

CELEBRATING TRADITIONS AND SUPPORTING MULTICULTURALISM



CLASS OF 2019-2020

Introduction

The Leadership Aurora class of 2019/2020 (graduating in 2021) is the only class in history that can be referenced as the longest (and best) class ever.

Following the retreat in Breckenridge, Colo. in September 2019, the class was humming right along with monthly meetings focused on showcasing the various industries and services available in Aurora. What came next was an event that has forever changed us, individually and collectively - the COVID-19 pandemic. Instantly our monthly in-person programs were cancelled, our habits and routines compromised, and many questions left without answers.

As a class, we rallied to support each other, pivoted programming to online formats, and even completed a socially distanced and outdoor police day. We found a way to complete the class project at the Village Exchange Center, which provided a refreshed space for their community. The power of our Leadership Aurora class was tested during this unprecedented time, and we learned that adversity made us stronger and provided even greater opportunities for us to support our community.

The Leadership Aurora program provides immeasurable value for our city and is consistently fulfilling and inspiring for participants.



Acknowledgements

The Leadership Aurora class of 2019/2020 acknowledges the many individuals and businesses that provide invaluable support to make this one of the most outstanding leadership programs in the United States.



Our appreciation goes to the guest speakers and personnel who took us behind the scenes of organizations throughout the city. Gratitude is also extended to the Leadership Aurora Board, Program Director Rene Simard, Assistant Director Mitzi Schindler, and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

As we graduate, we look forward to joining the ranks as Leadership Aurora alumni and commit to sharing our experience with our community to cultivate future leaders and advocates.

Board Chairs

Congratulations Leadership Aurora Class of 2020!



David Barber
2019-2020

This year has – to say the least – been challenging!

As a class, you worked around the significant challenges of the pandemic – to meeting virtually and having some of your sessions on Zoom. All through this, you stayed focused on keeping your group together and several of your classmates commented on the high degree of teamwork displayed. You saw the opportunities the City of Aurora offers and explored how to strengthen the community through your volunteer leadership.

This year taught you greater flexibility and adaptability in the face of unprecedented challenges, and you emerged as a stronger team of talented leaders ready to influence our city and community to higher standards and effectiveness.

Leadership Aurora class of 2020, congratulations and very well done!

Steve Sundberg served as the Chair of the Board for 2020-2021. Because of the pandemic, there wasn't a class of 2021, but Steve guided the "Longest Class Ever" through their second year, and made these comments during the virtual graduation held on February 26, 2021:

First and foremost, congratulations Leadership Aurora class 2020 graduates! Your class will always be remembered for its extraordinary accomplishments and spirit during a very unusual time. It is my hope that you will continue the mission of Leadership Aurora by being actively engaged in positively shaping the future of Aurora. Your unique experiences together have created a bond that will forever connect you with each other, the community and to Leadership Aurora. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of your Leadership Aurora experience.

I also want to extend my gratitude to the Leadership Aurora board. As you all know, it is made up of passionate Leadership Aurora graduates who work very hard to provide each class with unforgettable insights and experiences. This program could simply not happen without them.



Steve Sundberg
2020-2021

Class President

Leadership Aurora Family 2020

"Best Class Ever" Two times over!



Karen Lovett

"Unity is strength ... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."

— Mattie Stepanek

When we gathered in September 2019 in Breckenridge, our sights were set on building a better Aurora. Through gatherings, relationships, and hands-on experiences, we endeavored to transform our community. And from first introductions, we built friendships that will last a lifetime.

A few months into the program, the COVID-19 pandemic landed in our home state. But we didn't let the pandemic stop our mission of serving our community and continuing our Leadership Aurora journey. We pivoted and experienced Military Day through Zoom technology (a first for Leadership Aurora!), and we came together as a class to decide how we wanted to truly shape our community.

As I reflect on our year(s) together, I am reminded about the importance of teamwork. Before COVID, our class bonded quickly and melded as a team. We had tremendous forward momentum. After COVID set in, we were forced to cancel our Lassos and Libations fundraiser, alter our police session, cancel fire day, and postpone graduation. And yet, through it all, we maintained a sense of teamwork and camaraderie. Despite navigating these two new eras – before and after COVID – we continued to look for opportunities to give back and to complete our commitment to the Village Exchange Center.

Now that we have risen to the occasion, let's go out there and shape Aurora's future, keep in contact with our new network with and perhaps most importantly, let's encourage and role model the importance of community involvement!

2019-20

Opening Retreat



Some carpooled, others drove solo, some stayed for the weekend... but one thing was true for everyone: we arrived at the opening retreat of the Leadership Aurora program as virtual strangers, and by the end of it had created memories, learned about each other's leadership styles, and established our collective intentions for the year.

The Leadership Aurora retreat in beautiful Breckenridge, CO offered an ideal setting to immerse ourselves into the program and bond as a cohort.

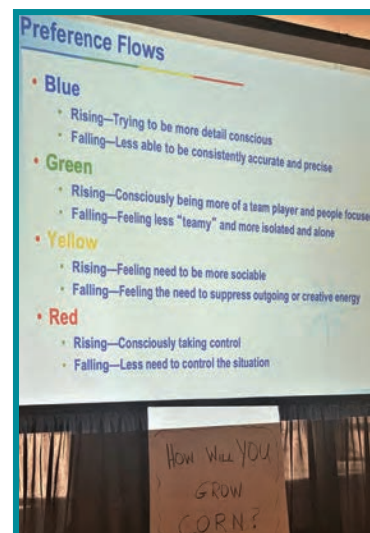
One of the highlights was the thought-provoking exercises facilitated by Franco Marini from the University of Denver's Daniels College of Business. The intentional reflective exercises and our Friday the 13th luck together worked magic to elevate our class from acquaintances to teammates and friends.



"Mostly I support you in remembering the magnificent being you are, and from that space keep on being in service in ways that enhance your life and the lives of people all around you."

— Franco Marini,
emailed to the class on
October 30, 2019

May we move through this year and beyond in a way that makes an impact on the Aurora community!





2019-20

Leadership Board

David Barber (Chair)
Re/Max Unlimited

Steve Sundberg (Vice Chair)
Legends of Aurora Sports Grill

Rachel Banks (Immediate Past Chair)
Adams County Workforce

Marcia McGilley (Secretary)
Aurora-South Metro Small Business
Development Center

John Adams

Alan Antolak
Adolfson & Peterson Construction

Natalie Artibee
Nelnet

Sunny Banka
Metro Brokers Sunny Homes & Assoc. Inc.

Kinder Blacke
Colorado Air National Guard

JoAnne Dodson
HealthONE-The Medical Center of Aurora

Jennifer Evans
Advantage Security Inc.

Eric Franks
Aurora Fire Rescue

Robert M. Fryberger Jr.
Fitzsimons Credit Union

Allen Golden
Pickens Technical College

Christina Grooms
Buckley Space Force Base

Mike Hanifin
Aurora Police Department

Tom Isaacson
Aurora Open Space Advisory Board

Tricia Johnson
Community College of Aurora

Karen Lovett (Class President)
UCHealth

Kynnie Martin
Xcel Energy

Caleb McNaughton
Highpoint Church

Laura Noe
Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage

Suzanne Pitrusu
Community Banks of Colorado

Chanell Reed
Families Forward Resource Center

Taylor J. Roberts
Tri-County Health Department

Colin Spencer
Colin Spencer Productions

Michael Tapp
Porter Adventist Hospital

Yvonne Valdez
Citywide Banks

John Wolfkill
Community College of Aurora Foundation

Sarah Young
City of Aurora – Water Department

Rene Simard (Program Director)
Aurora Chamber of Commerce
Rene.simard@aurorachamber.org

Mitzi Schindler (Assistant Program Director)
Aurora Chamber of Commerce
Mitzi.schindler@aurorachamber.org



Class Project

The 2020 Leadership Aurora Class chose to put our community efforts towards supporting the immigrant and refugee population. Did you know that 20 percent of Aurora's population are immigrants and refugees? Our class saw it as a major impact in the community to partner with the Village Exchange Center (VEC) and help them carry out services to this population. The VEC is an agency that addresses and alleviates challenges for people from all over the world. It serves as a community center and multi-faith worship space and seeks to celebrate cultural and religious diversity by creating an inclusive environment where residents from all background interact, share, and develop together. Through organic and colocated programs, informational services, and cultural activities, the center is a "one stop shop" supporting integration, engagement, and empowerment of newly arrived residents.



We were slowed down in the beginning by the effects of COVID, but we got right back to it as soon as we were able. Our class worked hard to recreate the VEC's event space in the basement where there are community events, classes, and after school programs for youth. Our resources allowed us to give fresh paint, clean up the floors, provide new furniture, a mural, and new décor for the entire space. We hope our efforts provide a positive communal space for everyone.



2019-20 Class Profiles



Mandy Ashley
Aurora Health Alliance

As a young family, we're having fun creating new family traditions based on the traditions of both parents and adding new ones! Skiing on Easter? That's a new one for the Ashleys!

It's all about personal growth – you have to expose yourself to different cultures in order to grow. Thankfully, this is easy to do in such a diverse city!

Thomas Banker
140th Wing, Buckley AFB

I had heard great things about Leadership Aurora since my arrival here seven years ago and I finally had the chance to go through the program. What a fantastic way to get to know others in the community and learn more about many things that help make Aurora great.

*Through food...lots of Italian/Irish American food!
Appreciate, learn, utilize all individuals' strength/experience/backgrounds regardless of where one is from or what one looks like.*



Lori Banks
Aurora Mental Health Center

Because I come from a multicultural family we don't just celebrate in one traditional way but we recognize and embrace a variety of activity that are inclusive of all throughout the year.

Alex Beardsley
FirstBank - Havana

Celebrating diversity allows me to respect, value, and explore varying viewpoints in order to increase creativity, problem solve quicker, and make more informed decisions.



Tanner Berkey

HomeSmart Realty

It means I have an ancestry rich with culture and diversity unique to my family. It represents an opportunity to learn and grow by experiencing each other's heritage.



Sam Bican

Children's Hospital Colorado

We celebrate family traditions by getting all of the family together and playing board games. This includes my family, my wife's family and my sister in-law's family. All of us have different backgrounds so it makes for a fun time.



Brendan Brown

Nelnet

For me, celebrating multiculturalism is about strengthening our communities, deepening our social bonds, and finding new perspectives. It is about having dialogue, exploring, traveling, and seeking out those things that are different all while grounded in openness and respect.



Michael Bryant

City of Aurora

Family traditions tend to be focused around holidays, whether in special recipes on Thanksgiving, movies we quote by heart at Christmas, or worshiping together on Easter.

Celebrating diversity means recognizing that my experiences and my background are just one piece of a large puzzle, no more or no less valuable a piece than anyone else's. And you can't get a clear picture of who you are or where you're headed as a community until you fit those pieces together and step back to admire their individualism and connectivity at the same time.



Jennifer Buckley

Visit Aurora

Food is a huge part of our family. We love cooking big Italian meals and drinking great wine, whether it's on a vacation or during the holidays with family and friends.

I love traveling and being able to learn about new cultures.



Jordan Clark

The CELL

I love and value the opportunity to bring people from different backgrounds together to achieve a common purpose and making our world a better place. I love celebrating diversity in almost every circumstance or situation I am in. Whether at the gym, at work, with my family, at church, at a concert, at an event, at the airport, at Leadership Aurora (#bestclassever), I strive to appreciate the diversity and creativity that is all around me. I love meeting new people and engaging with different audiences. I have done this all my life, and I believe this is part of what motivates me to foster meaningful relationships and community in all aspects of life. Diversity is all around us. Each of us has something unique and beautiful to bring to the table, and I love being able to see that and value those unique perspectives and contributions.



Dave Cernich

City of Aurora, Police Department



Angelina Costin

Grandma's Handyman Service

Growing up, I've always appreciated the various cultures and people around me. When I was in high school, I went on a class trip to Japan. There, I did everything I could to show my respects. I spoke Japanese and studied cultural norms so I wouldn't inadvertently offend or come off as disrespectful. It is important to remember that though all people are equal, some things are more important to certain groups than they are to others. It is wise to be mindful of others and acknowledge that all various cultures and people comprise our society.

In December, our family gathers to do sugar cookies for Christmas. During this time, we bake and decorate different shapes of cookies all while catching up on life. We don't get the opportunity to get together like this often but around this time we all make it happen.



MaryAnn Crawford

Bye Aerospace

Life is richer with different types of food, music, and traditions.



Dackri Davis

Aurora Public Schools

Food! We are a family of foodies and love to incorporate various dishes from our diverse cultural traditions! Celebrating diversity means inclusion and valuing all people.



Edward Hauschild

140th Wing, Buckley AFB

Being that my wife is from the beautiful state of Chiapas, Mexico, we try to celebrate a lot of cultural and family traditions as much as we can. Whether we are celebrating someone's birthday, Independence Day, or the holidays, we do our best to celebrate them combining American and Mexican customs. Always fun!

For my family and I diversity and multiculturalism are very important. It allows us to get different perspectives of how people from other countries eat, live, and celebrate life. It really opens us up to the reality that there are so many people and countries that are different than ours who are also extraordinary.



Alexandra Hoffman

The Medical Center of Aurora

In everyday moments, we can celebrate diversity by welcoming perspectives that vary from our own. Dynamic ideas are born from intentional collaboration.



Sarah Jiter

Community College of Aurora

*Family – a memory, history passed from generation to generation.
Being intentional in valuing cultural differences and experiences.*



Rebecca Kelley

Plante Moran

Heritage to me is your background, it is the ideas, stories, culture, and history that you share with your family and those who came before you.

We all have different heritage, and depth is added to that heritage based on our experiences. Celebrating diversity means opening yourself up to and experiencing different heritage, beliefs, and ways of life and welcoming the impact it may have on your own ideologies.



Shaunna King

Falck Rocky Mountain

We get together for weekly family dinners to touch base and catch up.

Our family celebrates together for all traditional holidays.

Celebrating diversity means knowing we are uniquely different but having tolerance and acceptance for those differences while allowing our distinct journeys. "Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value."

— Albert Einstein.



Kacey Leyba

City of Aurora, Public Safety

Our family loves holidays, especially Christmas. Food, games, and laughter brings us closer and closer every year. We have a bake off -- who's tastes the best?



Karen Lovett

UCHealth

Our family tradition has been passed down from my grandmother to my mother and now to me. My husband and I host Christmas and we celebrate his African American culture and my Irish culture by the food we eat. I will pass this family tradition down to my only daughter.

When I think of diversity and multiculturalism I think of inclusiveness. Everybody has their own story to tell and all we have to do is just listen and learn. Be open minded and embrace our differences and similarities.



Beau Martinez

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

One of my favorite family traditions is during Christmas time. My family and friends all gather around a big table and make homemade tamales all day. We start with making the pork and masa. Shred all the pork and add the red chili. Then we also cut up hatch green chili and cheese for "vegetarian" tamales. Once that piece is done, we spend the whole day rolling and bagging the tamales. At the end we freeze them and eat them throughout the year!

To me it means bringing people together by sharing culture. Celebrating multiculturalism is about understanding the why and meaning behind different traditions. It should be a learning experience that is taught with open arms and welcoming attitudes. This is one of the best ways to bring people together and share the awesome differences we all have.



Teina McConnell

Pickens Technical College

Celebrating diversity/multiculturalism means noticing and naming that the people around us come from many different realms. Celebrations happens when we drill down beyond race and ethnicity to the point of recognizing the cultures that exist within all races and ethnicity by integrating philosophies, thoughts, and people from many different ethnic and cultural experiences.



Jennifer Mills

Citywide Banks

Celebrating diversity means accepting, respecting, and appreciating all people and learning from one another.



Cheryl Myler

Raymond James



The way we celebrate. I love all holidays because growing up my mom made them all special. On valentine's day she would leave a little something for us in the morning before we went to school. She put up shamrocks for St. Patty's Day. Thanksgiving and Christmas just for all the wonderful cooking smells. So today we still get together, may not for valentine's day but for St Patty's we all meet for corn beef and cabbage, and I host the 4th of July, my sister Thanksgiving and my mom still does Christmas. I feel very blessed that may family is still here, and we still get together.

When I think about diversity, I think of all of us as a mix of differences, racial, ethnic, gender, age etc. Inclusion is about making that mix work, understanding our mix and celebrating it together.

Dianne Myles

Dope Mom Life



How do you celebrate or incorporate cultural or family traditions? This is an interesting question. As a black woman or person in the United States of America, our culture was stolen from us, so we have done an amazing job of creating a culture. I celebrate my culture by wearing my natural hair, acknowledging my ancestors, and the shoulders I stand on and honoring the fight they had for me to have the privilege I have. I participate in politics and use my voice to be a voice for the voiceless. I now also understand my duty in picking up the torch and fighting for the generations after me to be equal in this country.

It is honoring and respecting the differences that make us all a part of the human race. It's also never forgetting that all our stories are different, and those differences matter.

Phillip Pacheco

Advantage Security, Inc.



My Favorite family tradition must be banging pots and pans at midnight each New Year. When I was a child, my grandmother told me that making terrible noises as the clock turned at midnight to the new year would scare off evil spirits and ensure us good luck throughout the new year. It was the only night we were able to stay up late, and we would tell stories and play games to keep ourselves awake. We would pick out pots and pans as midnight approached and when the time came, we would make an awful racket banging the pots and pans together while we screamed out "Happy New Year."

As an adult my family and I have keep this tradition alive through our children. While we have seen little evidence of scared ghost, seeing the children's excitement each year to wake up the neighborhood and wish them a happy new year has been rewarding. It is as though my children are connected to family members they have never met, even if it is only through a shared experience.

Quill Phillips

Community College of Aurora

Every year my family and I attend the annual Juneteenth parade in the Denver Five Points to celebrate the emancipation of slavery on June 19th, 1865, where 250,000 people who were still enslaved 2.5 years after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Union Soldiers traveled to Galveston, Texas to deliver the news. This is like the Black Independence Day for us!

Celebrating diversity to me means that we get to bring our full authentic selves into the work we do and the people we interact with daily. Traditional expectations of our identities are challenged, and we are able to embrace new perspectives that liberate people to be themselves unapologetically and contribute to an environment in healthy equitable ways.



Steve Ruger

City of Aurora, Clerks Office



Jill Ruiter

Aurora Public Schools Foundation

I love being fully immersed in other cultures and having the freedom to ask questions and learn more about their traditions, food, families, and customs.



Priscilla Sandoval

Home Mortgage Alliance

I normally go back to Texas where I'm from and spend time with my parents and brothers. Enjoy unfamiliar cultures, foods, and traditions as if they were your own.



Alex Schultz

Community College of Aurora

To me, celebrating diversity means recognizing that people are different—we have different backgrounds, different beliefs, different stories. We don't always have to agree with one another, but we should always respect one another.



Susan Siegman

Wagner Equipment

Celebrating diversity and multiculturalism means to me being open minded to experiencing and accepting something new about a cultural that you aren't familiar with while including everyone involved. The world is a beautiful place.



Joe Simms

HQ ARPC, Buckley AFB

My side of the family (Southern) goes to church. My wife's side of the family (New Jersey Italian) throws a party. Stepping out of your comfort zone and actively trying to learn more about the world around you.



Giovanni Taw

566th IOS, Buckley AFB

During the holiday seasons we would always try to change year to year what we would prepare food wise and how we would celebrate. We would choose different countries around the world and would make a menu, set up activities for everyone to engage and learn, and would have to research before we could participate!

It means being open to new experiences, being able to listen to those around you and treating everyone equally. Giving everyone an opportunity to be involved is a great start when looking to celebrate diversity!



Heather Tinley

Cherry Creek School District

We are a mixed-faith family, so we focus on birthdays, graduations and secular holidays. We pick a theme for the celebration - such as royalty, pirates, or musicians - and dress up and decorate accordingly.

Restaurants love us or hate us!

My mother encouraged me to incorporate an appreciation for all cultures into our daily lives. We speak Spanish to each other, eat at Ethiopian restaurants, watch plays by African American authors and celebrate the richness of our community in many other ways.



Yolanda Trevino

STRIDE Community Health Center

Celebrating diversity as a female of Mexican descent to me means being able to wear who I am in pride and love. The beauty of Multiculturalism is to learn about and be able to appreciate and celebrate all cultures without judgement or fear.



Meredith Velasquez

Juvenile Assessment Center

Celebrating diversity recognizes everyone's unique experience in this world.



Mathew Wasserburger

Aurora Fire Rescue

Celebrating diversity means expressing a positive and genuine interest in diverse cultures and its people. If we turn our backs to diversity, we will only become a more divided community.





Community Day

Community Day was eye-opening and informative to say the least. In the first-class meeting since the retreat, we had a full day learning about several aspects of Aurora which began by hearing from guest speakers during breakfast. From there, the bulk of the day was allocated to visiting various non-profit organizations across the city in small groups before re-joining and sharing our experiences with the entire class. The missions of the organizations we toured focused around a variety of services geared toward helping Aurora's youth, homelessness, refugees, immigrants, employment opportunities, and more. Overall, the class learned there are many resources available to help members of our community, most depending on grants and donations to be able to fulfill their purpose. The day finished with an enlightening poverty simulation sponsored by Goodwill Industries. Through the mock poverty exercise, the class quickly recognized the reality and severity of the financial conditions and struggles many community members live with every day.

City of Aurora Day

Aurora Leadership kicked off our very busy day with the City of Aurora Mayor Bob LeGare, Deputy City Manager Jason Batchelor, and City Council Member Bob Roth. Budget, Aurora's biggest challenges, and revenue were hot topics discussed during this time. Aurora Chamber President and CEO Kevin Hougen then shared what the future of Aurora is going to look like. New housing developments going in, the Gaylord expanding, Buckley Space Force Base, and so much more.

We then moved into a mock council session, where there was fun to be had by all. Class members were given roles as council members, pro-oil and gas citizens, and anti-oil and gas citizens - with actual snippets of a previous council meeting.

After lunch, the class participated in the first ever Go Fund the City. Classmates partnered with their success partners and were given \$1,000 in 'Aurora Bucks.' City Departments lined the lobby and tried to convince each team on why they should "spend" their 'Aurora Bucks' on their department.

Before we headed to Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center, we took a small detour through the city to see what was already happening, that had been discussed earlier in the day. At the Gaylord, the class split into two groups for tours of the restaurants, sports bar, spa, and meeting areas.

It was exciting to see, hear, and experience what an amazing city we get to live and/or work in every day!



Media Day

For the first time, Leadership Aurora spent the morning at Rocky Mountain PBS, where we learned all about public media in the community and creating public partnerships. Rocky Mountain PBS serves the public by creating a perceptive representation of their local community. They are a nonprofit organization that relies heavily on donations from their 90,000 members. They are the largest public media outlet in the state with more than 350 community partners. Rocky Mountain PBS makes their way into 85 percent of households and hold the #1 spot for public trust in the media. What an informative morning!

Our afternoon was spent in the hustle and bustle of Aurora 8. We moved quickly between camera production, reporting, interviewing, and the control room. The Aurora Now producer gave us an inside look at the municipal television station and their programming. Aurora 8 participates in the live streaming of City Council meetings, the production of a weekly news program, public affairs programming, and other informational programs focusing on city services, community events, and more. They are the most decorated municipal station in the nation and received their first Emmy Award this year!



Education Day

On education day with Leadership Aurora, we learned so much about the range of education available for both high school and college in the Aurora area. We began the day at the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus - which is an absolutely beautiful campus with cutting edge technology for high school students. It was astounding to learn that students could get college level certificates for jobs in mechanics, nursing, home building, and a wide variety of other needed industries. We saw everything from tiny homes being built for the homeless, to brand new vehicles donated for students to practice working on in mechanics. It was very interesting to learn how much local businesses are interested in these young students, and that some students leave the school with high paying job offers for their newly developed skills.

We then traveled to the Pickens Technical College and got to experience some hands-on activities that included creating a floating wine rack. Not only did we get to use power tools, but we also received guidance from former student graduates in the program. It was exciting to witness the expertise of the students in action.



Of course, lunch was provided by the culinary arts students at Pickens Technical College, and there was visible pride in the students' faces who created the delicious meal. During lunch, we heard from successful students who are employed in their desired professions. Young, talented, and driven are the words that come to mind after hearing their stories. A young woman who just bought her first home, is working in a male dominated field, and couldn't be happier working on large machines that paint soda cans. She expressed her dream to work at NASA one day on space machines, and that dream will hopefully be realized in the future!

Healthcare Day

Healthcare Day was filled with information and experiences unique to Aurora's massive healthcare system. We started our morning with an overview of all that The Medical Center of Aurora has to offer, including behavioral health programming, rehab, and emergency services throughout Aurora. They are number one for ER transports in the state. Next, we had a presentation from the ethics committee to encourage us to start our living wills and advance directives for end of life care. Interesting conversations! We moved on to tour the emergency department, an operation room, a cath lab (with state-of-the-art technology to save heart attack patients), and the helicopter pad. There was even a therapy dog on the way!

In the afternoon, we moved over to Anschutz Medical Campus where we participated in a lifesaving STOP the Bleed training. We learned about groundbreaking surgeries with bionic eyes, four of them which have been done out of the very center we were in. Also, we were given information about the current opioid crisis in Colorado, and how to help our loved ones, our community, and support efforts to end the epidemic of opioid deaths. A fascinating day full of information!



Police Day

The class was scheduled for Police Day on March 19, 2020. Because of the official onset of the COVID pandemic earlier that month, the session was converted to a half day with masks. Class members attending learned about what the Aurora Police do daily, heard about some of the programs, met a few of the canine crew, and got to tour a few of the specialty police vehicles.



Military Day

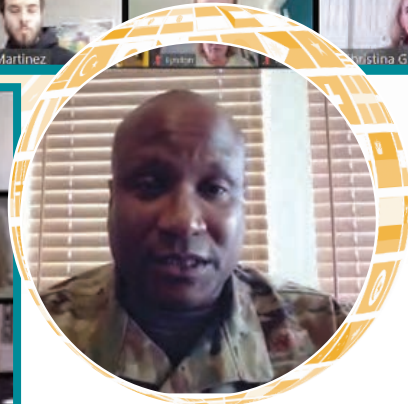
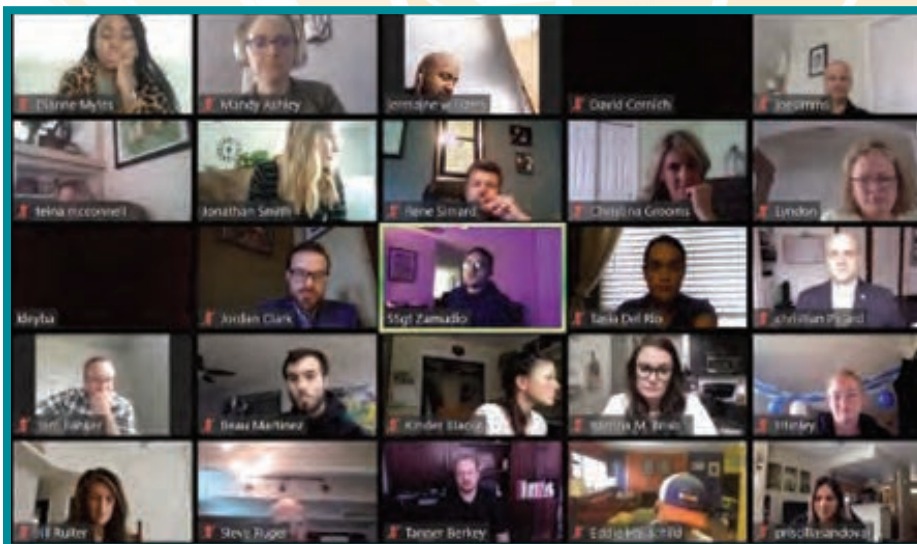
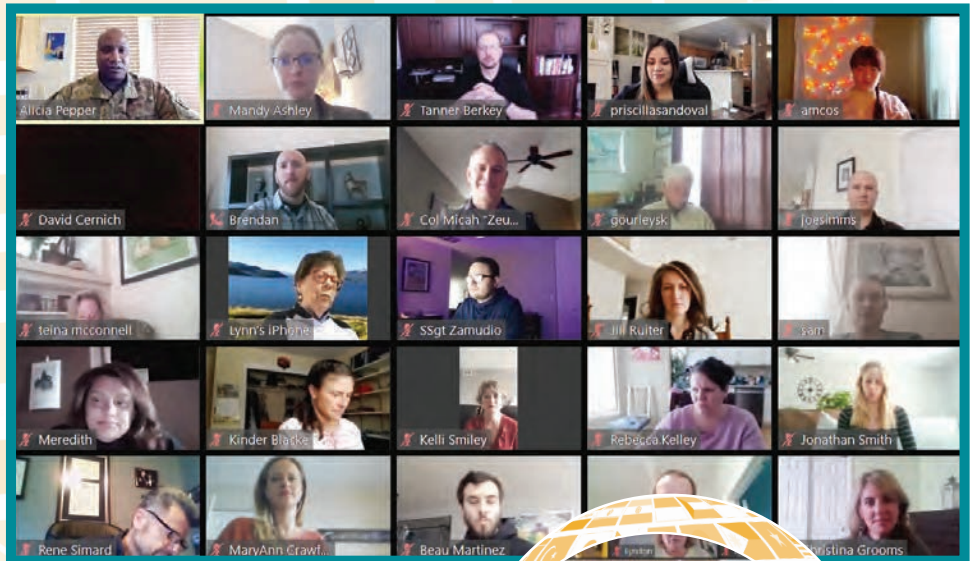
Military Day for the Class of 2020 turned out to be the first time a session was done virtually. The panel presentation featured US Air Force Colonel Devin "Sultan" Pepper from the 460th Wing, Colonel Micah "Zeus" Fesler from the 140th Wing, and Colonel Kelli Smiley from Air Reserve Personnel Center. These leaders explained their missions and how they impact National Security Objectives. They also explained what they did for the local community and how important it was to have relationships between the two.

Colonel Pepper explained the uniqueness of the 460th and explained the space domain. He described how they used technology in space to track what was going on in the world. He also talked about how satellites were used to help fight the forest fires that were in Colorado and the west over the last few years.

Colonel Fesler then talked about the 140th Wing, and the defensive and offensive capabilities of the Wing. He explained the difference between the Air National Guard and Active Duty and how the Guard was comprised of citizen soldiers, individuals that are part of the community and also work with the military.

Lastly, it was Colonel Smiley's turn to let the class know the important role the Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC) plays in supporting the Warfighter. Members of the ARPC perform human resources (HR) services to all airmen in the Air Reserves, Air National Guard, and Active Duty, providing services including retirement processing, pay and other entitlements.

The second half of Military Day was comprised of six airmen from the three different components. They each were able to give a 2-3-minute speech explaining who they were, where they were from, what their jobs were and why they joined.



Fire Day

By May of 2020, it was impossible to follow through with Fire Day because of the restrictions and stay at home orders that were in place. The world had changed, but the Leadership Aurora Class of 2020 continued to stay in touch with and support each other.

Graduation

Although usually graduation is held in June, the Leadership Aurora Class of 2020 had a virtual graduation, eight months later - on February 26, 2021, to honor and celebrate all they had accomplished as a class, as well as for their dedication to staying together during the pandemic.



You can see the graduation and the class video at:

Graduation - <https://youtu.be/LMGjMyGm4lw>

Class Video- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXochQAxnY>

Congratulations to the Leadership Aurora Class of 2020
Longest and Best Class Ever!

Social and Connections





Congratulations to best and longest class ever!

Through the incredibly unpredictable and difficult COVID pandemic,
your determination, perseverance, and spirit kept you together and strong!

Aurora Chamber of Commerce



Congratulations Leadership Aurora Graduates

From Pickens Technical College



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If everyone is moving forward together,
then success takes care of itself.
- Henry Ford



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