ASHS Leadership Academy- Session 1
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Like many individuals, much of what I have learned about leadership has come from observing and emulating those in leadership positions. I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe leaders skillful at drawing the best from others. And, I have observed other leaders who were less appealing. What I am beginning to understand is that good leadership is a lot like teaching. One may have natural abilities, but we all can benefit from self-reflection and training. Improvement is always possible and change inevitable. As I reflect on the first session of the inaugural ASHS Leadership Academy, I have identified areas for personal improvement and how I have changed already, both over the years and with the initial training in this program.

Required reading for our first seminar in Denver was Leadership and Self-deception: Getting Out of the Box. The book presented how we sabotage interpersonal relationships, both personal and professional, by misplacing our focus. I would fail to capture the nuances of the book and its message if I attempted to do so here. However, I can share how impactful I found the message and the subsequent discussion during Session I. While reading, I reflected on so many important relationships in which I have been guilty of being "in the box", as the authors termed it. Prior to this seminar, I fancied myself a relatively self-aware person, but the experience was a bit of an awakening. Honest self-reflection has shown me that I have much room for improvement. Simply coming to this conclusion already has allowed me to grow as a person and a better leader.

Another enlightening aspect of the first seminar was the in-depth discussion of the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®). I have taken this test multiple times and felt confident my results would be the same again. I would be a moderate extrovert and strongly intuitive. I was identified as an ENFJ; Extrovert, iNtuitive, Eeeling, and Judging. Someone with these preferences likes to interact with others, likes new skills and the big picture but sometimes glosses over details, takes feelings into account with decisions, and is decisive and scheduled.

My results aside, this part of the seminar was valuable because my previous MBTI tests did not include an explanation, and implications, of the results. Dr. Flores helped us unpack our results and stressed that this test indicates your preference in response to situations but does not define who you are. This may seem obvious but clearly understanding your default reactions to scenarios—being self-aware—allows adjusting our behavior to improve interpersonal relationships. What my results indicated was that some of my preferences have changed due to learned behaviors. In other words, I have grown as a person responding to my environment.

What I learned during Session I was interesting, eye opening, and at times not easy to admit, but it was valuable and has made me aware of how I interact with colleagues, friends, family, and strangers, and how to improve my interactions. The experience of having such open and frank discussions with the other Leadership Fellows in Class I was one I will remember. I look forward to continuing to learn with them.
ASHS Leadership Academy Class I from left to right: Julie Campbell, Heather Kirk-Ballard, Ryan Contreras, Chad Miller, Mae Culumber, and Wusheng Liu.