

# Growing Pasco Leaders

*Trinity hospital, James P. Gillis YMCA are part of a crash course about the county.*

*By Members of the Leadership Pasco 2013 Class  
Community Contributors*

**T**hey are current or potential leaders in Pasco County, usually identified by their employers as people who could or are making a difference in the county. Over the course of nine months, they get an intensive education about the county, including teambuilding at Trinity's YMCA and touring the Medical Center of Trinity. We asked five members of the class of 2013 to tell us what they learned and what surprised them. Here is what they had to say:

*By Nikki Alvarez-Sowles*

One of my favorite days was the bus tour and team building day. This was our first class, so, the class members did not know each other. Over two days, we traveled throughout central, east, and west Pasco.

There were stops along the way where we met many dignitaries and local community leaders to discuss the history and diversity of Pasco County. We met with developer J.D. Porter who explained the vision of the development in central Pasco in the Wiregrass and surrounding areas to encourage economic development while limiting the impact to the environment.

After a trip to East Pasco, we traveled to West Pasco, where we learned about the exponential growth of the late 1900's and the challenges that our local representatives face in meeting the needs of an urbanized population. Jack Mariano, Pasco County Commissioner, joined the tour and spoke with the class about the SunWest project, which is a planned development for a water sports complex, county park, and destination resort.

We stopped at the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park, which is preserved as a natural wilderness and learned about animals indigenous to the area and those that are invasive. One of our class members, Lisa Shippy-Gonzalez, owner of Honey Baked Hams in Longleaf hosted lunch for the class at Havana Dreamers.

In the afternoon of the second day, the class took part in team building exercises at the James P. Gillis Family YMCA in Trinity. There we learned about our individual personalities using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter and how we interact with others. Afterwards we headed to the low ropes course and had fun working together and encouraging each other to solve intricate and physical challenges.

All in all the tour was wonderful. I cherish the experiences, friendships, and memories made at Leadership Pasco.

*Nikki Alvarez-Sowles is Chief Operations Officer, Pasco County Clerk and Comptroller's Office and class president for*

*the Leadership Pasco Class of 2013.*

*By Mike Miller*

Being a part of the 2013 class of Leadership Pasco has given me the opportunity to connect and learn with other like-minded professionals in our county, as well as meeting many of the lawmakers, government leaders and business owners throughout the county. It has been a tremendous experience for me.

As a transplant, I feel a greater connection with Pasco County and its people. Leadership Pasco is a great opportunity to build relationships, learn about the history of our community as well as discuss present day challenges.

It taught me that sometimes you have to put aside what you want for the betterment of the society. It has taught me that we need to spread the word of hope to the oppressed areas and give to organizations that are essential to helping those in need.

The fund-raiser our class is raising money for this year is the National Alliance of Mental Illness and their new office. This is a tremendous opportunity to support and give assistance to the people that need our help as a community the most.

Leadership Pasco is a tremendous reminder that collective minds produce an unstoppable force. The opportunity to connect with such inspiring and well-intentioned people assures me that our community is in good hands as we look toward the future as proven in how the county has come together and pooled resources to maximize effectiveness.

One of the ways they have done this is our Sheriff, Chris



**Debbie Humphrey and Ed Rogers struggle to hang on in a low-ropes course at the James P. Gillis Family YMCA in Trinity. Crystal Lazar gives some back-up to Humphrey.**

*Photo by Bob Waselewski*



Nocco, who has created a concentrated effort between jurisdictions of law enforcement agencies working together to help reduce crime. They are using Intelligent Policing to go into areas where most of the crimes occur to try to prevent crime.

Another example is the vision of our county commissioners like Jack Mariano and the Sun West Mine project in Hudson. I also give credit to all of the people involved with the Pasco Economic Development Council and how they are bringing businesses into our county to provide jobs for our residents.

After spending the last several months learning about our businesses, our people and our government, it has solidified my faith in this county to attract people and businesses of such diverse interests and backgrounds.

Leadership Pasco has been a great way to learn about the county, Pasco's history, and meet a great bunch of people.

*Mike Miller is president of Miller Wealth Management Group in Trinity.*

*By Ashley Juno*

My favorite day for Leadership Pasco was healthcare day, since that is the industry I work in.

We started the day at the new Medical Center of Trinity, which I had not seen yet with several interesting panel discussions about the healthcare industry.

The first panel included the top administrators from Pasco County hospitals talking about the future of healthcare, followed by a panel of local ER professionals talking about their experiences in the ER.

County Commissioner Pat Mulieri was on hand to give a tour of Pasco County's Mobile Medical Unit, which a past class of Leadership Pasco helped fund.

Other panels included the health department, indigent care

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**What's in that head? That's what Shannon Hancock checks on at Pasco Hernando Community College.**

Photo by Bob Waselewski

**Top, Leadership Pasco participants tour the Medical Center of Trinity on healthcare day; middle, a demonstration of the Sheriff's Department K9 dogs; bottom, participants at the power plant in West Pasco.**

Photos by Bob Waselewski



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and behavioral health, which is close to my class's heart since we are raising money for NAMI Pasco, which helps people with mental illness.

After a delicious lunch provided by the Center, we took a behind the scenes tour of the new Medical Center of Trinity – I was impressed with all of the modern touches the hospital had for patients.

Our class was then bused over to a local hospice center, where we received a tour of the care center and heard from an elder care panel. The panel was interesting – they had us all do an exercise where we looked on at a mirror on our shoulder and then had to draw on a sheet of paper what they were telling us looking only at our shoulder. This illustrates what people with dementia go through – trust me, it was hard to do.

All of the Leadership Pasco days have exposed me to parts of Pasco County that I didn't realize exist and I'm glad that I am part of this program.

**Ashley Juno is Director of Community Relations at Gulfside Regional Hospice.**

*By Michele Leo Hintson*

Since moving to Pasco County from Hillsborough County in



**Trinity businessman Mike Miller leaves the Mobile Medical Unit, which a past Leadership Pasco class helped fund.**

Photo by Bob Waselewski

Judicial Circuit's public defender's office, and from its prosecutor's office regarding their priorities, and the struggles that come with representing and prosecuting suspected violators of the law, including those with drug dependency issues and with a history of mental illness.

As an attorney practicing in Florida since 2003, law enforce-

2004, and working primarily in Hillsborough County, I had not taken the opportunity to really explore Pasco County and all that it offers.

Leadership Pasco has afforded me to opportunity to spend time with my fellow Pasconians, learn about the rich history of Pasco County, and understand the challenges that it faces in the future, along with much of Florida.

What most impressed me about Pasco County since I began my journey with the Leadership Pasco program are the people who serve the County on a daily basis.

As part of one of our first sessions, we had an opportunity to experience approximately one hour of what a typical morning for many of our law enforcement officers and first responders face in Pasco County, arising from calls regarding a potential domestic violence situation to a suspected kidnapping.

In addition, we were able to hear firsthand from representatives of the Sixth

# Classes Give Back

*Leadership classes must create and complete a community service project before graduation.*

## **While Leadership Pasco class**

members learn about the workings of the county, the class as a whole is required to do a class project "that will make a positive impact on our community," the Leadership Pasco website explains. Once the class has a created a plan, Leadership Pasco's board of directors must approve it and the project must be completed by the class's May Graduation.

**The class of 2013** chose a goal of raising \$25,000 for NAMI Pasco, the Pasco County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. NAMI Pasco has support groups for people with mental illness and also for vet-

erans and their families dealing with PTSD and other disorders.

**Past projects by Leadership Pasco** classes noted on [leadershippasco.com](http://leadershippasco.com):

**Class of 2011** – Raised money to build a 1,186 square-foot K-9 kennel on the Land O' Lakes jail property so the dogs and handlers can have short-term shelter and training space.

**Class of 2010** – Created the Hygiene for Humanity Project, with a goal of raising \$44,000 for two, commercially manufactured mobile shower

trailers with self-contained utilities for The Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco.

**Class of 2009** – Set a goal of raising \$5,000 toward a travel van for the Center for Independence to transport disabled adults throughout Pasco County.

**Class of 2008** – Created a paved fantasyland at the Angelus complex in Hudson for people with cerebral palsy.

**Class of 2007** – Landscaped and painted the new Healthy Families building in Hudson.

**Class of 2006** – Raised \$20,000 for the missing and abducted children command center.

—**Cheryl Segal**



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All-day sessions are held between September and May, with subjects ranging from criminal justice to education.

## LEADERSHIP PASCO

- **Leadership Pasco has operated** since 1991 and has had more than 600 graduates.
- **Its mission is to** "identify and recruit current or potential leaders of Pasco County, facilitate the development and interaction of those leaders, and to foster an issues-oriented learning environment for these leaders and the citizens of Pasco County."
- **Leadership Pasco hosts Taste** of Pasco, which is in its third year. It was held this year on May 11.
- **Deadline for the class** of 2014 is June 1. Guidelines and application can be found at [leadershippasco.com](http://leadershippasco.com). For more information, contact Cindy Ewald, recruitment chair, at [cindy.j.ewald@suntrust.com](mailto:cindy.j.ewald@suntrust.com).

ment day reaffirmed my belief that our men and women in law enforcement, and those who serve us as public attorneys and judges should be commended for the work that they do on a daily basis to sustain our justice system and our way of life.

Also, the Leadership Pasco experience has made me realize the important role my fellow Pasco County residents and I should play in helping those who serve, including, assisting law enforcement whenever possible, and offering support to those in need.

*Michele Leo Hintson is an attorney with Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick LLP in Tampa.*

*By Summer Martin*

Leadership Pasco has been an amazing experience for me.



Larry Engle, left, of NAMI, with Denise O'Brien, from the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, and Leadership Pasco members Stefanie Pontlitz and Nikki Alvarez-Sowles.

Photo by Bob Waselewski

Having already lived in Pasco County for 10 years, you would think there wasn't much to learn, but that is not the case. Each class was enlightening, and really informed people of all aspects of the community in which we live.

Education Day really brought to light the bright spots in our local schools.

We started our day out at Land O' Lakes High School where we were served breakfast made by students in the State-of-the-art Culinary Academy, followed by a tour of the high tech facility. Many people have no idea that this incredible facility even exists. The students learn to create culinary masterpieces with the best equipment in the industry -- it would make Chef Gordon Ramsay jealous!

They even have an auditorium style room where the stage is a kitchen with TV monitors and cameras perfect for any cooking show. They can even stream their classes live on the internet! On top of learning to cook, they grow their vegetables while learning aquaponics.

Our next stop was Marchman Technical Education Center, where you see kids and adults learning important skills that will help them secure a job in today's workforce. I was especially impressed by the Commercial Art Department where students learn how to design on the latest software like Adobe Creative Suite, and sketch and animate characters for video games. We learned while there, that a former Marchman student is in Hollywood working on special effects for the next Star Wars movie.

Our class also toured the new Gulf Elementary School where we saw elementary kids making movies on their iPads, and preparing Keynote presentations. The technology that Pasco County kids are being exposed to is really cutting edge.

We ended the day touring the beautiful campus of Pasco-Hernando Community College in New Port Richey. The training and development that PHCC offers for medical fields is truly commendable. It was exciting to hear about future plans for 4-year degrees and the new Porter campus in Wesley Chapel.

Leadership Pasco has opened my eyes to the many incredible things going on in Pasco County, and many things we need to work on. I highly recommend the program to anyone who is wanting to be a leader in our community

*Summer Martin is marketing and events coordinator for the Pasco Economic Development Council and secretary for the 2013 Leadership Pasco class.*