Greenleaf Center Receives Major Grant to Launch Institute Program

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has recently awarded The Greenleaf Center a major, four-year grant to create and implement a groundbreaking new Servant-Leadership Institute Program.

Over the next four years, The Greenleaf Center will launch a process to effectively support fundamental changes in 25 different not-for-profit educational institutions across North America. The Servant-Leadership Institute Program will initially focus primarily upon colleges and universities.

A process will begin this Fall with the identification of college and university presidents and/or board chairs who wish to declare their desire to foster servant-leadership within their institutions. Starting in 1996, The Greenleaf Center will begin to offer an annual, three-day Institute experience involving the executive head of the organization (the president) and the volunteer head of the board of trustees (the board chairperson). Each annual Institute will encompass six or seven different institutions (with the college president and board chair from each school). Over the next four years The Greenleaf Center expects to have 25-30 participating institutions.

Because deep institutional change takes time, The Greenleaf Center anticipates forming long-term relationships with most of the participating institutions. Many of the participants will likely be drawn from the ranks of college/university presidents and board chairs who are already members of The Center and who are already committed to the idea of servant-leadership. The Institute experience itself is intended to both clarify and inform the participants on issues around servant-leadership, and to allow for the opportunity for each institutional pair to create a brief sketch of some “next steps” to be taken around the infusion of servant-leadership within their own institution.

The ultimate intention of this program is to assist in the creation of a number of servant-led institutions in higher education which may serve as inspirational models for other institutions.

(Continued on page 5)

Reflections on Leadership Published To Strong Reviews, Sales


The first book of its kind, Reflections on Leadership, is an authoritative anthology that traces the profound impact which Robert Greenleaf’s writings have had since the initial publication of his essay, The Servant as Leader, 25 years ago.

“Reflections on Leadership is a fitting tribute to a man whose own sense of service has given all of us hope that at long last leaders will recognize that power of purpose is far stronger than power of position,” said Jim Kouzes, Chairman and CEO of TPG/Learning Systems and co-author of The Leadership Challenge and Credibility. “After nearly 30 years, Robert K. Greenleaf’s work has struck a resonant chord in the minds and hearts of scholars and practitioners alike. His message lives through others, the true legacy of a servant-leader.”

This collection of essays and commentaries on servant-leadership illustrates Greenleaf’s timeless, down-to-earth and highly effective philosophy. Rooted in the belief that we can learn from one another, and that the role of the organizational leader is fulfilled in serving others—customers, employees and community—while at the same time setting high standards and leading by example, Greenleaf’s value-based approach is more substantive, enduring and relevant than most.

“This book should prove more durable than the many management books now available touting quick fixes and faddish concepts,” commented Booklist. Reflections on Leadership explores the implications of the servant-leader concept in such areas as business.

(Continued on page 4)
Guest Column

Transforming Schools Through Servant-Leadership

by William Dever, Chief Superintendent
Calgary Catholic Schools, Calgary, Canada

In the Canadian province of Alberta, there are two dimensions to the public education system. Because of the historical development of both Canada and of Alberta, one of these dimensions is designed to meet the needs of the Catholic community. It is important to stress that the Catholic schools in Alberta are not parochial schools as within the American context but truly public schools which are accountable to the Minister of Education through their elected Board of Trustees. The Calgary Catholic School Board serves the educational needs of approximately 36,000 students in 83 schools. We employ slightly over 3,000 employees of whom approximately 1,700 are teachers.

Traditionally, Calgary Catholic has been an hierarchical organization. We spent a great deal of time and effort attempting to recruit the best employees possible. However, our organizational practices did not necessarily reflect the ongoing trust and confidence that we displayed in our employees when we first hired them.

In the mid-1980s, senior administrators of the District were introduced to Greenleaf’s Servant-Leadership. The ideas embedded in this text had a profound impact on members of senior administration. Schools are entrusted with society’s most important members—their children. Which one of us would not want to see all the students we serve become “…healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” If we had these hopes and aspirations for our students, how could they obtain these ideals unless they were taught by individuals who were allowed to bring to the students their gift of personhood? If they were to bring to their students their total potentiality, they too had to become “…healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants to their students.” Senior administrators began to discuss and struggle with Greenleaf’s ideas. The discussions did not focus on the acceptance of these ideas, they addressed the difficult task of transforming a traditional hierarchical organization into one that would remain effective while embracing and empowering all individuals in it to become servant-leaders.

These discussions led to a reading of Peter Senge’s The Fifth Discipline. Senge readily admits the significant contribution of Greenleaf to his work. In fact, Senge refers to The Servant as Leader as “…the most singular and useful statement on leadership that I have read in the last 20 years.” There is a great deal of congruency between Greenleaf and Senge. We felt that Senge provided us with a mechanism that would allow us to implement many of the fundamental principles embedded in the writings of Greenleaf. Because both deal with fundamental issues rather than with a “flavor of the month” approach to change, we felt that both texts provided us with a strong foundation which permitted us to extend an invitation to each of our schools to become involved in our journey to implement servant-leadership—not as an end in itself, but as a means of improving academic achievement and empowering both our employees and our students to develop their gifts of personhood.

We recognize that it will be a journey that is never completed, but it is a journey that must be taken.
Message from the Executive Director

by Larry Spears

Occasionally I am approached by servant-leadership advocates who question whether The Greenleaf Center and servant-leadership may be tilting either too much, or too little, toward a particular type of organization or application. In the past I have heard from a few people who have expressed varying concerns that The Center may be too preoccupied with servant-leadership as it relates to secular businesses, religious-and-faith institutions, higher education, service-learning organizations, not-for-profit trustees and staffs, or institutions-in-general vs. the personal growth of individuals.

Whenever I am confronted by these kinds of concerns, I generally feel both worry and relief. The worry part of it has to do with my fear that, as a Center, we may not be communicating clearly enough the fact that our work encompasses any-and-all people and institutions interested in servant-leadership. The relief part of these conversations comes from the knowledge that if The Greenleaf Center can be simultaneously perceived as getting "too-deep" into multiple and widely-different applications of servant-leadership, then we are probably doing a good job in also demonstrating the depth as well as the breadth of our work. It is important to know that we do strive mightily to be inclusive of all viewpoints surrounding servant-leadership.

This newsletter which you are holding is a good case-in-point of our continuing commitment to going deeper into all of these areas, while simultaneously embracing one-and-all. The cover story on our forthcoming Servant-Leadership Institute program calls attention to our groundbreaking efforts at helping institutions in higher education, and eventually in many other types of institutions, to bring servant-leadership deep-inside organizations. The story on the responsiveness to the publication of Reflections on Leadership highlights some of the ways in which for-profit businesses and other organizations are helping to lead the way in the institutional practice of servant-leadership. David Specht's piece on The Theology of Institutions Project reflects the growing-edge work taking place around faith, spirit, and the theological applications of servant-leadership. Bill Dever's piece highlights the inherent possibilities of servant-leadership for schools, for youth, and for people in general. When viewed as a whole, both this newsletter and the entire range of The Greenleaf Center's programs and resources help to demonstrate the scope-and-depth of what is going on throughout society around servant-leadership.

Many of us have been deeply inspired by all that has occurred in recent years around servant-leadership, and within The Greenleaf Center. The servant-as-leader idea shows every sign of continuing its evolutionary growth and applications into many different areas. Likewise, The Greenleaf Center will continue in its sometimes challenging, but always exhilarating effort to serve as a hospitable home for the broad range of institutions and people who share in-common their passionate belief in servant-leadership.

Mark These Dates!


Who is the Servant-Leader?

The servant-leader is servant first. . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and most difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?"--from The Servant as Leader by Robert K. Greenleaf

The Greenleaf Center's Mission

"The Center's mission is to fundamentally improve the caring and quality of all institutions through a new approach to leadership, structure, and decisionmaking. Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decisionmaking."

The Greenleaf Center's Goals

1. To help deepen an understanding of the original ideas of Robert K. Greenleaf and the principles of servant-leadership, via the preservation and promotion of his writings.
2. To nurture colleagues and institutions by providing a focal point, and opportunities to share thoughts and ideas on servant-leadership.
3. To produce and publish new resources by others on servant-leadership.
4. To connect servant-leaders in a network of learning.

Originally founded in 1964 as the Center for Applied Ethics, Inc., the Center was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985. The Center is an international, not-for-profit institution headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Servant Leader Books in Review

No Contest: The Case Against Competition


Reviewed by Jeff McCollum

(From time-to-time, reviews of books relating to servant-leadership are included in The Servant Leader. This review is written by Jeff McCollum, a member of the Greenleaf Center’s Board of Trustees. Jeff is Director of Organization Development for Warner-Wellcome, a consumer health products manufacturer.)

“If we are to move toward a more caring, serving society than we now have,” Robert Greenleaf writes in Servant, Retrospect and Prospect, “competition must be muted if not eliminated.” Alfie Kohn’s book, No Contest: The Case Against Competition offers compelling support for Greenleaf’s assertion.

Kohn’s central premise is that competition has been socialized into us so deeply that we accept it without a second thought. In advocating his position, he challenges the reader to reexamine the following “myths” of competition: it is inevitable, it is productive, it is more enjoyable than not competing, and it builds character. For me, having grown up playing competitive sports and having worked 25 years in industry, the challenges were disturbing. While I will still argue that competition can produce healthy effects, I am willing to look at the underside—particularly my own tendency to inject competition into many situations.

Kohn draws a distinction between structural competition and intentional competition. Structural competition is designed-in competition. Elections, games and other situations where there is one winner are structural competition. Intentional competition is what we bring into our own situation based on our assumptions and beliefs. Thinking that “doing better” than someone else is the same thing as “doing well”, substituting extrinsic rewards (which are always constrained) for intrinsic ones (which are virtually limitless), hogging “air time” in a meeting are all symptoms of intentional competition. Greenleaf’s admonition that we must be called to be servants before we can become leaders may have been his way of trying to take intentional competition out of the equation.

Intentional competition creates structural competition. Believing that competition is healthy and normal, schools encourage students to compete for the best marks. Believing that competition is healthy and normal, businesses encourage employees to compete for raises and promotions. These reward structures then produce a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because there are powerful external rewards, people compete for them. Because people compete for them, we believe that competitiveness is part of human nature. Because we believe competitiveness is part of human nature, we design competitive situations into our institutions. And, on it goes.

The fact that competition is so deeply ingrained has been particularly hard on women. Kohn argues that women go through a socialization process that progresses from avoiding competition, to competing guiltily to competing wholeheartedly. As a consequence, the “female world view” which stresses moral development, conversation and relationship is being lost.

In my own view, this loss is not a matter of gender but of closing off the feminine part of each of us. Men and women should be looking to their feminine as a way to improve our institutions.

Kohn cites research by Edward Deci which shows that the presence of powerful extrinsic motivation dampens the effect of intrinsic motivation. W. Edwards Deming, too, recognized this effect and one of his 14 points for creating a culture of quality in an organization was to substitute intrinsic motivation for extrinsic.

Our natural tendency is really to cooperate. This emerges in the face of terrible tragedies and events. Inured in the assumption that competition is inevitable, we are surprised, touched and warmed in the presence of true service. Rather than look at the institutions we have created and risking being disturbed, we conclude that “tragedies bring out the best in human nature.” Could it be that our man-made institutions bring out the worst in us? Primus inter pares recognizes the urge to cooperate. Absolute power concentrated in a senior executive does not.

Kohn offers some hope. In his final chapter he concentrates on the growing trend toward cooperative education. The “teacher’s” role is to create the learning environment. The students role is to learn and teach each other (this system would have been called “cheating” in the 1950’s when I was in grade school). The result is lively classrooms, turned on, joyful kids who don’t want to leave school, and a seed of hope for the rest of our institutions.

(Continued on page 5)
Reflections on Leadership
(Continued from page 4)
are not easy to find. This is one. Reflections on Leadership is a worthy and worthwhile gift to all those who attach high value both to their responsibilities and to people with whom they work.”

For those who have already benefited from Greenleaf’s ideas and wish to deepen their understanding, this is an essential book. It is also the ideal introduction for those eager to draw on a source of wisdom that has inspired so many.

Reflections on Leadership is available at bookstores across North America and sells for $27.95 (hardback). Or you may order copies directly from The Greenleaf Center at the special introductory price of $25 (plus $3.50 shipping-and-handling). See the order form on the back of this newsletter.

Grant (Continued from page 1)

tions, thereby fostering the creation of still more servant-led organizations in the next century. In addition, The Center anticipates expanding the Institute idea, starting in 1998, to begin a similar program for other types of institutions.

“This program marks a major development in the continuing spread of servant-leadership throughout society,” said RKGC Executive Director Larry Spears. “We hope to partner with dozens of institutions that are ready to explore the brave new world of servant-leadership. Our great dream is that servant-led institutions will become the norm, rather than the exception, in the 21st century.”

As part of this grant the Center intends to supplement and offer an array of programs and resources to support these institutions in their efforts following the initial Institute experience. In addition to our current line-up of workshops and resources we anticipate offering on-site consultations, affinity groups, written and electronic communications, and other opportunities.

The Greenleaf Center is now inviting letters of inquiry from interested presidents or board chairs of institutions in higher education.

Toward a Twenty-First Century
“Theology of Institutions”

by David Specht

A goodly number of faith communities have been inclined to embrace Robert Greenleaf’s thinking and writing about servant-leadership. According to oral tradition, at least a few hoped that he might gesture back toward Christian scripture and tradition as the source of his thinking, and were chagrined to discover that his inspiration was not the prophet Isaiah’s “Servant Song,” but rather Herman Hesse’s Journey To The East.

The notion of servant-leadership in which the heart of leadership is wrapped in a spirit of service and revealed most unfailingly by the impulse to call forth the best of others resonates deeply with many of the cherished convictions of several religious traditions, including the Judeo-Christian tradition. And while Robert Greenleaf appears to have not drawn in any conscious way from the Christian theological tradition, he has not been at all bashful about speaking to us.

In fact, he has set before us a task: that we develop our capacity to reflect theologically on institutions. In an unpublished paper (“Note on the Need for a Theology of Institutions”), Greenleaf spoke plainly and at length to this need: “I do not believe that the urgently needed fundamental reconstruction of our vast and pervasive structure of institutions can take place, prudently and effectively, without a strong supporting influence from the churches. And I doubt that churches as they now stand, with only a theology of persons to guide them, can wield the needed influence. I deem it imperative that a new and compelling theology of institutions come into being. It is my hope that contemporary churches will take the lead to produce it.”

This effort is currently underway. For the past two years a circle of colleagues under the shared leadership of Richard Broholm and David Specht has been collaborating in an action-research project centered in the greater Boston area. The focus of this work has been the development of a theological reflection model that can be used by institutional leaders as a resource for helping them to “see things whole” even as they seek to discern creative strategic possibilities in response to thorny real-life institutional problems. The evolution of this model is being shaped on the basis of its use in occasional cross-disciplinary gatherings of institutional leaders, business school faculty, management consultants, pastors, and theological reflectors who come together from around the country to focus on a dilemma being faced by one participant institution.

Participants come together for a day of holding this particular institution in trust, inviting it to stand under several queries designed to help gain a balcony perspective on its life and trajectories, as well as a discernment of its core animating spirit. The process concludes with the offering of strategic advices to the institution which addresses not only its presenting problem, but its quest for wholeness of perspective as well.

Supported by a grant from the Bauer Foundation and under the sponsorship of the Greenleaf Center, the colleague group in this Theology of Institutions project has moved from a series of thinkpieces which trace the evolving assumptions and theory of the effort and are currently working on several articles for religious and secular publications. An initial version of Seeing Things Whole, the theological reflection model, is scheduled to become available for circulation among friends by January of 1996.

The second half of this four-year project will focus around further research and testing of process resources, and work on a book which will seek to engage a broader community in this ongoing conversation.

David Specht is a colleague in the Theology of Institutions Project, which is under the care of The Greenleaf Center.
Reflections on Leadership

Order your copy of Reflections on Leadership from The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership at the special introductory price of $25 (plus $3.50 shipping and handling), three dollars off the retail price.

Name __________________________
Institution ______________________
Address _________________________
City ___________________ State _____ Zip ________
Phone ( ) _______________________

___ Yes! Please send ___ copies of Reflections on Leadership at the special introductory price of $25 per copy (plus $3.50 shipping and handling).

I am paying by:
___ Check ___ VISA ___ MasterCard ___ American Express
Card Number ____________________
Expiration Date ______ Signature ______
Name as it appears on card ________

Please mail or fax your order to:
The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership
921 East 86th Street, Suite 200
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 259-1241
Fax: (317) 259-0560
Quantity __________
Cost of Book(s) __________
Shipping and Handling __________
(one book @ $3.50, More than one @ 10% of cost)
TOTAL DUE __________

"Reflections on Leadership is a worthy and worthwhile gift to all those who attach high value both to their responsibilities and to the people with whom they work."

— Max DePree, author, Leadership is An Art and Leadership Jazz