

Historical Account of Leadership Ocala/Marion Alumni (LOMA)

Following the graduation of the first Leadership Ocala class in 1988, those members organized an alumni group using the name “Leadership Ocala/Marion Alumni Association.” With a small base of 30 graduates, socials were held and potential projects were discussed. Ed Keeton, president of First Union National Bank, was the association’s first president. The association was independent of the Chamber. The group did hold the first welcome reception for the new class, Class II, in Ed Keeton’s home.

After Leadership Ocala Class II graduated, the alumni association grew stronger with numbers and Munroe Regional Medical Center’s Senior Vice-President Paul Clark initiated a more aggressive agenda with a newsletter, directory, participation by the association’s members at community projects, and an Alumnus of the Year award, named in honor of Frank Stafford for his successful efforts at establishing the program. Forums on controversial community projects were also a part of the year’s agenda. Networking was still provided through holiday socials and the Third Thursday Breakfast, where alumni met for breakfast at a designated time and place the third Thursday of each month. The association also held a welcome reception for the new class, Class III, at Kitty Ray’s home in the fall of 1989.

For the first time, by-laws, articles of incorporation, and a mission statement were created for the group. The original mission statement was, “The mission of the Leadership Ocala Alumni is to strengthen and improve the Ocala/Marion County community by fostering and encouraging active involvement in the community, initiating discussion and resolution of community issues and concerns, supporting the continued development, expansion, and operation of the Leadership Ocala program, and facilitating networking among the alumni and leadership structure of the community.” Although the organization did file for incorporation, a few years later board members would elect not to renew the papers of incorporation with the philosophy that potential grants and foundation awards were more likely to be received by groups that were not incorporated.

In 1991, the association, which had been operating on a calendar year, changed its year to coincide with the Leadership Ocala program year.

Dues to the alumni association were \$25, with an optional \$10 for the first scholarship donation to the Leadership Ocala program, beginning with Class V. In 1992, a \$300 donation was made to the Leadership Ocala Youth program.

All dues-paying members of the alumni association were encouraged to apply for positions on the LOAA board, and applicants were selected by the nominating committee of the board and voted upon by the alumni at the annual meeting each summer.

With larger numbers of graduates, the alumni association began holding the welcome receptions for new classes at The Appleton Museum and other public facilities.

In 1993, LOAA merged its program into the Chamber with the agreement that directors and officers would handle the program and staff would work with the association but not be responsible for day-to-day operation. The name of the association was eventually changed to Leadership Ocala Membership Affairs and then to Leadership Ocala/Marion Alumni at the end of 1995.

In 1995, LOMA for the second time sponsored and assisted the Ocala Assistant City Manager and Class I graduate Janet Tuff in coordinating the "All American City" application for Marion County. The effort was successful.

In 1996, following the first year of the newly-developed leadership program Partners (for community seniors), graduates of that program became eligible for membership in the alumni association.

Priorities of the association changed every few years, but some more traditional projects included the non-partisan sponsorship of a political forum every two years for local and state candidates, sponsorship of a needy family at holiday times, the selection of Frank E. Stafford Jr. Alumnus of the Year Award, and the LO/MY golf tournament. LOMA also participated in the United Way of Marion County's Day of Caring and offered members opportunities as individuals to participate in other community-oriented programs such as mentoring through the schools.

In the fall of 1997, an Advanced Leadership program was planned and implemented the following spring. The program was primarily skills-based. In the fall of 2000, the program was revised into the LEAD Series, a series of sessions focusing on community issues at an advanced level. It was implemented in the spring of 2001.

In 2002, LOMA members voted to amend its by-laws to allow the immediate past-president to remain on the Board for a one-year term. This provides LOMA with consistency and a continuous vision in its leadership efforts.

In 2003, LOMA held its inaugural "Non Event," offering members the chance to attend an event that didn't actually exist. The idea was to raise money for scholarships without requiring

anything but a donation – no time was involved. The efforts raised nearly \$2,500. 2003 also saw a revised version of the quarterly newsletter, *LO-Down*.

In 2004, LOMA radically changed its approach to fund-raising. Membership dues were eliminated and a major events calendar debuted, including personal/professional growth sessions with motivational speakers and local personalities. As well, the group refined its mission statement to better focus on its goals, reading *“To support the programs of Leadership Ocala/Marion and create networking opportunities for Leadership graduates.”*

2005 brought a new experience in terms of the annual meeting. LOMA went “dark”, so to speak, and held an annual dinner for the first time. Also, LOMA’s slate of officers remained for a second term, a first for the organization. As well, LOMA’s Membership Directory was redesigned and distributed to members without charge thanks to supporting advertisers.

In early 2006, LOMA became LOMA Inc., to better facilitate the goals of the organization.

Historical Key Dates for LOMA

- 1988** First Leadership Ocala Class graduates; alumni association informally organized. First welcome reception for the new class, Class II, was held at the home of Ed Keeton, president of the association.
- 1989** Paul Clark, graduate of Class II, begins a more aggressive agenda for a formal organization with a mission statement, dues, a newsletter, directory, etc. The association is named “Leadership Ocala Alumni Association.” Group members become involved in various community events as well as begin to sponsor their own.
- 1989** First Alumnus of the Year Award is giving to Ed Keeton at the Leadership Ocala Class III’s graduation dinner.
- 1990** First annual meeting in the form of a picnic is held in the summer.
- 1993** LOAA merges into the Chamber of Commerce with the understanding staff will work with the association but officers / directors of LOAA as volunteers will independently handle day-to-day items
- 1995** Alumnae Janet Tut requests LOMA’s assistance as the sponsoring organization in coordinating efforts for the All-America City application for Marion County for the second attempt. The effort succeeds. Organization’s name is changed to Leadership Ocala/Marion Alumni to reflect changes of the Chamber’s Leadership programs to include Marion in their formal names.

- 1997** Annual golf tournament fund-raiser for LO/MY established.
- 1997-98** Advanced Leadership program is introduced for graduates under direction of Class IV member Carol Savage.
- 2001** Advanced Leadership program is revised into the LEAD series.
- 2002-2003** By-laws amendment includes immediate past president as board members for one-year term.
- 2003-2004** First 'non-event' raises nearly \$2,500; newsletter redesigned. Mission statement refined.
- 2004-2005** Membership dues eliminated and major events calendar debuts. First-ever annual dinner held. Membership directory redesigned and distributed free to members. Leadership Development Program established by bringing in keynote speakers.
- 2005-2006** Slate of officers remains in-place for unprecedented second term. Leadership Ocala/Marion Alumni merged into Leadership Ocala/Marion Alumni, Inc. (newly formed corporation).
- 2006-2007** LOMA Inc. celebrates Leadership Program's 20th Birthday; Board of Directors Unanimously votes to make alumni membership list available to Leadership graduates for discounted price of \$100 for a single-time use, and higher price of \$300 (one-time use) for those not related to Leadership programs. "Get Re-Acquainted Series" begins as an attempt to reinvigorate alumni interest in networking opportunities.
- 2007-2009** LOMA offers educational mini seminars, networking events and social opportunities. In 2009, the LOMA Board votes to relinquish its 501C3 status and transitioned back to the Chamber of Commerce umbrella.
- 2014** The Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership re-launches LOMA as a part of its Talent Development initiative. David Williams, was selected as the Chair of the Board of Regents. A Leadership Reunion and LOMA kickoff event was held in September and attended by 175 plus. Following a reception to welcome Class XXVIII, Dr. Larry Peppers, SIMSOC founder, provided the keynote address.



FRANK E. STAFFORD JR.

ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR AWARD

This prestigious award is named after Frank E. Stafford Jr., whose vision, tenacity, and hands-on involvement were instrumental in establishing community leadership programs through the Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce.

The Alumnus of the Year recipients are LO/M and Partners graduates who exemplify the goals of the Leadership program by demonstrating a commitment to the community and involvement in volunteer activities beyond the scope of their agencies or organizations. Candidates are nominated each spring by LOMA members and selected by an appointed committee which reports to the LOMA board. The Alumnus of the Year award is presented at the annual LOMA meeting, usually held in May. Past recipients include:

1990	Ed Keeton
1991	Bill Evans
1992	Paul Clark
1993	Darlene Rippel
1994	Tony Burke
1995	Carole Savage
1996	Janet Tutt
1997	Jim Frazier and Jim Lowry
1998	Phil Bledsoe
1999	Henry Hicks
2000	Wally J. Wagoner
2001	Janet R. Kent
2002	Frank Rasbury
2003	Manal Fakhoury
2004	Danny Gaekwad
2005	Charlie Stone
2006	Rosey Moreno-Jones
2007	Kevin Christian
2008	Wayne McCall

PAST PRESIDENTS

1988 Ed Keeton (organization was informal)

1989 – 1991	Paul Clark
1992 – 1994	Cathy Ackerman
1994 – 1995	Kelly Hamer
1995 – 1996	Tony Burke
1996 – 1997	Teri Carey
1997 – 1998	Henry Hicks
1998 – 1999	Patsy Lancaster
1999 – 2000	Chris Poole
2000 – 2001	Tom Dewey
2001 – 2002	Wanda Bahde
2002 – 2003	Carolyn Fender
2003 – 2004	Manal Fakhoury
2004 – 2005	Kevin Christian
2005 – 2006	Kevin Christian
2006 – 2007	David Williams
2007 – 2008	David Williams
2008 – 2009	David Williams