

>> Hello. This is Janet Michael.

In addition to hosting The Valley Today each weekday at noon on the River 95.3,

I also produce podcasts and I'm excited to introduce you to

a new podcast series in partnership with Lord Fairfax Community College.

Having provided higher education and career training for the past half-century,

LFCC is tightly interwoven into the fabric

of the Northern Shenandoah Valley in Piedmont regions.

Join me every week for conversations with current and former students to hear

their funny and inspiring stories as we learn about their journey to higher education,

the role that LFCC has played,

where they are now, and where they plan to go.

We'll also talk to current and former professors about

their experiences and best memories of LFCC over the past 50 years.

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just search for LFCC Stories.

Hello, and welcome to The Valley Today.

I'm your host, Janet Michael.

Happy Thursday as you are listening to the show today,

we of course have pre-recorded our conversation on the Zoom screen.

That still doesn't matter because it is LFCC Day as you are listening to the show.

It is Guy Curtis' turn at the mic from Workforce Solutions.

Guy, we're going to be talking today,

I understand about one of my favorite topics because

I don't think it can be discussed and taught enough,  
which is leadership, especially in a pandemic.

>> Absolutely, thank you for having us back on the show.

Yes, leadership is a need and a skill that is always out there,  
and as leaders in our region are always looking to refine  
those skills and find emerging new leaders as well to replace the existing.

We're excited to talk about our Leadership Institute program.

It's in its 10th year coming up,

and that's one of many of the programs that are offered at Lord Fairfax Community  
College

within leadership to help those area leaders within our region to grow and succeed.

This particular program really

focuses on the new and emerging leaders within the business community.

Helping them grow and develop their understanding and application  
of leadership skills for a very strategic way of approaching it.

They will dive into

very relevant competency-based leadership topics

dedicated to collaborating and

developing action items to help implement in the workplace.

Really, a lot of the takeaways from the course can be directly applied.

With our 10 years of celebrating,

we want to just share that we've served

217 leaders over the nine years it has been around,

as well as 35 different companies within our region.

Fortunately enough today, we have an alumni with us,

Jeff Hill from Thermo Fisher Scientific.

Hill share a little bit about his experience.

But one thing that really resonated with me as we were looking at the program is the ripple effect of all of these leaders that we've served over the years, and how many folks they've touched.

I think Jeff himself really felt that it was also a reason of significance for him in going through the program and what the outcomes were for himself, and not only just when he went through it but today and moving forward.

Just like leadership, it's always a need that we need to refine and continue to build on,

and we're very excited about this program at its 10th year.

>> It changes. Leadership today is not the same thing that leadership would have been when the program started, even 10 years ago or 20 years ago.

It changes with the business environment, so you really do have to update yourself and understand how business works today in order to teach people how to lead their people in that business?

>> It does and because of what I mentioned off-air is that there's the silver tsunami.

We have a number of folks who are retiring, they're getting out of the workforce, and so there's a direct replacement of another generation, the millennials and others who are out there as either a new leader in their role or an emerging leader, and they're being thrust in some situations into a position where they're new to it. In other words, they once were a buddy, but now they are a boss of their peers. How to manage some of the situations.

Even with the changing generations that are coming through, there's different styles and approaches to how to work with them and lead a team effectively.

Yes, it's always changing and I think why this program has been successful over the years is that it really adapts to those real-world leadership skills that are current and relevant.

We have experts who are teaching in the program from at least those that we know who have had at least 15 years of experience or more and over several weeks of sessions and meeting in a small class size at various locations.

This program is allowing you to connect and share best practices with other like leaders in your same situation.

I think I'll not have greatly benefited from that because they have not only just a networking opportunity with many different leaders in different positions and different industries, but they have a chance to really network for a lifetime.

In other words, they have folks they can lean on for other leadership topics and challenges as they grow and learn in their roles.

We know there's a need, over 50 percent of businesses within our region are in desperate need of leadership.

We also have had recently with a couple of two key industries that we worked with a lot within

Workforce Solutions in our college is the manufacturing and construction environment.

Now, even a greater need in those roles, because they have such growth that's happening within our region, our construction environments, to manufacturing,

over 80 percent is needed with  
new front line leadership type of  
roles and positions and one of the jobs are being posted,  
but also not even with that too,  
folks are being promoted within,  
a lot of jobs are opening up and now you're being posted.

There's a great need and so, first of all,

loving the share about this program and what it has done for our community.

>> I think it's a misconception to a lot of people hear the word leadership or they  
think about leaders and they immediately  
think of people working in an office environment.

That isn't the case these days,

like you mentioned with manufacturing and construction,

leaders are in all types of industries and come from all walks of life.

>> Yes, they do. Yes, that's right.

Whatever industry you're working into,

your home life to community organizations that you serve,

you name it and so to be ahead of it,

and to be a true leader and develop folks that are worth following as leaders,

we all follow and watch the goods that are out there,

the thought leaders and those who we admire and want to be in following  
somewhere form,

and so ultimately, that would be the goal if you are a leader.

I heard this a few weeks ago and it sounds a little morbid,

but you're trying to sell tickets to your funeral.

People say that sometimes and if you think about it as a leader,

as you develop yourself and you want to

do good things to the community and you have people follow after you,  
and so that's something I'm thinking about myself in my own personal leadership  
journey.

If I can sell tickets,  
how am I impacting the community today,  
and not only just with that home and life and what you do,  
but I work in the people you work with,  
and so to be a true leader,  
that could be one philosophy or example.

It just a weird thing to say,  
but you're trying to make an impact and you want people to show up and be  
there and obviously make a significant impact on many people's lives.

But we're happy to have alumni here today with us.

>> I will buy a ticket to your funeral, Guy.

Just so you know,

I will buy a ticket to your funeral.

>> Okay. Thank you. I appreciate it.

>> You mentioned we've got Jeff Hill on the Zoom screen with us today.

He's an alumni of the Leadership Institute.

He's a quality assurance manager at Thermo Fisher Scientific just down the road.

From me, Jeff, when did you go through the Leadership Institute? How many years  
ago?

>> I went through in 2015,

about six years ago.

>> What drew you to it to initially?

What was your position and why did you think that  
would be something that would be good for you in your career?

>> Well, it's funny that we were talking about a ripple effect.

I recently, just before I went into the program,  
I had been promoted to  
a leadership position and I was fortunate the person that I worked for,  
saw something in me that I didn't even know was there and I  
was playing a team in work in leadership position,  
and she said, "Oh yeah, by the way,  
I'm going to send you to this class so we can get some toolkit."  
The rest is history, if you will.

It was an opportunity that is like,  
I can do it later and then, okay,  
here's this class and see what you can go and get out of it.  
>> I know it's pretty much a year-long class.

You meet once a month and I would assume cover a different topic.  
Usually, people sign up for these and they think, okay,  
I'm going to leave and I'm going to have all of these  
up in the air concepts that are going to be taught.

You just mentioned that there's a toolkit.  
So you're left with actual stuff that you could use  
and put into practice the minute you got back to your office?

>> Yeah. In some cases,  
I was putting things that I learned in class in play the very next day.  
Something would happen.

There's a very thick three-inch binder that has permanent residence on  
the bookshelf in my office and over the last six years,  
I've gone to that well a multiple times  
because a situation is presented itself and you're like,  
well, I think I remember talking about this in class at some point.

It at least gives you a frame network that you can go back to in an unfamiliar situation,

something that you've never thought of or experienced.

You have this framework that you can use to at least guide your own internal thoughts,

so that ultimately you arrive at a constructive approach for whatever situation that it is that might be presenting itself.

I can't tell you how many times over the years,

at least starting there has helped.

I think, had I not gone to the class,

I would have probably made some of the,

and I did make leadership mistakes obviously,

but it's knowing that there's a way.

It's like, if you're scratching your head,

it's like I've got this one thing I can go back and refer to.

Time and time again, I go there and it's helped guide a lot

of difficult situations that I've faced over the years that presented themselves.

If that binder disappears off the bookshelf,

I'm going to be a very upset person.

>> Well, and Guy mentioned the opportunity to network and make connections.

Not just with the people who are teaching the different classes,

but with your classmates as well.

Have you found over the years that you've leaned on them and

reached out to them for advice too?

>> At certain times, yeah, that happens.

I can't say that it's happened a tremendous amount,

but we all stayed connected a little bit after the classes.

Situations will come up where you know somebody may be looking into employment



somewhere,

or they want to get an idea of what is this place like?

Then you like, "Oh, you know, I know somebody that works at that company that you're going to.

Let me use my network and ask

a couple of questions and see what they're willing to share, what they can share."

Ultimately, you set somebody else up for success.

It could be a successful job interview

or a peek into how another industry works if someone's looking out for a career change.

Those are a few different situations where that cohort of people, they really come in handy.

The thing is, it doesn't matter if it's been five minutes or five years, you can reach out and you're going to get a response.

That's a really positive thing as well.

I think one of the other things that came along with it too,

is just like any other class,

you develop that camaraderie.

Yeah, it's only once a month,

but the commonality that binded us to all was,

we're all facing the exact same thing.

Wherever we were at in our leadership journey,

we were in it,

and so you remember that and it's like, oh yeah,

sometimes you're not just learning from,

like Guy was saying,

these established leaders and experts and outstanding instructors,

you're also learning from your peers too.

There's hundreds of years of experience sitting in a room with you once a month for an entire year.

That's a beautiful place to be.

>> Jeff, maybe we can talk a little bit about some of the specific examples that you've gone to that binder for, that it's helped you work through and feel like you've handled a situation better than maybe you would have if that binder wasn't accessible to you.

Can we talk about some of that in the next segment?

>> Oh, absolutely.

>> Okay. Well, we're going to take a quick break.

When we come back, we're going to continue our conversation about leadership on The Valley Today.

It is LFCC Workforce Solutions' turn at the mic.

We're going to come back and have more of a conversation with Jeff Hill.

He is an alumni of the Leadership Institute that is currently going on at LFCC.

Guy Curtis is also on the Zoom.

We'll talk more in just a couple of minutes.

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>> Welcome back to The Valley Today.

I am your host, Janet Michael.

Happy Thursday, as you are listening to the show today.

It is LFCC day and it is Guy Curtis from Workforce Solutions' turn at the mic.

Joining him on the Zoom screen is Jeff Hill.

He is an alumni of The Leadership Institute,

which is what we've been talking about today.

He's also the Quality Assurance Manager at Thermo Fisher Scientific.

Guy, we talked a little bit in

the first segment about The Leadership Institute as a whole.

These types of programs are important no matter what our business climate is,

but I would imagine they're even more important

now because of things like you mentioned in the first segment,

the Silver Tsunami, and the pandemic.

A lot of people have had to step up into leadership roles that maybe they weren't prepared for.

So things like this are probably more important now than they would've been in a normal 2020 situation.

>> Yeah. I would think so.

Certainly, leadership is always an emerging theme to tackle and be in front of.

As I've progressed through my career,

learning even more so in my maturity as a professional,

but also connecting with community members and people that I work with daily,

that leadership is something that there's always something new or different.

Different challenges in our working and living environment and so,

pandemic certainly thrust us in.

We had to figure out new ways to communicate,

new ways to collaborate,

new ways to lead our teams.

Whether that's through a technology,

or virtually in some way or form,

we were very challenged these last year or so.

I think, now even more so as we learned the new normal that we have in today's world.

Leading is going to be a little bit different to some level,

in so how to advance yourself further.

But honestly, a lot of

the tried and true best practices that are out there are still being employed today.

The Leadership Institute program that we're talking about,

in its 10th year still has a lot of

those foundational leadership elements as part of that program.

But there's always new things.

There's new things to consider as a leader,  
to be aware of your industry which you are doing exactly within your role.

But also, there are some common themes that are out  
there that many leaders can learn from others.

I think the collaboration and the community effort within Leadership Institute,  
it's up, for example, provides a great opportunity for  
folks to learn those best practices in one place, in one time.

I really like what Jeff said earlier as far as having that perfect place to be  
over years of time to really develop your own leadership philosophy,  
is a key thing in today's success of being a leader.

>> You mentioned the ripple effect that a good leader can have on an entire team,  
which then again filters down into the entire community and the opposite,  
sometimes, is even more magnified.

Lack of leadership sometimes creates a bigger ripple and creates more issues.

If you can avoid that by just getting  
some of this training and learning about leadership,  
you could avoid a huge crisis in and of itself.

>> Absolutely. Yeah. I've heard many times,  
many employees also will stay for their job to  
avoid a pay raise because of the great leadership they have.

Even in today's dynamic world of being competitive,  
you can't afford to lose great leaders and great folks that work with you.

As a leader, it's even more important today to attract and  
retain the talent that you would like to have within your organization.

Having a leader, having an investment within a great leadership team,  
and folks who follow that individual or work

with that individual is even more important today, for sure.

>> Jeff, you mentioned you were in the program in 2015 because basically, your boss said I'm sending you to this.

What did you think when you went initially

and was it at all what you thought it was going to be once you've got knee-deep into it?

>> I was blown away by what it ended up being.

I have pretty vivid memories of

the first class session and we had to go around the room and introduced ourselves.

I remember running off the statistics,

I'm Jeff, I work for so and so, etc.

But then, basically, it was like being in confession.

I recently become a leader,

and I'm here to learn and get as much out of this as I

possibly can because I need all the help I can get.

I think that's one of the things that come out of it.

You know, an awful lot is asked of anybody that's asked to lead,

whether it's a Fortune 500 company,

or you're leading a baseball team, a church, your family,

whatever, and having tools is especially important.

I remember sitting there that first day going,

wow, they clunk that binder down in front of you and you're like, okay.

But then it's not just that,

it's all the interactions and the activities and discussions and everything like that.

Looking at it as a learning experience in your head,

not like Guy was talking about earlier.

He was talking about his own maturation as a professional and everything like that.

It is. That's what it is.

It's a learning experience.

2020, there's no book with those obstructions in it.

As businesses, as people, as families,

as everything, on the fly,

we all had to figure out what was going on and go from what is the status quo,

being in a building, being in an office five days a week,

40 hours a week, whatever the case was, too

I was just looking down at the calendar.

It's 53 weeks ago I started working from home four days out of five,

but that was difficult for me too because I had five people on my team,

they had to be in the building all the time.

As a leader, that was one of those things, that was a struggle.

It was like part of my team is at home,

part of my team is in the facility,

I'm at home, all of the different things and you're ever trying to run a business.

In fact, our story is not unique.

Everybody was scrambling.

We saw it all across our communities,

all across the country, all across the world.

What helps you is you do have tools and you say,

"Well, we're going to try this,

and if it works great," and we found ourselves tweaking and fine-tuning and moving on.

At the beginning it felt like we were all probably

over-communicating and then we started,

Okay, it's been three months.

Once everybody think about this and then you start dialing back the frequency of this or

increasing the frequency of that depending on what the needs of the team is, but yeah, it was an experience that you gain so much from.

You don't even realize it at the time,

but over the last six years or so there's been different times we were like, "Wow."

You come back to the well, if you will,

and you realize this was something I learned and now I get the chance to apply it,

and then what you hope is somebody else

learned something from it and takes that knowledge and passes it on to others.

>> When you've gone to the book in the past,

have you gone to it with hope that there was going to be some guidance in it?

Have you gone to the book with a,

since this is the last shot that I've got,

please let there be something in there?

Talk to me about your relationship with the book.

>> Well, I think sometimes it's something to give you a framework.

Leadership is multifaceted as everybody knows.

Sometimes there's things you just don't know.

I think one of the coolest courses that we have over the course of

Leadership Institute was HR for the non-HR folks.

We didn't have any HR people in our cohort of people up classes,

but then you suddenly realize it's like oh yeah,

I have a team,

I have these responsibilities and everything like that,

but then there's this whole host of things that I don't know anything about,

but they're really important,



and if you mess them up,

there are very serious consequences that go along with that.

Sometimes it's good, like in that particular realm,

is going back and having that as a reference and being able to say, "Okay,

I can read this little bit of a blurb about logistics," like FMLA for example.

To get a little bit of a factual blurb enough to be able to say,

"Okay, I understand this now.

This affects somebody on my team."

Now I have at least a baseline level of knowledge to be able to go to, say,

my HR resource and say,

"I have this question.

I understand FMLA to be this,

here's where I'm struggling with it, can you help me out?"

I've found, especially in that area,

it's like everything was so foreign and you're like I have no idea where to start.

[inaudible 00:24:02] give me that baseline jumping off point where you can say,

"I really don't know enough to ask a question here,

but I've read a little bit and I understand this,

can you help me fill in the blanks?"

So that ultimately you make the right decision to

benefit the person involved in the situation that's presented itself.

>> Guy, the Leadership Institute,

as this show is airing on Thursday the 8th,

it started today actually.

Is it too late for somebody to sign up?

If it is, you guys have other leadership options,

leadership trainings and classes for people, don't you?

>> It may be too late, however,  
we are working to establish a second cohort.  
What this particular course is doing starting  
today is 20 leaders within those limited spots,  
but we're looking to also add an additional cohort,  
so that is a possibility.

Depending on where you are as a leader and where you want to go with your next  
steps,

we do have a number of different other courses and programs.

We call them open enrollment courses where you can just sign up in  
advance based on a specific topic,  
or like just what Jeff was mentioning,  
HR for the non-HR leaders.

That's an example of a course also we've, ala cart,  
pulled out so that you could take that one-on-one if you would wish.

There's also ways that our organization provide a customized solution for your  
company.

If you do like a specific topic or  
a session for your leadership team or emerging leaders you have within your  
organization,

that topic could be brought directly to your site.

Leadership Institute is just one way,

one model or mode, if you will,

to get your leadership started,

but we have other modes to deliver it,

so whether it's a customized solution, open enrollment course.

In this particular program,

Leadership Institute is just the mid level entry.

We're also working on a new entry-level foundational approach supervisor role type of

program that'll be a gateway to

this program depending on where

the student is or that person is in their leadership journey.

Yes, you could get onboard with this particular course if we have spots left,

but by the time this is airing this day on Thursday the 8th,

we may be full, but definitely reach out.

This is a cohort that we offer often,

and so it does happen every year,

but there's also other programs and opportunities to take advantage of.

We definitely encourage you to reach out.

>> Where would be the best first place for them to start?

Would that be your website?

>> Yeah, certainly. In terms of learning more about

Leadership Institute and getting a feel for past alumni,

we have an awesome video that's on our page.

It's [lfccworkforce.com/li](http://lfccworkforce.com/li).

We have a number of alumni coming forward sharing about their experience,

giving testimonials of what they learned or they gained,

as well as other learning opportunities too.

Looking through our site, you'll be able to find that,

but if you have direct questions,

I encourage you to reach out to our main point of contact,

Larry Baker, who's on our team.

His information is available on that same page.

He can guide you and share other opportunities that we do have within

the leadership realm to get that person started if you do miss out on the institute.

>> Cool beans. Well, thank you both for taking some time out of your day to have a conversation with me about leadership. I appreciate it.

>> Thanks for having me, Janet.

>> Absolutely. Thank you, Janet.

>> We are going to wrap up our conversation today.

We have been chatting with Guy Curtis from LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Joining him on the Zoom screen has been Jeff Hill.

He is a 2015 alum of the Leadership Institute,

which has been what we've been talking about.

He's also the Quality Assurance Manager at Thermo Fisher Scientific.

I will be back tomorrow.

I will have a brand new episode of The Valley Today ready to go for you.

Just a few minutes afternooon,

so meet me here then.