



# A WEEK IN *Learning*

## SPOTLIGHT

*Individuals and teams leading a culture of learning!*

### **RIISING LEADERS: FOUNDATIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY GRADUATES ILLUMINATE THE HERO'S JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE**

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There's a parallel between legendary characters like Luke Skywalker and Harry Potter and the graduates of our Foundational Leadership Academy (FLA). The common thread? The Hero's Journey. At its core, this narrative archetype focuses on the transformation of a protagonist through an epic adventure, encountering challenges and mentors, and experiencing profound personal growth. Similarly, the FLA graduates embarking on their leadership journeys evoke the question: "How can I be a great leader for my team?"

#### **The Hero's Departure**

FLA's participants are summoned into leadership roles as their leaders recognize distinctive qualities within them. Some, like Career Coach Olga Hernandez (Cohort 20), dive into leadership willingly, while others, like HR Systems Analyst Chantel Sanchez (Cohort 21), initially resisted the call, doubting her skills. This skepticism is expected, reminiscent of the hero's initial doubt and uncertainty.

Those who receive the call to lead begin their leadership journey by attending our Foundational Leadership Academy (FLA). This 6-week course serves as a platform to develop the leadership skills of GCNA employees. FLA content covers everything from Leadership Theory to Growth Mindset.

Like Frodo Baggins had Gandalf, and Luke Skywalker had Obi-Wan, heroes need guidance from mentors along their path. Luckily, Goodwill has plenty of mentors to support team members as they develop as leaders.

Chantel credits the SR Manager of HRMS & Workforce Analytics, Jessica Sample (Cohort 8), for pushing Chantel through her journey. Jessica told her, "Stop saying you are not a leader. We are going to reframe how you think." This mindset change gave Chantel the confidence to accept her abilities in leadership.

#### **The Hero's Initiation**

FLA isn't a typical leadership course—it's a transformative journey. Participants, like Instructional Designer Michael Brocchini (Cohort 21), absorb impactful concepts such as "clear is kind" and "rumbling with vulnerability." Beyond buzzwords, FLA's real triumph is its focus on Goodwill's mission. Michael highlights the collective investment in the non-profit's purpose, which is achieved through activities, discussions, and reflections on Goodwill's core values.

Networking during class caught the attention of the IT Security and Operations Manager, Ben Schnee (Cohort 20). "I was in a room full of colleagues I don't normally see. There were employees from Retail, HR, and the ROC. Coming from IT, I don't have the chance for deep discussion with these colleagues." Ben appreciated the collaboration FLA afforded him.

The topic of appreciation was the treasure Chantel found. “I wanted to learn how my teammates valued appreciation because of the Emotional Intelligence section. Was it with a note, a verbal thanks, or public recognition? I asked and applied their preferred method. Then, I saw my team doing this, too.”

## The Hero's Return

FLA's impact is vividly seen in leaders like Michael and Chantel, who recognize tangible changes in their professional lives. They witness shifts in leadership styles, embracing democratic approaches and placing newfound value in trust within their teams.

Every FLA class ends with a reflection on Goodwill's core values. Michael has realized that trust is a significant part of leadership. “I am now comfortable with the idea that I am not good at doing everything.”



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He understands that the leader needs to be trusted but also needs to trust in their team.

Since FLA, Olga feels that collaboration and engagement have grown the most for her. She approaches conversations with clients in a way that encourages them to believe in themselves. “I help them believe they have the skills to apply for different positions.”

Chantel said she is much more well-rounded as a leader. “The core value that I connected with the most was innovation. FLA made me realize that innovation is only one piece of the bigger picture.”

## The Continuous Journey

FLA is more than a conclusion; it's a prologue to an ongoing story of leadership excellence. Equipped with skills from FLA, these leaders are not mere participants but authors of their leadership narratives, shaping a dynamic and empowered organizational future. The question evolves from “How can I lead?” to “What more can I achieve?” Like the Hero's Journey, FLA symbolizes the continuous evolution from leadership potential to impactful leadership.

In FLA's condensed yet profound experience, emerging leaders, much like iconic heroes, discover inspiration, guidance, and growth. As the Hero's Journey unfolds in the professional realm, FLA graduates carry the torch of leadership, contributing to a narrative of success and empowerment in their organizations.

***Thank you for leading a culture of learning!***

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