



AN ADVENTURE IN LEARNING AND EXPLORATION

By Frances Hesselbein

In 2009, the University of Pittsburgh established the Hesselbein Global Academy for Student Leadership and Civic Engagement. Annually, fifty global students are brought together for a leadership summit at the University of Pittsburgh to develop their leadership skills and apply them to real-world situations through interactive presentations, mentorship, and civic engagement.

In July 2015, global leaders from more than twenty-five countries, including Afghanistan, Ghana, Egypt, Cameroon, India, Vietnam, Nigeria, Canada, Nepal, Ukraine, Pakistan, South Africa, The Netherlands, Cambodia, Philippines, Morocco, Tunisia, Mexico, Ecuador, Russia, Lebanon, Australia, Ghana, Brazil, Indonesia, and Palestine and more than fifteen states across the United States gathered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, along with ten accomplished mentors, for the seventh annual Leadership Summit.

Already, leaders in this group (chosen from an application pool of more than five hundred) have accomplished much: they've worked on global political campaigns, founded nonprofits, double- and triple-majored—many while working to pay for their educations.

According to Joan Snyder Kuhl, Hesselbein Academy advisor and mentor, reflecting about her team's civic engagement assignment with Magee-Womens Research Institute:

“My team had only a couple hours to brainstorm but this group of overachievers had already begun to ideate the evening until 2:00 a.m. They took over the board room with flip charts and white board illustrations that allowed for every voice and idea to be heard. During the formal civic engagement presentation, my students launched into their ideas using their social and mass media expertise presenting brand-strategic recommendations and a cascade of design ideas that kept me at the edge of my seat!!

The Magee-Womens Research Institute team was blown away by the students' professional and innovative thinking."

Hesselbein Academy mentor Jim Earle had similar reflections. "I just finished serving four days as a mentor at the Hesselbein Global Leadership Academy—what an amazing experience this was! Numerous students commented that this was the greatest experience of their lives."

It was truly life changing for the students and the mentors! I am so grateful I was asked to participate.

Although I could not be with the students on-site, I connected with the group virtually throughout the weekend via Skype. The energy conveyed through a laptop, from my office in New York City, was truly amazing.

Our aspirations for this seventh University Summit were that its young leaders of the future, from all over the world, will change lives wherever they go. Leaders of the future shining a light wherever they go. After the summit, more than ten of the Global Academy students visited me in New York, traveling by train or rented car.

So it was true that we did not say good-bye after four exuberant days together, but that we are committed to finding ways to stay connected, and continuing the incredible adventure in learning, exploration, and courageous leadership that began at the University of Pittsburgh.

A Celebration

On September 16, one of our Institute's greatest supporters, Thomas J. Moran, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Mutual of America Life Insurance Company, threw me a birthday celebration of a lifetime.

As always, it was a Happy Birthday, with no numbers. Long ago, when my grandfather was 97 and "the oldest living Republican office-holder" in office (as well as Justice of the Peace in South Fork, Pennsylvania), he ran for his next three year term. When people would ask, "Squire Wicks, would you mind telling me your

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age?" He would politely say, "Yes, I would. For age is irrelevant, it is what we do with our lives that counts."

So, when nice people ask me my age, I smile and say, "May I quote my grandfather, please?" And I tell them, "Age is irrelevant, it is what we do with our lives that counts."

Now, to be clear, I never celebrate birthday "numbers." I learned from my grandfather that age is irrelevant; it is what you do with your life that matters. It is my belief that to serve is to live. All those who know me know that I believe leadership is a matter of how to be, not how to do.

As a young girl, leading and managing were the furthest things from my mind. I had a different focus: writing poetry. At age seventeen, my father died and I returned home from the University of Pittsburgh Junior College and assumed responsibility for my family. Yet in my lifetime, doors were opened, and I simply walked through the open doors.

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