



International Leadership Associates, founded in 1987, offers a unique approach to leadership development with its Leadership Challenge, a spirited leadership development seminar held mostly outdoors at Camp Joy . These are the members on the team Elliott Blodgett, Steve Coats Steve Houchin Connie Sullivan, Amy Thompson and Lisa Nack. (Tony Tribble for the Enquirer)

Building great leaders ... from the outdoors in

ILA offering training exercises free to nonprofit organizations

Written by
Jeff Wallner
Enquirer contributor

It's one thing for business leaders to learn about leadership development and risk-taking while sitting in a classroom or hotel meeting room.

It's quite another to do so while harnessed to a pizza-box size platform 25 feet above ground.

But that's exactly what clients of International Leadership Associates experience during the spirited Leadership Challenge Workshop, which since ILA's founding in 1987 has been held at Camp Joy, a 315-acre retreat venue near Clarksville, about 40 miles northeast of downtown Cincinnati.

"It's learning that sticks," says Steve Coats, managing partner at ILA. "At the end of the day, the group congregates around a campfire. There's as much leadership development going on there than anything that goes on in a classroom."

ILA's clients – which include E.W. Scripps, Kroger and Fifth Third Bank – send scores of their top managers through the Leadership Challenge Workshop, which offers three days of classroom lessons and outdoor team-building exercises that encourage participants to take risks, solve problems and leverage support from their peers.

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ILA's Core Beliefs

- Leadership does make a difference. It can be the key to an extraordinary workplace
- Leadership development is a process – not just one or even a series of training sessions.
- Leaders develop leaders. Leadership is everyone's responsibility.
- People deserve good leadership – organizations are made up of good people who deserve good leaders.

For more information on ILA and the Leadership Challenge Workshop, visit: www.i-lead.com

Scripps has sent more than 500 of its employees through The Leadership Challenge Workshop since 2010, says Lisa Knutson, the company's chief administrative officer. "We thought it was just going to be another leadership program, but it was a culture change for our company," Knutson said. "It was much more personal than professional. It has changed the lives of people who work for our company. It gives you a way of trying to become the next best version of yourself."

Coats calls the team-building event a "challenge by choice." No one is forced to climb 25 feet to the platform then lunge toward a trapeze bar and swing to the other side. But those who do learn to ignore their instincts and take a leap, while trusting the safety system and relying on the support and encouragement of team members standing below.

"You choose your level of engagement," Coats said.

Beginning this month, ILA and Camp Joy are joining forces to offer the Leadership Challenge Workshop tuition-free to area not-for-profit organizations. Many nonprofit leaders are set to retire, leaving a void in leadership, says Amy Thompson, executive director of Camp Joy.

"Unfortunately, where nonprofits spend the bulk of their funds, leadership development takes a back seat," said Thompson. "We wanted to come together with ILA and leverage each other's abilities for a broader impact on the community."

The Leadership Challenge typically costs \$2,400 per person, including all meals, snacks, lodging, course materials and activities, with costs fluctuating based on the number of participants.

The first tuition-free Leadership Challenge for nonprofits will be Monday through Wednesday.

"We're offering them the gift of leadership," said Coats.

Based on the best-selling book "The Leadership Challenge" which has published five editions since 1987, the Leadership Challenge Workshop is ILA's premier offering.

But the company also offers other programs with specific instruction in effective communication, how to manage change and growth, and how to become better coaches.

Coats said ILA has experienced its best years since 2008, managing a relatively small number of clients each year. ILA considers itself a boutique consulting firm, remaining a certain size to best serve its client base and continue to grow its collaboration with Camp Joy.

"We offer contemporary leadership lessons," says Coats.