A Personal Journey in Leadership

By Laura Leyser

Are leaders born or are they made? This is a question that I have often pondered on my journey in leadership and as OREA’s new leadership initiatives are developed, the organization as a whole is also weighing in on the question.

Now, every journey in leadership is a personal one. In my case, it was a combination of my nature along with many professional experiences that have molded my leadership skills.

My first foray into leadership was in childhood as a gymnast. While I was enjoying the fun — and hard work — of gymnastics, I was also developing traits that have served me well as an adult: Dedication and perseverance.

Over the years, I became involved in a variety of community organizations and in each I was encouraged to take on more and more responsibility. Those childhood traits of dedication and perseverance paid off.

But, those traits alone weren’t enough. I also had the will to achieve. A wise teacher once made a profound statement, “Attitude, more than aptitude, will determine one’s altitude in life”. With a personal will to achieve firmly in place, I was introduced to many mentors who helped cultivate my inner strengths. Strong and stable personal relationships, in my case, also provide that extra measure of support as I have taken on various leadership roles.

Developing a leader is like putting a puzzle together: One’s basic nature combined with some coaching and formal training can enable an individual to grow into all that they can be. Leaders are born, and then, they are made.

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