

The Leadership Challenge Takes Hold in The City of Boca Raton's New Leadership and Development Center

In 2002, the City of Boca Raton, Florida purchased an 118,000 square foot facility for the purpose of developing a state-of-the-art training center for police, fire and general municipal services. The purchase of the building, made possible with millions of dollars seized in a drug trafficking case, and its subsequent use was inspired by a vision from three city leaders who shared a passionate respect for the best-selling leadership book, *The Leadership Challenge*, by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner.

Boca Raton City Manager Leif Ahnell, former Police Chief Andrew J. Scott, III and Director John J. Sullivan, Jr., Ph.D. had each read *The Leadership Challenge* at different times in their career, yet all attribute the book's message as a powerful influence on their identities as leaders. Drawing on their inspiration from *The Leadership Challenge* and realizing that many others could benefit from it, the three combined efforts to establish an institution for the city known as the International Center for Leadership & Development (ICLAD).

“ICLAD has become the foundation for all training and personnel development for the City of Boca Raton and *The Leadership Challenge* has become part of our vernacular. We've really taken *The Leadership Challenge* as our core template and integrated it into almost everything we do,” said Sullivan, who serves as the director of training and professional development at ICLAD. “Every one of the more than 1,800 city employees from sanitation workers to city executives have gone through *The Leadership Challenge* training, and our managers are evaluated on it. It's a performance expectation.”

All Boca Raton city employees are required to participate in an eight-hour familiarization training program on leadership in which they receive a copy of *The Leadership Challenge*. That course is later followed up with program on leadership in which each person is encouraged to consider the mission, vision, and values of the city government under the scope of their job and work to identify how they can utilize one or more of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® detailed in *The Leadership Challenge*.

Sullivan says that the City has created incentive programs to support the training as well. For example, pens with one of The Practices represented are awarded to city employees in front of their peers along with a certificate for demonstrating that particular practice. “*The Leadership Challenge* has become the bedrock of training across all of the entities citywide,” Sullivan adds. “What we're saying is ‘You as an employee are being empowered to Challenge the Process.’”

Last year, the Boca Raton Police began implementing The Five Practices into the categories of evaluation for performance among its employees. Sullivan says they have already seen success in the implementation with measured improvement in customer service by more than 12 percent. He says the fire department will begin implementing

The Five Practices into its performance evaluations this year and other city services will follow.

“The Leadership Challenge is really founded upon some core beliefs and genuine research,” says Sullivan. This has been a process that has taken a tremendous hold and been embraced by management across the board. We couldn’t be more delighted and are anxious to see continued improvement and adoption.”

The International Center for Leadership and Development (ICLAD) will officially open its doors at a new facility in the first quarter of 2007. National and international leaders from the public safety professions are expected to attend and both Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have been invited to participate in the building dedication ceremony as key speakers.