managing Director/CEO, Ribbon and Bows Oh My; Horizon Hospitality Capital; Legacy Dental Group

Johnson County

- **Scott Andrew**, CEO, Retail Service Systems; CEO and Co-founder, Rugged American Spirits/Tennessee Hills, Rugged Holdings

Knox County

- **Gabriel Bolas**, President and CEO, Knoxville Utilities Board
- **Amy Cathey**, Associate Dean, Graduate and Executive Education, Haslam College of Business, University of Tennessee Knoxville
- **David Colquitt**, Owner, The Swag
- **Becky Hancock**, Executive Director, Historic Tennessee Theatre
- **Larsen Jay**, Commissioner, Knox County Commission
- **Renee Kelly**, Director of Boundless (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Program), Clayton Homes
- **Parinda Khatri**, CEO, Cherokee Health Systems
- **David Miller**, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, University of Tennessee System

Madison County

- **Edward Jackson**, State Senator, Tennessee General Assembly
- **Mandy White**, Chief Economic Development Officer, Greater Jackson Chamber

McMinn County

- **Tyler Forrest**, President, Tennessee Wesleyan University

Montgomery County

- **Wes Golden**, Mayor, Montgomery County
- **Walt Lord**, Vice President for Military and Veterans Affairs, Austin Peay State University

Putnam County

- **Konstantin Yepifantsev**, CEO, Home Caregivers

Rhea County

- **John Bamber**, Executive Director, Rhea Economic and Tourism Council, Inc.

Shelby County

- **Trevia Chatman**, President, Bank of America Memphis
- **Holly Coleman**, Program Director for High Quality Education, Hyde Family Foundation
- **La Sonya Hall**, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Shelby County Government
- **Russell Ingram**, Chief Operating Officer, Epicenter Memphis
- **Dan Springer**, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, City of Memphis
- **Ignacio Vincentelli**, Chief Counsel North American Container, International Paper Company

Sullivan County

- **Beth Rhinehart**, President and CEO, Bristol TN/VA Chamber of Commerce
- **Darla Scott**, EVP and CFO, Bank of Tennessee
- **Subhashini Vashisth**, Group Leader, Corporate Innovation, Eastman Chemical Company

Williamson County

- **Noni Ellison**, SVP, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, Tractor Supply Company
- **Laquita Stribling**, Vice President, Randstad USA
- **Burton Williams**, CEO, The Ayers Foundation
- **Mark Yancy**, Chief Executive Officer, NashvilleHealth

Previous classes have been able to facilitate numerous community engagement sessions across the state. Since Leadership Tennessee's founding, more than 500 members have graduated through both the Signature Program and Leadership Tennessee NEXT, which is dedicated to emerging leaders.

The cohort's work will begin in August and run through June 2024.

ABOUT LEADERSHIP TENNESSEE

Leadership Tennessee was founded in 2013 as an initiative of the College of Leadership and Public Service at Lipscomb University, and in 2021, it launched as an independent 501(c)(3). The program fosters collaborative, non-partisan dialogue on issues of state importance,

connecting and deploying a network of diverse leaders and engaged citizens. Citizens with demonstrated community and professional leadership from every region of the state bring their diverse backgrounds and experiences to an in-depth exploration of the complex issues facing Tennessee, with a focus on how leaders can collaborate to effectively address those issues.

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