

Christine Kennedy, Executive Vice President, Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce



As a certified leadership and life purpose coach, Christine Kennedy is always on the lookout for ideas that will foster her own and the growth of others. As the director of [Leadership Lynchburg](#) and an ALP board member, she brings the same hunger for improvement to shaping her leadership program and our national community of practice. As Executive VP at the Lynchburg Regional Chamber, running Leadership Lynchburg is just part of her job, yet it has continued to perform at high levels thanks to Kennedy's get-it-done attitude and countless alumni who propel its success. With Kennedy's leadership, Leadership Lynchburg services a regional population of approximately 240,000 but operates at a level you might expect from a larger counterpart.

After a successful career in banking, Kennedy shifted to the Chamber and Leadership Lynchburg shortly after graduating from the program herself eleven years ago. She was attracted not just by the positive experience she had, but by the opportunity to re-shape the program. "The Chamber created a committee for overhauling the program and was asked to chair it. I loved the work—I was fascinated by the potential to solve problems when you are bringing smart people together. When a position opened up to complete the re-design, I went for it."

Kennedy led Leadership Lynchburg's shift toward a focus on leadership capacity-building for its participants. "It was all about introducing the community and the players to our class, and employers stopped seeing it as leadership development," Kennedy says. Kennedy and her team created a curriculum focusing on community leadership development, including capabilities like project management, team-building, visioning, and more.

Kennedy also ramped up the challenge on her classes to lead community change. As part of the selection process, applicants are challenged to identify 1-2 top issues facing the community. Then, at the opening retreat, their responses are aggregated into 4-5 core priority areas of the class as a whole. The class divides into smaller teams of 4-6 people, each of which connects around one of the areas. Their charge is to focus on that issue over the course of their year together, and leave an imprint. They are not expected to create a "silver bullet" comprehensive solution; but they are expected to push the needle in a positive direction.

To fuel her fire and inspire her efforts to lead change in her program and community, Kennedy has a pretty active reading list. She enjoyed fascinating case studies of leading change in *Switch* by Chip and Dan Heath. She's preparing to read Bob Burford's *Half-Time* about changing one's game plan from success to significance; and is into *The Go-Giver* by Bob Burg and John David Mann, about developing a life approach centered on philanthropy.

These resources, together with her strong relationships with leaders across her community, will continue to inspire Kennedy to lead change. She's excited about getting her Leadership Lynchburg's first foray into youth programming off the ground in the coming year. And she is already thinking about big picture issues that will drive change into the future. "How do we incorporate technology and still preserve a human connection? Another issue will be how younger generations communicate—how do we engage them on their terms? How do we leave behind traditional models of leadership programs to remain a credible, valuable, engaged tool in our community?" stated Kennedy. Although no one knows the answers, Leadership Lynchburg is fortunate to have Christine Kennedy in a position to respond, and ALP is thankful for her example to her peers.