



## Legacy of Leadership Lincoln

On a winter day in late 1984, Jo Kinsey was given time off work at National Bank of Commerce to visit Omaha and shadow a woman for whom community leadership had become a passion.

The appointment with Connie Spellman, then director of Leadership Omaha, had been arranged by Dr. Vance Rogers, former president of Nebraska Wesleyan University and respected community leader.

Acknowledging that the earlier generation of Lincoln known as the O Street Gang was gone, Rogers and others expressed concern about the future of the city. Who would fill their shoes? Who would make things happen? From where would new leaders come?

Rogers and others also sensed a growing division between the business community and neighborhood groups and recognized an urgent need to bring the two together.

Kinsey and Rogers began talking with other community leaders including Duane Vicary, executive director of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and John Frey, past president of the Lincoln Foundation. These individuals spread their enthusiasm to other community leaders, Duane Acklie of Crete Carrier Corp., J. Robert Duncan of Duncan Aviation, Eugene Crump from the Governor's Office, David Sallee from the Mayor's Office, Thomas C. (Chip) Woods III from the Woods Charitable Fund, David Buntain from Cline Williams Law Firm and Brad Korell from National Bank of Commerce. These individuals came together to begin to lay the groundwork to establish the organization and in early 1985, John Perkins, Doug Carper, Mary Arth, Ross Wilcox and Dorothy Clark joined the founders as the first Leadership Lincoln Board of Directors.

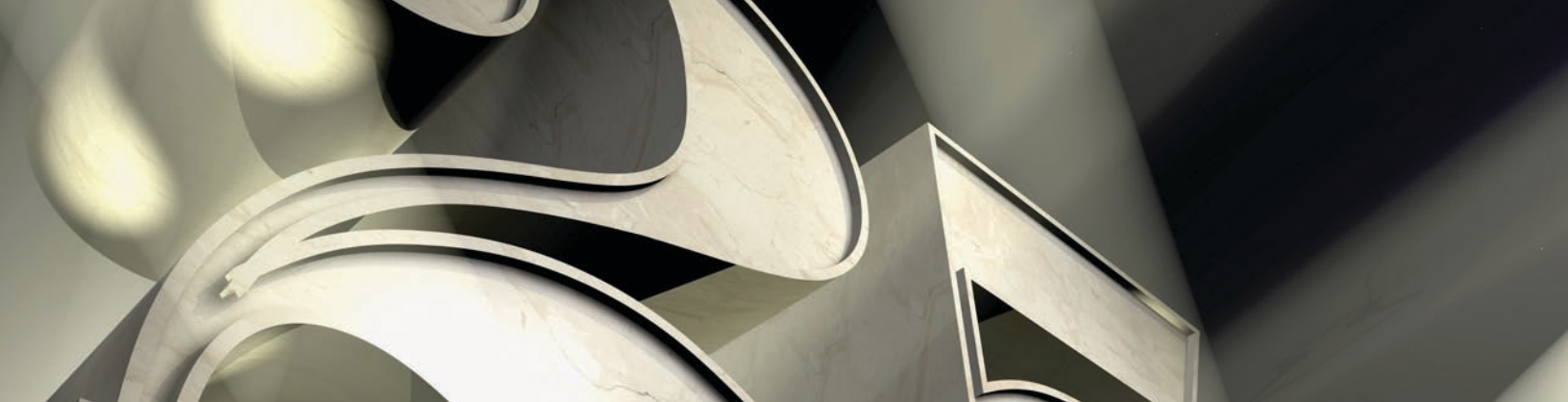
On April 25, 1985, Robert Duncan, Chip Woods, Gene Crump, John Frey and David Buntain signed and filed the Articles of Incorporation and Leadership Lincoln was in business.

The Founders and members of the first Board of Directors were powerful movers and shakers and visionaries. The board was diverse at a time when not many others were.

The names of the businesses and institutions with which these founders were associated were as important as the names of the founders themselves, for, without corporate and institutional support Leadership Lincoln would not exist. The financial needs for the first three years' of operation were met by the Harry Seward Leadership Trust at the Lincoln Foundation (now the Lincoln Community Foundation) and the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc.

Friends of Leadership Lincoln – corporations and individuals who gave \$25,000 or more over the initial five to 10 year period included National Bank of Commerce (now Wells Fargo), FirstTier (now US Bank), American Charter, Crete Carrier, Duncan Aviation and Dale Jensen. Smaller amounts pledged during the first few years were from Union Bank and the Huntington Partners Group.

Another major factor in the early success of Leadership Lincoln was Jan Leeper. Hired in May, 1985 and given the explicit directive to have a leadership development course in place by September, Leeper went right to work. Leeper led the organization until her retirement in June, 1998. Without her guidance, dedication, knowledge and passion, the organization would not be in existence today. Upon Leeper's retirement, Deane Finnegan was hired to serve as President of the organization. She remains the CEO today, continuing to build on the foundation laid by Leeper during the first thirteen years of the agency's history.



Leadership Lincoln founders were able to reach consensus easily and quickly on organizational details and were united in their purpose. The founders wanted the organization to be independent, to stand alone and to fit the complexion of Lincoln.

Over the years, Leadership Lincoln has evolved to continue to fit the complexion of Lincoln. The program continues to adapt to the needs of the community but the basic values established by the Founders continue to hold true.

Since its creation, over 2300 individuals have participated in and graduated from one of Leadership Lincoln's programs: Fellows, Executive Series, Youth Programming and Project A.L.L..

Conservative estimates indicate that Leadership Lincoln alumni have volunteered over 622,000 hours of time resulting in a benefit of over \$13,500,000 to Lincoln. Today, you would be hard pressed to find any organization that does not have Leadership Lincoln alums involved in some manner: from the Children's Museum to the Downtown Lincoln Association, from Cornhusker Place to the American Cancer Society, LL alums are making a difference. They started the Chamber of Commerce's Young Professional Group and recently created a project, "1000 Hours of Lap Time" providing books and "lap time" to all of Lincoln's children in the Head Start Program.

"Leadership Lincoln participants are truly one of our city's most valuable resources. They represent Lincoln's future. Because they want to be involved, that future can be a bright future indeed," Robert Duncan wrote in 1986.

"Leadership Lincoln graduates represent faith in the future of Lincoln," Jo Kinsey wrote a year later. They are not just believers – they are workers and leaders."

Those words remain true today.