



VAN FORUM

## Use Your Lifetime of Experiences to Make a Better World

### ALVA: Leadership Development for the Rest of your Life

After Dick Kavaney closed his law practice and *retired* full time, his wife, Peg, encouraged him to get involved in something that he cared about. The day she told him that he was “bored and getting boring,” he knew it was time to take action. Last fall, he signed up for the Vital Aging Network’s ALVA Leadership Development course. “It has opened a whole new world of possibilities for me,” says Dick. “I have met wonderful people, and I am engaged in work that I love and that I can see makes a difference.”

Don’t miss this opportunity to learn about ALVA from Mary Kowalski, ALVA facilitator, and Dick and Mary Ellen, participants in last year’s program. You’ll have an opportunity to talk about what you would do to make a better world and learn how you can get started.

ALVA will offer the course in six locations across the state this year (see page 5 for locations). Classes meet one day a month for eight months starting October 8, 2010.

#### Presenters:

- Mary Kowalski, ALVA Task Force
- Dick Kavaney, 2010 ALVA Grad
- Mary Ellen Kennedy, 2010 ALVA Grad

VAN requires preregistration for this free forum. To register, go to [www.vital-aging-network.org](http://www.vital-aging-network.org); look under *What’s New*. **Register online now!**

Questions? Need a ride? Call VAN at 651-917-4652.



### ALVA: Leadership Development Program

4:00 PM to 6:00 PM  
Wednesday,  
August 11, 2010

Free and Open  
to the Public

Rondo Community  
Outreach Library  
461 N. Dale St.  
St. Paul, MN 55103

[Map to Rondo Library](#)

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### September FORUM

### North Minneapolis: Empowering a Community

Tuesday,  
September 14, 2010  
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

[Additional information on page 8](#)

## Leadership Is About Helping Others Achieve

By Lori Terhaar, 2010 ALVA Graduate

**Lori Terhaar participated in the ALVA Leadership Development program for 2009–2010. The program gave her the structure to examine her experience, knowledge, and skills and to use that information to plan and implement a project that benefits her community.**

My most important discovery in the ALVA class was that change occurs when like-minded people gather to exchange knowledge, experiences, and ideas. My ALVA project was straightforward. I wanted to get a number of older women together with high school girls to collaborate on a project. Together, we agreed to organize a fundraiser to support [Nari Gunjan](#), a nongovernmental organization that provides education and literacy services for girls who are part of the Dalit community (“the untouchables”—the lowest rung of India’s caste ladder) in India.

We decided to hold a bake sale, got together to make the items, sold them, and gave the agency the money. Easy enough, I thought. But what happened afterward produced the greatest amount of learning and wonder for me. The high school girls and the older women bonded. They stay in touch. They worry about each other and enjoy each other’s company. They have a connection not only through the project, but also through what they learned about each other and the world.



Lori Terhaar, 2010 ALVA Graduate

The project taught me that leadership is not about accomplishing something yourself but, rather, about offering opportunities for others to create something amazing. It is about giving people a forum to discover what they can do and helping them achieve what they set out to do.

Through my ALVA project, I have helped to make a small change in my community. The experience has also changed me personally. I find it hard to explain the synergy that happens in an ALVA class and the confidence that I gained from being part of a forward-thinking group of people. The experience opened my mind to all the possibilities that are available to me and that draw from the gifts that I have within me.

The ALVA leadership program made me stretch as a person. Through the variety of speakers and the diversity of the class, I was exposed to many

new views about civic engagement and the different ways to define community. Because of this class, I know I can make a difference in innovative ways. I look forward to future opportunities to do so.

## Helping Children of Incarcerated Parents Thrive

By Mary Ellen Kennedy, 2010 ALVA Graduate

**Mary Ellen Kennedy participated in the ALVA Leadership Development program for 2009–2010. She took her years of experience as a teacher and applied it to help children in a new way.**

My ALVA project sought to better the lives of children who have an incarcerated parent and to provide support for the children's mentors through a Big Brothers Big Sisters' program. These children often have emotional or behavioral problems, may experience feelings of shame or stigma, and may show poor academic performance. They are often exposed to more risk factors than other children. These children are likely to experience fear, worry, confusion, deep sadness, guilt, isolation, and/or embarrassment. Anger often underlies all of these feelings.

After looking into organizations that are working on the issue in the Twin Cities, I discovered that [Big Brothers Big Sisters \(BBBS\)](#) has a great program called [Mentoring Children of Prisoners \(MCOP\)](#). It matches adult mentors with children. I decided to do my work within the BBBS infrastructure.

I'm working with the MCOP program to set up activities to enrich the children's experiences and to deepen their mentoring relationships. So far we have held a scrap booking event, a game and question-and-answer session with former Viking player Randall McDaniel, swimming at a YMCA, and horseback riding. My next step will be to set up a list of books at different reading levels about feelings, emotions, and problems that the children face and to develop a journal for the children to use with their mentors.

My project grew out of the impetus that the class provided to look at my life—my interests, skills, values, talents, and experiences—and to understand what I am passionate about. The ALVA class gave me a structured way to plan, implement, and evaluate the project. I also learned about leadership, brain development as we age, the impact of the social and political environment on public work, ways to network,

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### THE NUMBERS

**1.7 million**

Number of minor children in the U.S. who have a parent in prison

**25%**

Percentage of the 1.7 children with a parent in prison who are under age five

**15,000**

Number of children in Minnesota who have a parent who is incarcerated

**20%**

Percentage of children in Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities who are in the MCOP (Mentoring Children of Prisoners) Program

*Source: "Families with Incarcerated Parents Fact Sheet," Minnesota Fathers and Families Network, Britney Rosenau, M.P.H. candidate, Univ. of Minn., Maternal & Child Health, for compiling this fact sheet, Feb. 2010.*

## Helping Children of Incarcerated Parents Thrive (continued)

methods to present ideas effectively, and other factors important to effective leadership.

ALVA helped me to establish a purpose for this part of my life and gave me the confidence to accomplish something that is exciting and meaningful to me and beneficial to others. It has been an excellent and worthwhile experience for me.



Mary Ellen Kennedy, 2010 ALVA Graduate

### Age4Action Network and Vital Aging Network Co-sponsor Idea Forum

More than 120 people came together on July 12 at the Wilder Center in St. Paul to generate ideas about how to incorporate support for *work, serve, learn, and lead* more fully into the federal Older Americans Act.

Governor Tim Pawlenty stopped by the session to encourage the group in doing this important work. Senator Al Franken was unable to attend the session, but Bethany Snyder, his director of field operations, read a letter from him. In the letter, he said, "I am interested in looking for ways to harness the talents and passions of Minnesota seniors

and to actively involve them in the civic fabric of our communities." Senator Franken serves on the Senate's Special Committee on Aging and will be actively involved in the OAA reauthorization in 2011.

Greg O'Neill and staff from the National Academy on an Aging Society will prepare a summary report with findings from this *Idea Forum* and others held in locations across the nation. Age4Action will present the report to congressional leaders at a summary session in Washington, D.C. early this fall.

If you have comments to add to our growing collection of ideas, please e-mail them to [info@vital-aging-network.org](mailto:info@vital-aging-network.org). In your email, use *OAA Ideas* as the subject. Or, visit *TheExchange* at [www.agingexchange.org](http://www.agingexchange.org) to post your ideas.



## THE FACTS: ALVA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT 2010–2011

The Vital Aging Network is pleased to offer the ALVA Leadership Development program in six locations in 2010–2011. The course will help you:

- (Re) discover your lifework.
- Take advantage of the opportunities and address the barriers to leadership in later life.
- Plan and implement a project to build your capacity as a civic leader.
- Build an ongoing network for sharing ideas, knowledge, and resources.

Look for the class at: [Century College](#) in White Bear Lake, [Inver Hills Community College](#) in Inver Grove Heights, [Minnesota State University](#) in Mankato, [North Hennepin Community College](#) in Brooklyn Park, [Riverland Community College](#), and [St. Cloud Technical & Community College](#). Classes meet from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm on the second Friday of the month for eight months.

Course fees are \$750 with a late registration fee of \$50 for registration after September 24. Contact the schools directly to register.

VAN will offer scholarships to a limited number of participants. Scholarship application deadlines are August 16 and September 13. For information, contact Tom Hyder at 651-917-4635, [tom@vital-aging-network.org](mailto:tom@vital-aging-network.org) or visit [www.vital-aging-network.org](http://www.vital-aging-network.org).

### Information Sessions

#### Tuesday, July 27

9:30 AM to 11:30 AM *or*  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

St. Cloud Technical & Community College  
Customized Training & Education Center  
Rooms 127 & 128  
1215 15th Street North  
St. Cloud, MN

#### Tuesday, August 3

10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON

Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Centennial Student Union  
Room 201  
Mankato, MN

#### Wednesday, August 11

4:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Rondo Library  
461 North Dale St.  
St. Paul, MN

#### Thursday, August 19

3:00 PM to 5:00 PM

North Hennepin Community College  
Room TBD  
Brooklyn Park, MN

### DID YOU KNOW?

- A total of 170 leaders have graduated from the ALVA program since 2003.
- Twenty-one organizations throughout the state of Minnesota co-sponsor ALVA.
- ALVA Connection provides a way for ALVA grads to continue to learn and stay connected.

## Guest Column

### Why Provide Leadership Development for People 50+?

By Janet Jacobson, VAN Leadership Group and ALVA Task Force Member



Janet Jacobson

When discussing the Vital Aging Network's ALVA leadership training, skeptics occasionally ask: "Why provide leadership training for those who are well into the second half of life? Why not focus on those just starting their careers

or others in mid-career who need additional training and have years of active service ahead of them?" These questions make good points and are especially relevant given the many challenges facing our society and the need for innovative, visionary, and energetic leadership.

Older adults have a large reservoir of time, talent, energy, and experience. Thanks to advances in medical science, many will have 20 or 30 *bonus* years following retirement. And, yet, as a society, we have not been very successful in finding new roles for those over 50 who want to use those added years productively.

Many barriers to leadership exist for adults over 50. For example, older adults who exercised leadership in earlier careers may feel frustrated by the loss of the authority that came automatically with a title or position in their professional lives. They may feel constrained by the poorly defined roles and low expectations that characterize many volunteer positions available to retired individuals. Others who did not have opportunities to lead earlier in life may feel that they lack the necessary skills and don't view themselves as leaders. Or they may think they don't know the right people.

Since its inception in 2003, the ALVA Leadership Development course has successfully challenged older adults to confront these barriers to leadership by helping them recognize and develop their leadership skills, gain confidence, and apply their personal

strengths and passions to issues affecting the common good. Through presentations, small and large group discussions, readings, exercises, and personal reflection, participants have the opportunity to review past experiences to identify the skills they've used and the passions they've developed and consider where these skills and passions intersect with community needs.

They work on new skills: identifying stakeholders, networking, leading a discussion, and making presentations. They design a project that gives them an opportunity to apply their leadership skills by working on an issue they feel passionate about. Throughout, facilitators for the course and other class participants bolster and encourage them and help them develop a clearer sense of where and how they can make a difference.

The ALVA Leadership Development course provides relevant, practical, and experiential training that helps both experienced and new leaders make the transition to leadership roles in what some describe as *the third age*.

ALVA enables individuals over 50 years of age to:

- Make productive use of the years following retirement
- Take advantage of their skills, experience, and energy
- Stay involved and connected
- Continue to learn and grow
- Make a positive contribution

Older adults who are engaged are more confident, happier, and healthier. And everyone benefits from their leadership on issues that affect all of us.

## Volunteering Spotlight

Can we help spread the word about a volunteer opportunity in your organization? Send us information by the 10th of the month for publication in the e-Bulletin for the next month. While we will make every effort to include what you send us, space is limited.

### Our Fair Carousel, Inc.

#### *Volunteer Opportunities, Cafesjian's Carousel*

Join the fun at the former Minnesota State Fair merry-go-round, now named Cafesjian's Carousel and located in St. Paul's Como Park. Volunteer opportunities include ticket seller, gift merchandise seller, and ride attendants. The carousel is open Tuesday through Sunday from May 1 to Labor Day, and weekends during September and October. The organization provides training, and parking is free. For further information, see [www.ourfaircarousel.org](http://www.ourfaircarousel.org) or contact Tammi at 651-489-4628 or [director@ourfaircarousel.org](mailto:director@ourfaircarousel.org).

### Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly Peer Counselors

Growing older is easier when you have someone to talk to. Will you listen? [Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly](#) is looking for a diverse group of people 55 years or better to act as peer counselors. Qualified volunteers are good listeners, supportive, flexible, and interested in helping peers with mild to moderate depression, anxiety, grief due to loss, or difficulties in adjustment. The organization provides training, which begins September, 2010. The program requests a one-year commitment to see one or two clients per year, including attendance at supervisory and in-service sessions. To obtain more information or to apply, please call (612) 746-0753 or email [cswenson@littlebrothersmn.org](mailto:cswenson@littlebrothersmn.org).



**Colleen Fritsh receiving the 2010 Invisible Force Catalyst recognition award on behalf of DARTS at the 2010 Boomers & Civic Engagement Forum.**

### The Loft Literary Center

#### *Various Volunteer Opportunities*

Incorporated in 1975, [The Loft Literary Center](#) is the nation's largest independent literary center. The Loft supports the artistic development of writers, fosters a writing community, and builds an audience for literature. The Loft has many volunteer opportunities ranging from working and performing at the Loft's events to staffing book sales. Volunteers have always been at the heart of what the Loft does and is. To learn more about available volunteer opportunities, email Dara at [dsyrkin@loft.org](mailto:dsyrkin@loft.org) or call 612-215-2590.

### Community Thread Volunteer Drivers

The [Community Thread](#) Transportation Program needs six additional volunteers to be drivers to meet the needs of clients who live in the north and south areas of Washington County. Potential new drivers must complete a screening process, have a clean driving record, and have no criminal history. Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles. They must carry adequate car insurance and show proof of insurance. The organization provides orientation and ongoing training. Mileage reimbursement is available. Drivers set their own schedules. If you would like to join the team of dedicated volunteer drivers, contact Cathy Dyball at 651-439-7434.

## For Your CALENDAR



**Tuesday, September 14, 2010**  
**10:30 AM – 12:30 PM**

### SEPTEMBER VAN FORUM

#### *North Minneapolis: How Local Leaders are Empowering a Community*

**Presenter**

**Andre Dukes**, Engagement Director, PEACE Foundation

Urban Research and Outreach and Engagement Center  
 Room 105  
 2001 Plymouth Avenue North  
 Minneapolis, MN 55411

[Map to Urban Research Center](#)

#### UPTOWN ART FAIR

##### **August 6 to 8**

The weekend of August 6 to 8 will feature the 2010 Uptown Art Fair: *Urban Experiences*. Over 360 professional artists, 40 young artists, 25 performers, 20 food vendors, and hundreds of Uptown businesses will help uphold the 47-year legacy of excellence for the event. For more information, visit [www.uptownartfair.com](http://www.uptownartfair.com).

#### IRISH FAIR OF MINNESOTA

##### **August 13 to 15**

The Irish Fair of Minnesota features live music, entertainment, dancing, food and drink, Irish culture workshops, Gaelic language classes, and genealogy booths. Sporting events include Tug O'War, Gaelic football, rugby, hurling, boxing, and the annual *Run with the Celts 5K Race*. Kids will enjoy minigolf, crafts, contests, Celtic myth and magic, and sheepherding demonstrations with authentic border collies. The Irish Fair of Minnesota will be celebrating its 32nd year in 2010. For more information, visit [www.irishfair.com](http://www.irishfair.com).

#### SUPPORT GROUP FOR ADULT CHILDREN CARING FOR AGING PARENTS

##### **Wilder Foundation**

##### **Beginning Wednesday, August 18**

Adults face special issues when caring for their aging parents. Wilder is offering a support group for people who face this challenge. A licensed social worker facilitates the group, and attendees will learn how to work with their families to make good decisions, develop caregiving skills, and find resources that will make everybody's life more manageable. The group meets the third Wednesday of each month from 6:00 to 7:30 pm starting August 18 at the [Wilder Center](#). The agency serves refreshments. The group requires no registration and is free. For more information, call Barb Cooley, LSW, Wilder Foundation, at 651-280-2538.

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## For Your CALENDAR (continued)

### TWIN CITIES MEMORY WALK

#### **Alzheimer's Association Saturday, September 25**

The Memory Walk is the Association's largest local event that raises both awareness of Alzheimer's disease and dollars to support dementia advocacy, support, education, and research programs. Help support the cause by walking either the long (3 mile) or short (.7 mile) route at the [Three Rivers Park District – Hyland Park Reserve](#). Enjoy free snacks, visit the children's area or sponsors' tent, and join the Alzheimer's Association for the post-walk program. To register, sign up at [www.alz.org/mnnd](http://www.alz.org/mnnd). In addition, the agency will host multiple kick-off parties throughout the Twin Cities. To learn about the kick-off parties, call 952-830-0512.

### ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY CLASSES

#### **Hennepin County Library**

#### **Classes are currently taking place**

Hennepin County is once again offering classes at the [Adaptive Technology Lab](#). Participants can learn how to use:

- *Magic*, which magnifies for reading computer screens
- *Jaws*, which is a powerful screen reader for Microsoft Office software and the Internet
- *Open Book*, which provides an introduction to OCR scanning for low-vision and blind writers and readers.

The library holds all classes at the Central Library on Nicollet Mall. To obtain more information or to register, call 952-847-5669. The Hudson Family Foundation supports the Adaptive Technology classes.

### **VAN Awards Grants**

#### ***Vital Aging Network Promotes Civic Leadership for People 50+***

The Vital Aging Network is pleased to announce that it has awarded grants to three east metro organizations to further civic engagement and leadership among 50+ adults in their communities.

[The Oromo Community of Minnesota](#), [Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly](#), and the [Hamline Elders Block Nurse Program](#) each received \$4,000 to \$6,000 grants.

Funding from the Saint Paul Foundation and the Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America supports this project.

Together, the organizations will engage the experience and capacity for leadership of older adults to build stronger and more effective communities.

For more information, contact Tom Hyder at 651-917-4635 or [tom@vital-aging-network.org](mailto:tom@vital-aging-network.org).