



Young Professionals of Knoxville (YPK) piloted its first Leadership Certificate program in January 2015. The 10 graduates of the YPK Leadership Certificate were selected among past YPK presidents and members of the 2014 YPK board.

2015 YPK Leadership Certificate Graduates



Farima Alavi is an editor for HGTV.com at Scripps Networks. She served on the 2014 Young Professionals of Knoxville board and is currently the Social Events co-chair for United Way of Greater Knoxville's Young Leaders' Society. In her free time, she loves to cheer on her two favorite football teams - the Vols and Bama.

“This course was a great self-discovery program. I learned how to use my strengths to make a difference in the workplace and community. Collaborating with a small group of talented professionals gave me a fresh perspective on what it takes to be a good leader.”



Danielle Benson is the past President of Young Professionals of Knoxville and served as the Curriculum Chair for the Inaugural YPK Leadership Certificate program. Danielle is originally from Denver, Colorado and came to Tennessee via the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Danielle graduated from the College of Business in 2006 with a Business Studies degree. In summer of 2015, she will graduate with her MBA in Leadership from the University of Tiffin. Danielle is currently the Director of Training for the Alliance for Better Nonprofits and previously served as Marketing Supervisor for LBMC, PC and Director of Operations for the YWCA Knoxville. She serves on the board for the Friends of Literacy, Knoxville Marketing Association and the United Way Young Leader Society.

“I am grateful to be part of the inaugural program, I feel better prepared to use my courage and passion to engage others towards success. Knoxville is the best city for young professionals and this inaugural class is equipped to show Knoxville how young professionals contribute to our community.”



Ashley Bowen is a Human Resources Business Partner with Scripps Networks Interactive where she supports multiple departments' HR needs, serves as the point person for employee relations and leads develops the orientation program. With a background in Public Relations, Ashley has been involved in the community through Young Professionals of Knoxville and Big Brothers Big Sisters. She enjoys event planning, snowboarding and spending time with her "little sister" through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.



Jay Cobble is Principal Broker and a founding Partner at Providence Commercial Real Estate Services where he has won various awards such as PowerBroker and 40 under 40. Jay currently serves as Chairman of the Board at 4 Market Square and has held board or volunteer positions with CCIM, Dogwood Arts, Knoxville Fellows Program, Knoxville Chamber and Younglife. However the best part of his day is coming home to see his wife Rebecca and daughter Gwennie.

"The Leadership Certificate was an inspiring program that brought valuable knowledge to push me towards more productive leadership at work, in the community, and even at home." – Jay Cobble



Rachel Dellinger is the Director of Communications for the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra. A Knoxville native, she graduated from the University of Tennessee where her passion for publicizing the arts was fostered. She has served on several nonprofit and club boards including Tennessee Stage Company, Tennesseans for the Arts and Knoxville Rotaract Club. Rachel is the President-Elect of the Young Professionals of Knoxville and has served on the YPK board for three years. She is passionate about connecting, supporting and working with people in any capacity, and enjoys grammar, social media and live performance of any kind.

"I appreciate the opportunity to dive deeper into conversation and have meaningful discussion about leadership with my peers. Discovering our personal strengths and how we can use them on teams, at work and in the community was a valuable part of this program. The content is good, but the synergy from the other group members is energizing."



Casey Holbrook is an Professional Engineer, runner, North Knoxville resident, amateur theologian and accidental musician. He works at Agile Technologies where he oversees the design of high precision electro-mechanical systems and aids in process development and product development efforts.

Machine Design is Casey's first love professionally, and his tinkering extends to other weekend projects including an ever changing array of old vehicles, his 1929 bungalow, or his sailboat. When not working, Casey can usually be found enjoying time with his wife Melissa, playing music at weddings, working in his yard, mountain biking, or cheering on the Vols.

“The YPK Leadership Certificate process proved to be a valuable time of learning and growing professionally and personally. The program affords participants the chance to get expert coaching from a variety of accomplished instructors. I highly recommend the program to anyone who seeks to gain direction in their career and increase their effectiveness.”



Elizabeth Neutens has been a Provider Consultant with TeamHealth for a year and a half. She is involved with Young Professionals of Knoxville and currently serves as their community outreach chair. In her free time, Elizabeth plays several sports with the Knox Sports and Social Club.

“I really enjoyed my time in the Leadership Certificate program. I learned a lot about myself, which I believe help me better understand how others respond to various situations while maintaining my beliefs.”



Brandon Parks is a Senior Account Executive for IMG College - The Vol Network and has been with the company for 14 years. In the community, he has served as president for both the Dogwood Arts Festival's Board of Directors and the Young Professionals of Knoxville. He currently serves on the United Way of Greater Knoxville Board of Directors and as co-chair for the United Way's Young Leaders Society. He is married to Beth Parks who works at Scripps Networks Interactive. They have one son, Hudson and a girl on the way. At age 14, Brandon got his first taste of the sales world as a Coca Cola vendor at Neyland Stadium and has been selling ever since. #TheGoGiver

“The YPK Leadership Certificate program provided a great 6 week curriculum covering many aspects of Leadership. From understating yourself to working with and leading others, I plan to apply much of what I learned to my career, volunteer work and personal life.” – Brandon Parks



As the creative director for Moxley Carmichael, a premier public relations and communications firm, Charley Sexton focuses on creative solutions to accomplish clients' goals. He works with nearly every client on the roster and manages a highly creative and talented staff. Whether developing a brand identity, building a website or designing a print ad, Charley envisions the client's objectives and delivers compelling creative materials. Charley, a founding member and past president of Young Professionals of Knoxville and a member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), is participating in Introduction Knoxville's Winter 2015 session. He has a bachelor's degree in graphic design from the University of Tennessee. Charley and his wife, Linnie, are raising two

daughters, Haley and Riley. Charley greatly enjoyed being part of the inaugural class of the YPK Leadership Certificate program.

"Studying and discussing leadership values and challenges with other people who are passionate about the well-being and productivity of their teams is extremely important. The YPK Leadership Certificate program allowed me to explore new ideas and practices, while digging deeper into my own understanding of what it means to be a leader." –Charley Sexton



Heather Sutton serves as Marketing Specialist for ModernTech Solutions in Knoxville, TN. She is responsible for developing and executing comprehensive inbound marketing strategies for one of the nation's largest SOLIDWORKS 3D CAD resellers. Prior to that, Heather worked as Media Relations & Project Director for the Metropolitan Drug Commission. She also gained experience in recent years as a member of the public relations and events staff at Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee (BBBS).

Heather currently serves as the Membership Chair for Young Professionals of Knoxville. She has also volunteered as a mentor with BBBS for the past five years.