



Leadership Aurora Class of 2020 members participate in a mock city council meeting.

## Class hears from outgoing mayor, tours Gaylord Rockies and more as part of City of Aurora Day

By: **MICHAEL BRYANT**

November was City Day for Leadership Aurora, when class members had the opportunity to hear from city leaders before turning around and assuming their roles, if only for an hour.

The day began with a panel discussion involving outgoing Mayor Bob LeGare, outgoing Mayor Pro Tem Bob Roth and Deputy City Manager Jason Batchelor. The panel talked about the opportunities and challenges facing Aurora, such as the creation of a diversified tax base and working with partners across three counties and multiple school districts.

Aurora Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Kevin Hougan then took the class on a virtual development tour of Aurora to spotlight the areas currently or projected to see the most business activity. From entertainment, hospitality and international development near the Gaylord Rockies and the Aerotropolis in the city's north, to the bioscience and health-care development on the Anschutz Medical Campus, to the untapped potential of the city's eastern plains, Aurora has big things happening around every corner.

Class members then got to participate in a mock council meeting. With some class members serving as council members,

others serving as city staff, and others playing the role of residents, the "council" debated an oil-and-gas operator agreement to understand the processes behind how decisions are made and what avenues are available for residents to participate in how they're governed.

Then, class members took a deep dive into what services the city of Aurora offers by visiting booths in the Aurora Municipal Center lobby where each city department provided an overview of their work and made their best pitch on what they would do with additional funding. Each pair of Leadership Aurora success partners was given \$1,000 in mock "Aurora Bucks" to award to departments they found the most deserving of more funds. The winning department was Neighborhood Services.

The final activity for class members was a tour of the new Gaylord Rockies Resort and Convention Center where class members learned about how the state's largest hotel came to be built in Aurora, and how the massive property is bringing new business and visitors to Colorado.

Thank you to Highpoint Church for sponsoring breakfast and to the Aurora-South Metro Small Business Development Center for sponsoring lunch.

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## Leadership of Aurora Class of 2020

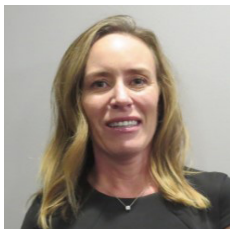
**Mission:** To guide participants to conduct as per our identified agreements for the success of the group and to achieve the goals of Leadership of Aurora.

**Agreement:** Be present, Be engaged, Be on time, Be all-inclusive, Be participative, Be respectful, Be Responsible, Be an ambassador of the program, and Have fun!

# President's Corner

Leaders of Aurora,

Happy New Year class of 2020. It's the start of a new decade and with that brings new beginnings, new opportunities, and most of all peace and happiness. As

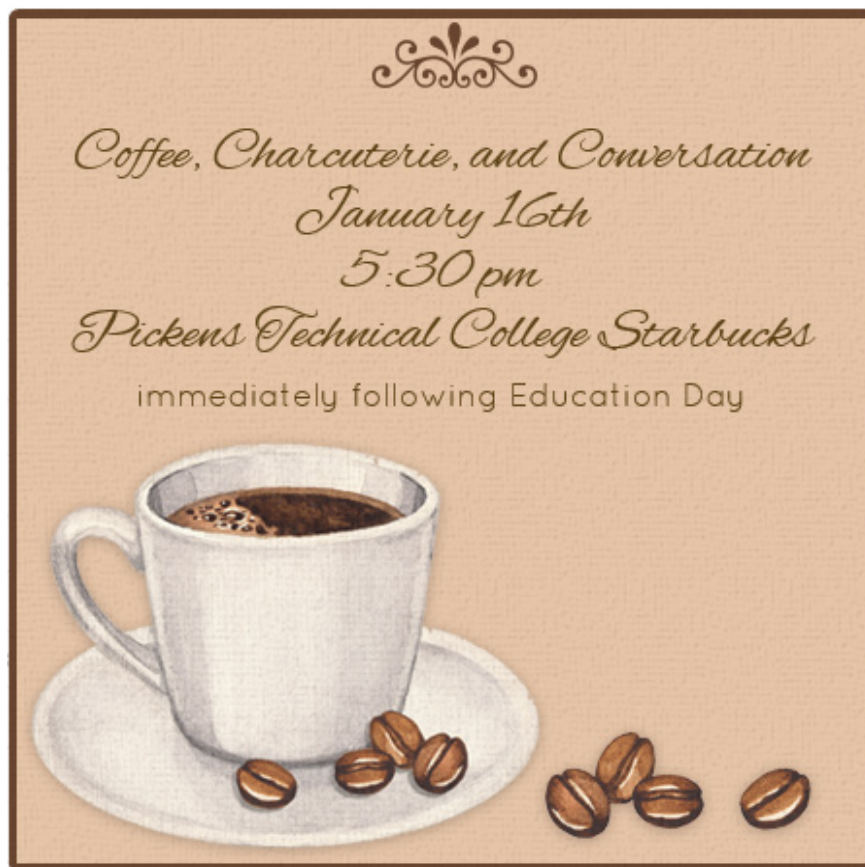


we continue our journey to embrace diversity, culture and authenticity we must remember one thing: "Great leaders don't set out to be leaders. They set out to make a difference. It's never about the role- it's always about the goal." Lisa Haisha

Be your very best you!

Best,

Karen Lovett RN MS ACNS-BC CCNS



## Meet the Class

### Beau Martinez, *Aurora Chamber of Commerce*

#### What has been the most eye opening experience in your Leadership Aurora class?

The day we did the poverty exercise in Leadership Aurora was a real eye opener. It showed us a new perspective on the challenges that people face. There are so many people out in the world that don't have enough to make ends meet.

#### What do you like best about living or working in Aurora?

I like the community feeling which is a small town feel that's connected to each other and there is great opportunity here.

#### What are some challenges you feel the industry you work in will face in the future?

I think it's difficult to encourage people to shop locally. With ease of ordering online, it's hard to keep the community involved in local businesses.



#### What values do you think are most important for a company to have?

A good working culture and comfortable environment is important to have. It is equally important that people get along and work well together.

#### How do you engage in or give back to the community?

The Chamber makes it easy to be involved in the community such as Leadership Aurora, where we take a proactive stance on giving back to the community through donations and support drives.

## Meet the Class

### Meredith Velasquez, *Juvenile Assessment Center*



destination for people, and there is a lot of diversity in Aurora. I enjoy that diversity, which brings new opportunities to connect with others like the unique cultural events and restaurants.

#### What are some challenges you feel the industry you work in will face in the future?

Meeting the needs of everyone is quite the challenge. We work for families with a lot of different backgrounds.

#### What values do you think are most important for a company to have?

Integrity and loyalty. It is important to value people.

#### How do you engage in or give back to the community?

I devoted my fulltime career to helping people, time and money to people less fortunate. I am active in my church, food drives and clothing drives.

#### What has been the most eye opening experience in your Leadership Aurora class?

Shop with a Cop was extremely eye opening. I work with families in need a lot but when I saw those kids putting others before themselves, I felt it even more and seeing how excited the kids were to give was impactful.

#### What do you like best about living or working in Aurora?

I feel at home, accepted and safe, which a lot of people take for granted. Everything I need is here, like my family. It's becoming a



# Media Day takes class behind the cameras

By: **ANGELINA COSTIN**

The word “community” is thrown around quite a bit these days. But what does it really mean? Community is more than a group co-existing in the same place or having something in common. It’s about being a part of a group that truly cares about each other; happily giving to increase the wellbeing of the group while solving problems and challenges.

Media has a direct impact on communities. Whether it be in a positive or negative way, the media tends to influence an audience digitally. Technology has made it easier to access local information on a global scale. Rocky Mountain PBS and AuroraTV are no exceptions when it comes to playing a vital role in the community. The mission of Rocky Mountain PBS and AuroraTV is to bring people together by playing an active and positive role in the community; broadcasting positive and creative content to better the lives of the viewers; and to spark conversations.

The Leadership Aurora class traveled to Rocky Mountain PBS and experienced the day-to-day responsibilities at Channel 6, home of some of our nostalgic and favorite shows. RMPBS, a nonprofit organization, thrives on local memberships that allows them to continue creating beloved content for viewers.

The class experienced a warm and informative presentation from RMPBS. Dan Diamond, director of sales, expressed the importance of public media to give back to the community, which increases value and strengthens our civic fabric. They connect to their viewers by offering educational programs, insightful talks on art and culture, KUVU Jazz, and instilling creativity and wonder into minds.

They proceeded to the film room with a large green screen where we met the hosts of Arts District, Kate Perdoni, Michael Gadlin and Executive Producer Jennie Castor. Behind the scenes is more than just cameras and spotlights. People behind the scenes are as equally important as conductors of the show to ensure smooth production and execution of a video.

Leadership Aurora headed down to the dark underground of Channel 6 where we were surprised to find machines and equipment behind glass like a museum. We were equally



Class members tour the Rocky Mountain PBS studios.

startled to find two men behind the glass observing at least 10 screens representing the shows from the station broadcasting in different areas. Not only are these men engineers and overseers, they will travel to different areas around Colorado if there are issues with the broadcast. RMPBS is on the move, right down the street. A new building increases ease of access to the community where people can connect to one another, ask questions, and be a part of the movement of RMPBS. The class looks forward to returning for the tour of the new building.

At AuroraTV, the heat was turned up when the lights and cameras pointed on the Leadership Aurora class. Members took turns operating cameras, asked difficult questions and defended a scenario. At \$80,000 each, the members were quite cautious attempting to capture their classmates on video. A director spoke into the ear of the camera operators, guiding them into the perfect shot where he then flipped to and from each of the three cameras. It was quite involved with many members of AuroraTV directing, all for 3-5 minutes of footage.

We gained an intense respect for newscasters and people behind the scenes in the heat of the moment. It’s difficult to answer questions on the spot knowing people are watching you, or even worse, debating. The hands-on experience was educational and informative and most importantly, fun!

The class headed back to the Aurora Room to receive a presentation on Digital Literacy: Fake News & Personal Branding by Matt Kaskavitch, Director, Digital Engagement University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

Fake news - You’ve heard you can’t believe everything you read on the internet. It turns out to be true! With the vast information on the internet, it’s hard to differentiate between what is real and what is not. Well, at least we

can trust our ears. Turns out, you can’t, said Matt. Adobe has invented a software program where you can capture a sentence someone speaks and as long as you type out what you want the voice to say, it will speak it and it’s hard to hear the subtle differences between what is real and what is not. This creative but potentially hazardous program has not been released to the public out of fear. Matt went into the importance to keep your reputation clean on the internet. If you don’t want it to be the headline on tomorrow’s paper, then don’t put it on the internet. Once that information is up, even if you delete the account, it is forever stored somewhere. He also went into depth about how personal brand identity plays a crucial role in a career. It allows people to get a sense of who you are as a person and what you do without actually knowing you personally.

Overall, the day was informative and insightful.



Class members take a bus from the Aurora Municipal Center to the Rocky Mountain PBS studios.

# An interview with former Colorado legislator Debbie Stafford

*Former lawmaker talks about career and approach to leading others*

By: **STEVE RUGER**

Debbie Stafford is a former Colorado legislator. First appointed to the Colorado House of Representatives in 2000, Stafford was elected four times to represent House District 40, which encompasses Elbert County and rural Arapahoe County east of Aurora.

Born in Rapid City, South Dakota, of Lakota Sioux descent, Stafford graduated from the Pikes Peak Institute of Medical Technology in 1972 and worked as a medical and optometric assistant in Colorado Springs before attending Nazarene Bible College from 1973 to 1974. Stafford is an ordained minister and also earned an associate of arts degree from Aspen College in 1992. In 2001 Stafford became a trained auctioneer, and she has employed her auctioneering skills during nonprofit fundraisers during her time as a legislator. Stafford has three children—Matthew, Melissa, and Rebekah.

I had the privilege of talking with Debbie regarding her career and her approach to leading others. We shared a terrific conversation, and I am tremendously grateful to have had the opportunity to talk to a strong woman, a proven leader, and – most importantly – a friend, about leadership matters. Here are the questions I asked and Debbie's answers:

### **Describe your biggest accomplishment during your time as an elected official.**

As an overarching accomplishment, Debbie highlighted her capacity to build relationships to invoke positive change. Specifically, she highlighted her time as a legislator where she worked to secure \$350,000 worth of funding for Aurora Youth Options. Debbie helped create a program that has proven to be a sustainable enterprise for mentoring at-risk youth in the Aurora community.

### **What is the greatest leadership lesson you've learned during your career?**

"Play nice in the sandbox." Debbie recognized the value of disagreeing philosophically, but noted that "honor, respect and dignity" are key in overcoming differences to conjure positive change. She emphasized that put-downs and name-calling rarely accomplish anything, adding that "decorum and respect" should always come first.

### **Describe your approach to leadership.**

Debbie, without skipping a beat, stated that it is imperative to "engage other stakeholders to strengthen, encourage and help sharpen a positive outcome." She highlighted the importance of "storytelling" and was wise to point out that people should not be judged quickly, especially without taking into account their past and their own individual accomplishments and challenges.

### **How do you motivate people?**

"I build people up and find the best in them."

She noted that there is nothing anyone has done in life that cannot be overcome. What a powerful statement!

### **What are your goals when/if you ever retire?**

"Never sit in a rocking chair and knit!" Debbie explained that in her free time, she enjoys building things and undertaking home improvement projects. In fact, she owns a cabin in Bailey – a work in progress that she plans to add an addition to in the near future. Debbie has no plans to ever retire and intends to continue "growing and learning."

I enjoyed ending our conversation with a discussion about the importance of strong female leadership. She wanted me to know that she has had to start over three times in life, including a time in her early 30s when she was on welfare. It was then she ran for state office on a platform to reform the welfare system. She highlighted again that honor and respect are virtues we should all strive for in our interactions with others. She has spent over 28 years helping people rebuild their lives and clearly shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. That is clearly what leadership is all about. Debbie is a builder – both figurative and literally – and Aurora is lucky to have her around.



### FAST FACTS

- Born in Rapid City, South Dakota
- Graduate of Pikes Peak Institute of Medical Technology, Nazarene Bible College and Aspen College
- First appointed to Colorado House of Representatives in 2000
- Elected four times to represent House District 40
- Became a trained auctioneer in 2001

..... ” .....  
[It is imperative to] *engage other stakeholders to strengthen, encourage and help sharpen a positive outcome.*

Stafford on her leadership approach  
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# Class members volunteer at Shop with a Cop event for underprivileged kids

By: ED HAUSCHILD

On Dec. 18, 2019, many students of the 2020 Leadership Aurora class volunteered their time by wrapping gifts for the 5th Annual Shop-with-a-Cop Christmas event.

It was an amazing day where police officers from Aurora Police Department, University of Colorado Police Department and the Adams County Sheriff's Office participated. These amazing officers and deputies took 103 underprivileged children from the community on a shopping spree. David Cernich, a Lieutenant with the Aurora Police Department and currently enrolled in the Leadership Aurora program (most amazing class ever) explained that Aurora PD in conjunction with Walmart volunteered their time to take these children shopping. He explained without their help these children would not have much during the holiday season.



Class members take a break from their volunteer work to pose for a picture.

Dave explained each child was given an allowance of \$200 with some basic instructions. First, each child had to buy a complete outfit for themselves, so they would have something nice to wear. The children were then required to buy at least

one member of the family a gift, to teach them that giving is important. If the child had money left over, they could spend it on themselves. It was amazing to see how the children spent their money. One child, Malik, purchased a pillow and

a bathroom mat for his mother because she currently did not have one. Another child, Ben, purchased a large blanket so his mom and dad could cuddle on the couch together while watching TV. Another sweet girl named Tamia selflessly spent all her money on gifts for her younger siblings thinking it was more important than purchasing items for herself.

The children were so happy with what they had bought, and the police officers did an extraordinary job in taking care of them. By spending their personal time with the children in a time of need, the officers proved their commitment to taking care of the members of the community. The event was a huge success and could not have been possible without the assistance of everyone involved. What a great example of how our Aurora officers interact with members of our community. Please keep an eye out for next year's event and another opportunity to volunteer.

## 5th Annual Thin Blue Line Blood Drive set for January 23 at Municipal Center

By: DAVE CERNICH

On Nov. 14, 2014, Aurora Police Officers Dale Leonard and Ryan Burns were on routine patrol and riding together in a marked patrol car. At about 9 p.m. the two of them had made what was believed to be a routine traffic stop in the area of East 16th Avenue and North Galena Street.

As Officer Leonard aired the stop over the radio, Officer Burns exited the passenger side of the squad car. Officer Burns immediately recognized that this was not going to be a routine stop as the driver of the vehicle was making furtive movements under his seat. These observed actions prompted Officer Burns to switch from the passenger side of his patrol car to the driver's side of the suspect's vehicle. As Officer Burns began to cross between the two vehicles, the driver pulled out a handgun and began to aimlessly fire the

weapon toward the officers. Numerous rounds were fired, and one unfortunately struck Officer Burns in the left leg. The round pierced his femoral artery. The pain and blunt force of the round striking his leg caused Officer Burns to immediately collapse on the cold snow-covered asphalt roadway. The blood loss from the injury was immediate. As Officer Leonard exited the vehicle he immediately recognized the severity of Officer Burns' injury. Officer Leonard's instinct was to place a tourniquet above the bleeding wound to slow the blood loss. Other officers arrived on scene and it was quickly determined that Officer Burns would succumb to the life-threatening wound if he was not immediately transported to the hospital. It was evident that he was losing too much blood to wait for rescue to arrive on scene so it was decided that the officers on scene would place him into a police vehicle and transport him code 3 to University

Hospital. They arrived at the hospital in less than three minutes, where Officer Burns was ultimately given 6 liters of blood.

This tragic event fostered the first "Thin Blue Line Blood Drive," which was scheduled for the following January. The members of the Police Department learned how close Officer Burns came to dying from his blood loss, but more importantly they learned the significance of the hospital having blood on hand to save lives.

We can't predict if and when our family or friends will need blood to sustain life, but we know that it may happen. Since the inception of this blood drive the members of the APD, city employees and residents alike have donated more than 336 liters of blood on behalf of the "Thin Blue Line Blood Drive," saving countless lives. Please look for and register yourself to donate blood through Vitalant (formerly Bonfils).

**The 5th Annual Thin Blue Line Blood Drive, sponsored by the Aurora Police Department, is Thursday, Jan. 23, at the Aurora Municipal Center (Go to [donors.vitalant.org](https://donors.vitalant.org) and reference site #A721, or call 303.363.2300)**

# Aurora Chamber Holiday Party

By: **ED HAUSCHILD**

This year's Aurora Chamber Holiday Party was a huge success. Many Leadership Aurora classmates (current and previous) attended and spent the evening enjoying each other's company as well as a delicious meal and other festivities put together by the Chamber. It was a spectacular event that had great entertainment to include a contortionist, individuals on stilts, caroling by the Aurora Caroling

Company and an ugly sweater competition where our very own MaryAnn Crawford almost took the top prize! Most importantly, it provided a forum where all who attended could let loose and just have a good time getting to know each other better and catch up from the last time we all saw each other.

Here are some images from the event:



## Terrorist-turned-reformer and scholar leads insightful discussion

By: **ED HAUSCHILD**

I was able to attend a national security discussion put together by the Counterterrorism Education Learning Lab (CELL) in partnership with the Aurora Chamber's Defense Council on Nov. 7.

The speaker was Dr. Tawfik Hamid, an Egyptian former Islamic terrorist who has since become a scholar and reformer for a more peaceful version of Islam. The purpose of his briefing was to tell the crowd about his experience on how he became a radical and the dangers of the extreme radical Islamic population.

After a brief introduction from our very own Jordan Clark, Dr. Hamid told us his story. He was born in 1961 and experienced what would be considered a normal childhood. His exposure to radical Islam started when he went to medical school. At that time, he was befriended by individuals who targeted young males. Dr. Hamid explained four

techniques used to "convert" young men. First, they focused on suppressing individuals from critical thinking. Then they worked on getting rid of an individual's human consciousness by making them think of others as trash. Next was making them believe that the second life was better than the one they were in now. If they did not follow instructions they would die and be tortured forever in their second life. Dying for their cause would guarantee them happiness forever. The last technique was to deprive the men from sex. The goal was to get you so deprived that you would do anything to get to paradise which was portrayed as getting all the pleasures you would ever want. As proof of his evidence, he presented statistics such as younger men being a high percentage of suicide bombers; coincidentally when testosterone levels are the highest.

Dr. Hamid then explained

how individuals were radicalized to become suicide bombers. While many young men had converted into radical Islamic thinkers, they were then preached hatred towards others that were not them. Furthermore, they were desensitized to violence by further suppressing their human conscious. They were convinced that causing pain to the infidels was a reason enough to attack others and that dying as a Shaheed was the guaranteed method to get to paradise. At that point, many would be willing to die for their cause.

Dr. Hamid went on to explain to the difference between the cultured, ritual, theological and radical/ sharia Muslims. He explained what he thought about the dangers of radical Muslims and presented methods to help address the phenomenon. He asked, "how do you defeat someone who wants to die and believes that dying would take

them to paradise?" He talked about an "anti-radicalism vaccine" that focused on the prevention of radical Islam and focusing on the center of the circle, suffocating the center in order to prevent further from becoming radicalized. In Dr. Hamid's case, he had an experience where he did experience a conscious moment and realized he could not continue as a radical Islam. Since then, he has been on a mission to educate others.

Overall it was a very interesting conversation that provoked thought and conversation with the audience. After his discussion, he took various questions from an audience that consisted of business leaders, first responders, military personnel and many residents interested in the subject. It was a great event hosted by the CELL and made all attendees more aware of the phenomena, of radical Islam and the dangers it can lead to in society.