



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Leadership Starts At Home: The Importance of Getting Involved

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Mayhew earned his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law in 2010, where he was president of the WVU Environmental Law Society and an associate editor of *The West Virginia Law Review*.

I grew up in a small town in Jefferson County, West Virginia. It was so small, in fact, that it seemed like everyone always knew who I was and what I was doing. Most people, of course, really didn't know me personally. They knew my parents, and they knew them because they were visible in our community. My parents spent time getting to know their neighbors. They served on town committees and church groups. They were kind to others, and they were well-liked and respected.

I've since moved back to that same small town. My wife and I live in the same neighborhood where I grew up, and many of our neighbors are the same people who watched over me as a child. As we build our own family and our careers, we do our best to engage with the people who live and work around us, and to give back to our community by volunteering our time and our efforts. You should too.

Many local organizations are in need of people willing to volunteer. Many young professionals are in need of leadership experience. Where

these needs intersect lie many opportunities for young professionals to not only develop their leadership skills, but to also learn about their communities and make a positive impact on the world around them.

Leaders set out to make the world a better place. The only way to do so is to get out into the world.

I am active with the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, as well as the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle. The Chamber promotes Jefferson County by supporting its businesses, educators and public servants. I regularly attend and volunteer my time for Chamber events, which has helped me meet other young professionals, as well as the county's business and political leadership. The United Way supports the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, as a whole, by addressing inequality in local education, income and health. I assist the United Way with its community campaign, which





raises the funds needed for its outreach programs. Most communities have similar organizations, and they are always in need of individuals who are willing to give their time and energy.

This past year, I had the honor of participating in the Chamber's Leadership Jefferson program. The Leadership Jefferson program selects individuals of varying backgrounds from the local community for a "master's degree" education on county business, politics and living. The program consists of monthly modules, each devoted to a different segment of the community. The participants work together in teams to plan out each module, with the intent of showcasing unique and interesting aspects of the community. Each module also includes a leadership seminar designed to develop the interpersonal skills necessary for public service and workplace success. Additionally, one module is devoted to state government, which allowed us to speak directly to our state legislators, the heads of our state agencies and the

governor about West Virginia and the Eastern Panhandle, in particular.

Through the Leadership Jefferson program, I met many wonderful young professionals and developed leadership skills for public and professional service. I also learned a few new things about a place where I've lived for nearly my entire life. If your community offers a similar program, I encourage you to take advantage of it. The connections that you make, the information that you learn and the skills that you practice through these leadership programs will have enormous benefit as you continue to take on new roles and responsibilities. There is also a statewide Leadership West Virginia program, which offers similar opportunities albeit on a larger scale.

I am also active in local government, although I am decidedly apolitical. I currently serve on a subcommittee charged with beautifying my town. Through my activities with this subcommittee, I've gotten to know my neighbors and my

local leaders better, and I've had an opportunity to make my town a better place to live and visit.

I came of age during a seismic shift in how people receive information and communicate with others. Through technology, millennials are more interconnected and have more opportunity to learn and share ideas than any previous generation. Yet, despite the ease with which we can now interact with each other, true leadership requires more than simply sending an email or posting to social media. Leaders set out to make the world a better place. The only way to do so is to get out into the world. Be informed. Get involved. Volunteer. You will be glad that you did. ▽