

Leadership Academy graduates 30th class



Leadership Academy founder Jim Williams reflects on the 20 years since the first Leadership Academy was held in 2005.

Leadership Academy attendees present a group project during Week 3.

In honor of the NALC Leadership Academy graduating its 30th class since its inception in 2005, the founder of the Academy, retired Executive Vice President Jim Williams, returned to preside over the graduation ceremony. The ceremony was held on May 23 at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, MD, just south of Baltimore.

“We weren’t sure if there was going to be a Class 2,” Williams said of the early days. “This is the 20th anniversary this fall of the start of the Leadership Academy. It’s hard to believe, but I’m incredibly personally gratified to see the quality of the students has not diminished one iota.”

The commencement event capped several months of intensive training on the skills necessary for union members to become effective leaders. Under the tutelage of their mentors—established NALC leaders such as branch presidents—the students combined three separate weeks of classroom learning at the Maritime Conference Center with take-home assignments and special projects.

During their classes, students took part in often-lively discussions on such

subjects as the National Agreement and the union’s legislative agenda. They also learned more about the Dispute Resolution Process, strategic planning, branch financial responsibilities, safety and health, retirement issues, route protection, workers’ compensation, effective negotiation techniques and the use of social media for branch communications.

Each week of the Academy also includes an emphasis on fine-tuning written and oral communication skills. Back in their branches, graduates will make use of those skills in such forums as membership meetings, awards ceremonies and dinners.

“And congratulations to all of you who spent these last five months working through this process,” Williams said. “It was intentional to put you in these positions and take you out of your comfort zones. And mission accomplished, I hope.”

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe, other national officers, and Headquarters letter carrier and professional staff members are tapped to teach classes on a wide variety of topics. The attendees also were guided by daily class instructors: former National Business Agents (NBAs) Troy Clark and Chris Wittenburg, Region 1 NBA Keisha Lewis, Region 5 Regional Administrative Assistant Larrissa Parde, and Assistant to the President Ed Morgan.

Williams urged the 29 graduates to be the best leaders they can be. “You serve as a leader in this union because you have a membership that needs to be led, and they need to be led with ethical decision-making. They need to be led with care, and they need to be led with people who really care about the future of their families and themselves.”





He encouraged each of them to be “someone who has chosen to consider the interests of others as more important than their own.”

Williams also urged the graduates not to think of their education as having an end point. “As a leader, you’ve got to make some tough choices, but you’ve got to do it from a position of care, a position of looking at the interests of others and saying, ‘What is it that they really need or want?’ And we do that through communicating and learning and continuing to be a lifelong learner.”

Finally, he challenged them to be mentors. “This class, if you distill it down to its essence, is all about mentoring. It’s all about passing on

what you have to another,” he said. “Be someone who is always looking to add a brick in the foundation that strengthens the people around you. Wow—and when it happens, man, it’s magic.”

After the commencement, the graduates were assigned to work at their respective NBA offices for a week to learn in a different environment.

As for Williams, he told the honorees, “The greatest compliment for me is that you are known as a person who cared deeply for others. And that’s what I tried to do when I established this Academy. I wanted to, in some way, build an organization, a training that had this idea that people matter and the people around you matter.” **PR**

Leadership Academy Class 30

Steve Benoit receives his certificate from former Executive Vice President Jim Williams.



NALC Leadership Academy Class 30 graduates

Claire Anderson
Southern Delaware
Branch 906

Steven Benoit
Hartford, CT Branch 86

Lamanda Bradshaw
Modesto, CA Branch 1291

Norris Beswick II
Albany, NY Branch 29

Kevrin L. Cordova
Amarillo, TX Branch 1037

Stephanie DeBaeke-Long
Boise, ID Branch 331

Joseph Delmont
Philadelphia, PA Branch 157

Kate Drass
Huntsville, AL Branch 462

Clancy E. Glover
Charlottesville, VA Branch 518

Morgan Harrington
Southwestern Michigan
Branch 246

Taejon N. Hayes
Bergen Co. Mgd., NJ
Branch 425

Jerry W. Ireland Jr.
Burlington, NC Branch 2262

Kunga Jinpa
Burlington, VT Branch 521

Jennifer M. Kimmell
Central Florida Branch 1091

John Long
Jamaica, NY Branch 562

Eddie Lee Lynch III
Cumberland Falls, KY
Branch 2242

Jade McBride
Olympia, WA Branch 351

Marcie Miller
Centennial, CO Branch 5996

Kiara O'Donnell
St. Paul, MN Branch 28

Eric James Porter
Sheboygan, WI Branch 102

Steven L. Powers
St. Louis, MO Branch 343

Veronica L. Ramirez
Arlington Heights, IL
Branch 2810

Jim Rangel Jr.
Rock Island, IL Branch 292

Casey J. Ritchie
Oklahoma City, OK
Branch 458

James E. Schaller
Virginia Beach, VA
Branch 2819

Sara Lynn Schawl
Clinton, IA Branch 126

Cody J. Shaw
Fairfield, CT Branch 2313

Steven Vasquez
Fort Worth, TX Branch 226

Marta R. Witten
Findlay, OH Branch 143