

CONNECTIONS



Leadership Buffalo's Annual Magazine



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The smart way to start your day



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THE BUFFALO NEWS

Message from the Chair

After 35 years Leadership Buffalo remains steadfast in its dedication to our city. Our values, our mission, our people, and our community at large drive us each day in the pursuit of connecting people and inspiring change. I'd like to personally thank the leadership team for their contribution to the strength we see in the organization today. First - to the phenomenal staff led by Althea whose daily commitment we all witness and appreciate, thank you for another exceptional, memorable, engaging, exciting year of programs, events, and community-building success. You are a role model team in Buffalo. To my wonderful colleagues on the board, who represent a diverse group of personalities and backgrounds, but share an absolute love for Leadership Buffalo, thank you for your collective dedication to Making Buffalo Better.

I would also like to thank all our community partners who open their doors to LB, willing to educate all of us on their own experience of Buffalo. Our city is brimming with kindhearted and dedicated – without them Leadership Buffalo would have not have the ability to connect people and inspire change. Thank you to all of you who support the work we do at Leadership Buffalo.

Here at Leadership Buffalo we are always working with you in mind, the broad “you” that is. Community is central to what we do. 2022 proved to be challenging for our community at large, but we remain determined and hopeful to build a brighter together. We also continue to reflect and listen to how we can better serve our city, in what ways we can grow, and where can we be ahead of the curve.



Rema Hanash (LB '05)
*United Way of Buffalo & Erie County
Leadership Buffalo Board Chair*



A Promising New Year

CEO, Althea Luehrsen, reflects on challenges and progress

As we enter into a new year, I wanted to reflect back on the challenges but also the progress we have made as an organization. The last few years have been extremely challenging both from a DEI perspective and a Pandemic. The May 14th tragedy, staffing issues, rising costs and extreme weather conditions proved to fill 2022 with challenges. But through it all, Leadership Buffalo has persevered and thrived, with a positive attitude, planning, creating new positions and developing new programs.

Our current programs continue to remain strong with 'back to normal' participation and we're de-

veloping several new initiatives for the 2023 year. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, professional development and DEIB trainings and programming. In 2023, we will be including DEIB trainings to each day session for Class Experience, Rising Leaders and Youth Leadership along with trainings for the public and membership. We will be creating monthly 'lunch and learns', a professional development series for 2023.

We have added two new positions at Leadership Buffalo. Please welcome Asia Alexander (YL '17) as she joined our team as our new administrative assistant and mar-

keting coordinator, and Charitie Bruning as the Director of DEIB.

The Leadership Buffalo board and staff are in its final stage of writing our strategic plan that will take us through 2025 which encompasses all the above and more. We will provide a link on our website when that is available.

I'd like to take moment to thank the Leadership Buffalo team, its membership and board of directors for your continued belief in the important work we are doing as we continue to pivot and grow. As always, any and all suggestions are welcome.

2023

**We're pleased to
welcome the new
class of 2023!**

Class Experience

Atiqa Abidi, ECIDA; Asiaki Adjei-Barrett, Dr. Barrett Speaks; Jennifer Arnold, Bonadio & Co LLP; Jenna Astridge, Aspire of WNY; Jacqueline Bett, Kaleida Health; Allison Bosch, Smart Recruiters; Ann Branch, Univera Healthcare; Lavar Brown, Wegmans; Krystina Burow, Ronald McDonald House Charities of WNY; Justine Campanella, Seneca Gaming Corp.; Ashley Coder, Buffalo Prep; Jennifer Collesano Rupp Baase Pfalzgraf & Cunningham LLC; Andalyn Courtney, Crowley Webb; Dana Dade, Ingram Micro; Yadira DeSantis, Kideney Architects; Robert Dunn, Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Buffalo; Julie Duquin, Businessolver, Inc.; Donald Elick, M&T Bank; Katie Ellis, Key Bank; Douglas Furminger, MOOG; Danielle Gare, Elevance Health; Lauren Genovese, Rich Products; Colleen Gough, Person Centered Services CCO; Ross Graney, JP Morgan Chase & Co.; Ethan Grant, KeyBank; Ameila Hakes, Horizon Health; Kiley Hand, 107th Attack Wing; Denise Herkey-Jarosch, Buffalo Prenatal Perinatal Network; Raziya Hill, Every Bottom Covered Inc.; Brad Hoppe, Bond Schoeneck & King, PLLC; Ben Indelicato, OneBridge Benefits; Peter Jabrucki, Independent Health; Marlyce James, SUNY Erie Community College; Matthew Johnson, 716 Ministries; Dina Kempiski, Northwest Bank; Patrick Kenney, Lawley Insurance; Caitlyn Kilkenny, Freed Maxick; Bryan Kilpatrick, The Pike Companies; Aaron Knights, Rupp Baase Pfalzgraf Cunningham LLC; Karen Kopacz, Child Care Resource Network; Julie Lulek, Catholic Charities of Buffalo; Erin McCabe, Northwest Bank; Elizabeth McPhail, Hodgson Russ LLP; Candace Moppins, Metro Community Development Corporation; Brandon Mott, Thomas Howell Ferguson P.A. CPA's; Beth Nephew, Seneca Gaming Corporation; Tammy Otminski Bank on Buffalo; Jared Perram, Saturn Power; Jaye Pratt, Our Lady of Victory Services; Deidre Prewitt, Northland Workforce Training Center; Kaitlin Price, Gerard Place; Stephanie Rivera, Buffalo Prep; Chiquita Rodgers, Evans Bank; Scott Rosenheck, Journey's End Refugee Services; Tracie Schafer, Aquarium of Niagara; Julian Schnopp, Turner Construction Company; Emily Smaldino, National Grid; Jessica Smith, BestSelf Behavioral Health; Keri Socker, Resource Council of WNY; Claire Stroh, Lighthouse Technologies; Racheal Tarapacki, Resource Council of WNY; Lauren Tennes, M&T Bank; Paul Thomas, Bethel AME Church; Amy Usiak, Evergreen Health; Alex Valdez, Buffalo Seminary; Vera Venkova, Neighborhood Legal Services; Richard Watson, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of WNY; Kenneth Weixlmann, KeyBank; William Wells, Explore & More Children's Museum; Jacob Wilkins, People Inc.

Rising Leaders

Katharine Amato, University at Buffalo; Daija Baldwin, Northland Workforce Training Center; Marisa Banas, Integrated Specialty Coverages, LLC; Daniel Bozer, Nautilus Solar Energy; Samantha Burfiend, Visually Impaired Advancement; Ben Clement, T-Mark; Benjamin Cranston, Phillips Lytle LLP; Ariel Davis, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County; Joe DeRose, Mazza Mechanical Services; Zachary Dewey, Lippes Mathias LLP; Andrea Doyle, M&T Bank; Sally Ernst, Independent Health; Shannon Fagan, BryLin Hospital; Samantha Felix, BankonBuffalo; Gladys Flores, M&T Bank; Taylor Gillmeister, LVBW LLP; Danielle Gmerek, Explore & More Children's Museum; Cydney Johnson, Tech Buffalo; Sierra Johnston, Jewish Family Services of WNY; Colten Kitcho, Note Advisors, LLC; Joseph Konze, Douglas Development; Briandi Little, Kaleida Health; John Rupert-Malones, People Inc.; Sarah Mancuso, Northwest Bank; Emily McGorry, Evergreen Health Services; Megan Morris-Smith, Lumsden & McCormick; Charles Mule, Niagara Metals; Joe Piotrowski, Seneca Gaming Corp.; Carmen Reale, Montante Group; JP Rehak, Lawley Insurance; Karlie Routledge, Manzella Marketing; Nico Santos, Breef; Anthony Sciandra, Frey Electric Construction Co.; Cindy Sideris, 43North; Aaron Tichenor, Rich Products Corporation; Dante Tuzzolino, KeyBank; Timothy Welch, Key Bank; Matthew Wisotzky, National Fuel Gas; James Zawodzinski, Hodgson Russ LLP



Uniland: Innovating How WNY Lives, Works and Plays for Nearly 50 Years



From the age of steel to the first stateside hotel with private bathrooms, the Queen City has positioned itself at the forefront of monumental changes in the way we live, work, and play for decades. Adopting a restorative and adaptive mindset has served incredibly useful in the development of our region, taking neglected and abandoned buildings and transforming them into staples of any Buffalonians daily life. Today, there are companies that work tirelessly to maintain Buffalo's reputation as a city of the future. One of these enterprises is a development company founded by Carl J. Montante— Uniland Development Company.

Like any good story, Uniland had humble beginnings. They started in the 70's with a single warehouse in Tonawanda which has since blossomed into more than 16 million square feet developed across WNY. Along the way, they

have garnered national attention for their model that continually breeds innovative solutions and evolutions. Key to their process is seeing projects from inception to completion, almost as a parent raises a child. We see this familial ethos throughout the organization, with the company being family led for generations.

Uniland's mission statement identifies six core values: Integrity, Professionalism, Excellence, Innovation, Customer Focus and Team Focus. They go onto lay out their philosophy, which centers around Quality and Enduring Value. Clearly these guiding principles have resulted in a wide expanse – so much so that as an owner and manager of over 300 buildings locally nearly every Buffalonian either works, plays, lives, or interacts with a Uniland property daily. This success has allowed Uniland to give back to the Western New York commu-

nity in significant ways through its support of local businesses, organizations, and development programs. With a focus on education, health, and wellness causes, Uniland actively participates in volunteering, workforce development, and DEI initiatives across our region.

“An office is not just a place with desks, conference rooms and coffee machines. As many have realized during their extended absence from its walls, an office space is greater than the sum of its parts.”

***– Scott Hill (LB '22) Uniland
Director of Sales***



One of Uniland’s most impressive feats was the redevelopment of the Avant building during the height of the Great Recession in the late 2000’s. This was the City of Buffalo’s first mixed-use adaptive reuse project. This revolutionary undertaking took a decommissioned Brutalist federal building and transformed it into a top-of-the-line Class A office space, condominiums, hotel, and commercial space. Core to the company’s approach, Uniland’s “Green Team” is trained to incorporate elements of sustainable design into every project. The company continually introduces the latest green building materials and technologies, minimizing the environmental impact of the construction and operation while maximizing tenant comfort and financial savings.

Uniland has had many firsts, including the first large-scale Solar Park in the City of Buffalo, which once opened in 2023 will produce enough power to supply for 800 homes locally. Uniland also made waves with their project at 505 Ellicott St, bringing the first locally developed flexible coworking, private office, and event space to Buffalo. HANSA, which opened in 2020, is truly a game changer for the Buffalo workforce. If you have not been to the automotive warehouse turned modern light-filled space, I implore you to spend a day there.

As we begin to zero in on what we see as the future of work in a “post-pandemic” world, Uniland and other like-minded companies are paving the way. There has been a clear shift in the way we as a workforce actually work. Forbes predicted that the 2023 workforce will be “more diverse, distrib-

uted and virtual than ever before.”¹ To me HANSA, along with other innovations across our city, stand as a signal of Buffalo’s ability to compete in a new era. As we transition out of the rigidity and traditionalism of our grandparents working culture, we step into a world where community, collaboration, comfort, and work-life integration reign supreme. This shift in the culture at large would be moot if we did not build settings conducive to these new ways of life. Uniland delivers this future to us through the likes of HANSA and Avant, plus numerous other mixed-use projects in the works now which will further transform WNY’s landscape and enhance our region’s ability to compete for employers and employees alike in the future.

Ultimately, life is not one size fits all – but I guarantee you that somewhere in the Uniland portfolio is something that will fit and enhance your life. As we forge ahead and craft the city we wish to leave behind for the generations to come, I am grateful for all the innovators and disruptors like Uniland in our city.

¹ Marr, Bernard. “Future of Work: The 4 Biggest Workplace Trends in 2023.” Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 28 Nov. 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2022/11/28/future-of-work-the-4-biggest-workplace-trends-in-2023/?sh=4ca2cfce2e2f>.

“Creating HANSA, working with our outstanding management team, and meeting our new members has been very exciting. The business community we are creating within HANSA is sorely needed in Buffalo, especially during and post-COVID, and we are proud to be a hands-on business partner for our members and guests.”

– Carl Montante, Jr. Uniland Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Initiatives and Co-Founder of HANSA



Scott Hill

Class of 2022

Senior Leasing Executive,
Uniland Development Company

Erin Wilson-Fontenot

Class of 2022

Community Manager,
HANSA workspace

Congratulations to all of Uniland's graduates of Leadership Buffalo:

- Laura Zaepfel (2004)
- Peter Sayadoff (2009)
- Kellena Kane (2009)
- Michele Walter (2016)
- Charlie Callahan (2020)
- Sue Hassinger (2020)

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Future of work

Class Experience member evolves through the program

by Jennifer Loughran (LB '22) | Horizon Health Services

How do we evolve; as workers, as employers, as Buffalonians, as servant-leaders? All of these questions were asked throughout my time at Leadership Buffalo. The LB Class of 2022 was forced to evolve throughout the year, as were still trying to figure out how to come together in the midst of a pandemic, and then had to come together as a community after the racist-fueled mass shooting that occurred in our very own backyard on May 14th. In order to not just survive, but to thrive today, we must continue to evolve and prepare for what the future might bring us.

While our Day Sessions taught us about the current face of hunger and poverty in Buffalo, what we can do to prepare our younger generations for the future and explored different options around job creation and workforce development, what I feel mattered most when thinking and planning for the future of work, was the servant-leadership traits of empathy, listening, persuasion, awareness, community building, foresight, conceptualization,



healing, and commitment. These characteristics are what will help us thrive in the future, as they compel us to work together, support one another and build a sense of belonging for all.

After the 5/14 tragedy in Buffalo, our community as a whole was deeply impacted and will be forever changed; our LB class was forever changed. Despite our Day Session being canceled in May to allow people the needed space and time to grieve and heal, several LB Class members came together to serve our community and the organizations of our class members contributed the helping heal our community. This is

what Leadership Buffalo is all about.

According to Robert K. Greenleaf, “servant leadership places an emphasis on the well-being of those being served.” We must treat people as people and we must move from the idea of “me first” to “we first.” I believe the future is full of opportunities and challenges. I also believe that we can face whatever challenges come our way and turn them into opportunities when we put a focus on servant leadership. What Leadership Buffalo emphasizes is that it takes a collective WE to be the change we want to see.

The Buffalo People!

Buffalo newcomers experience our greatest asset.

by Gary and Lisa Decker

Experience Buffalo provided us with a wonderful opportunity to see many of the amazing sights and sounds of Buffalo and WNY but, more importantly, it introduced us to the region's most valuable asset – its people! The program took us many places; from the behind-the-scenes tours of the construction sites of the amazing expansions at Buffalo AKG Art Museum and DL&W Terminal to the cultural landmarks of the Summer Estate at Knox Farm, the Explore and Museum and the Italian Cultural Center of Buffalo to the iconic views from Seneca One Tower, Buffalo City Hall and the Buffalo Bills Stadium and Training Center. The visits to these incredible venues provided us with a first-hand introduction to the amazing places you always say you are going to visit when you move to a new

place but never quite seem to get to. For us, these visits have also instilled a desire to explore more of our new home here in WNY.

The restaurants we experienced along the journey have been world class. A combination of amazing cuisines from all corners of the world coupled with top notch service in beautiful venues. To dine in the places where many of the decisions were made that shaped the past, present, and future of Buffalo, the region, and world was inspiring. While all the dining experiences were amazing, the most memorable was having cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in the Dining Room of the Buffalo Bills in the year they will win the Super Bowl! Go Bills!

As incredible as all the visits and dining experiences

were, the most amazing part of Experience Buffalo was the people that we met. At every venue and restaurant we visited the owners/hosts were full of passion, energy, and enthusiasm that you can only get in a place appropriately known as the “City of Good Neighbors.” The incredible Leadership Buffalo staff and the amazing people in our group have become more than staff and classmates, they have become lifelong friends. To share the experience of getting to know Buffalo and WNY with these amazing people has been a great honor and privilege. We are grateful to have been part of such an incredible experience and hope that future generations of leaders that move to Buffalo will do the same and see how special of a place this really is.



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Doing The Work

Let's talk about the work being done in Buffalo.

by Rachael Ireland (RL '22) | Rich Products

When thinking about our careers and workplaces, it's easy to become both energized and overwhelmed by the seemingly limitless potential our world holds. In the past three years alone, we have seen the pace of change at work accelerate at an unprecedented rate. What does this mean to the future of work?

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the future of work has three main considerations: 1) who does the work 2) how the work is done, and 3) when and where the work is done. So, where does that leave us? How do we retain what has worked in the past as we consider how we need to adapt for the future?

Who does the work?

One of the greatest assets of our community is our people. Throughout the Leadership Buffalo experience over the past year, we had the opportunity to spend time with the people doing the work – from inspiring teachers introduc-

ing new technology and ways of learning, to healthcare professionals pushing the boundaries of physical limits, to manufacturers finding the balance between human talent and automated efficiency, to non-profit leaders whose sheer passion fuels their purpose to make our community the very best it can be.

How does the work get done?

For many of us, we think technology, innovation and automation. Yes, the future of work must maximize and advance technology. But, as our class saw and experienced this year, what's most inspiring and encouraging is the unmatched benefit of human connectivity. Technology might be re-shaping how people are coming together and collaborating, but the underlying sense of caring—the why—remains consistent and foundational.

When and Where is the Work Done?

This is perhaps the most interesting question when considering the future of work.

As a lifelong Buffalonian – with no plans to leave – I would say the potential to attract and retain individuals, families and companies to our amazing community has never been more promising. Not only have fellow Buffalonians transformed their daily work habits and schedules, but they've also transformed entire work environments. Over the past year, Leadership Buffalo has taken us to re-imagined spaces and places the Trico Plant and the Powerhouse, among others. Silo City is another great example and still others (dare I say the Bills stadium?) are on the horizon.

So, what lies ahead? I'd be lying if I said I could make a prediction. But, after a year of moving in and around our community, I'm clear that I've never been more excited to see what might be coming next.



Making connections in Youth Leadership

Youth Leadership graduate makes connections in her program year

by Andreea Merzianu (YL '22)

Slouching on a bench, head down, and waiting impatiently for my mom to pick me up from school, an older classmate of mine came up to me and excitedly told me to apply to the Youth Leadership Program at Leadership Buffalo. He was in the program at the time, and had clearly enjoyed it enough to encourage me to join too. To this day, I'm not quite sure what my friend saw in me at that moment—a bored teenager moping around after school—but it changed my perception of leadership and who I could be in the future.

I had always had an element of leadership in my life: I created a tutoring program at school in sophomore year and I was always that ambitious kid doing a bunch of extracurricular activities for fun. But I never fully understood the extent of being a leader until I was accepted into LB.

On the day of orientation, we were instantly greeted by people who had made leadership their livelihood. They knew exactly how to give convincing presentations and explain how leadership affects their daily lives. I walked in dumbfounded that we had to wear name tags for every session, and I walked out confident that this program would be beneficial to me and my future.

Each session, whether it was properly dining with a butler or learning the magic of ne

working with a professional, I realized more and more why my friend approached me on that day at school. LB isn't a program that's just a resume padder; rather, it teaches students the value of growing into confident young adults able to interact with peers and others around them.

During some of our initial day sessions, my classmates and I found it difficult to connect with unfamiliar and different people. Through our further sessions, though, we were forced to collaborate and apply what we had learned in presentations to introspect in our lives and achieve our goals as leaders in our communities. More and more, I began to see that LB had a unique ability to pull people together in a way that nothing else I had experienced did. I was able to apply what I had learned in the day sessions to my work in a scientific research laboratory. With the goal of becoming a principal investigator or physician some day, I knew that even the most extensive knowledge of science alone wouldn't make me successful. Relationships with peers and the ability to work alongside others are half the battle. In my research as an intern at the lab, I began to take steps towards this goal: asking questions to familiarize myself with the research my supervisors were doing, undertaking an original research project, attending conferences, and writing a paper for publication. As I flew solo

at 17 years old to Baltimore to present my work at the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) conference with my PhD friends, I had a moment of realization. The lessons I learned from LB were directly applicable to my current career and my future. I would never have had the confidence to speak publicly to experienced scientists or converse with successful leaders without my experience at LB. And here I was doing it before I had even graduated from the program.

In the future, I can see myself confidently approaching the working world as a LB alum, knowing that I've gained the skills to become independent and have that final push outside of my comfort zone as a kid. The lessons of collaboration, confidence, strength, and resilience go far beyond the expected realm of entrepreneurship, and they apply in every other aspect of life as well.

And that's what Leadership Buffalo is to me: human connection. Not just the fancy LinkedIn connections that are trending on the internet, but also the ones that give you the chance to explore your limits and share your knowledge with others. LB creates the types of connections that make someone frantically persuade a seemingly exhausted high school student in the hallway to experience the same thing they did.

2023 EVENT CALENDAR

Leadership Buffalo has a number of events planned for 2023. There is something for everyone; from fundraisers, leadership trainings, LBR, and all class happy hours!

Find a full list of events and more details at leadershipbuffalo.org/events

State of LB Luncheon

February 23rd

Ten Pin Throwdown

March 5th

LB Revisited

April 28th

Values Awards Luncheon

May 4th

Youth Leadership Graduation

June 8th