

For Release: 2/22/2017

Source: Linda Shrieves Beaty, Public Affairs & Marketing

P: 407.582.5661 | E: lbeaty2@valenciacollege.edu

CEO Organization Donates \$12,000 for Scholarships to Valencia College

ORLANDO – The CEO Leadership Forums, a group of Orlando business leaders, will celebrate its one-year anniversary on Mar. 1 by awarding Valencia College a check for \$12,000, which will be used to provide student scholarships.

The award event, which will bring together 25 business leaders in addition to Valencia College officials, will be held at Valencia College's West Campus on March 1 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. The event will be held in the college's Creative Design Center, in Building 10. Valencia's West Campus is located at 1800 S. Kirkman Road, Orlando.

Nasser Hedayat, Ed.D, Valencia's Assistant VP of Career & Workforce Education says "we are very excited about our partnership and working relationship with CEO Leadership Forums and its dynamic sponsor team. Besides student scholarships, the Forum's C-level guests and their companies can become venues for student internship opportunities and part-time jobs, attend classes on campus as guest speakers and/or serve as board members for Valencia's new Business Administration program Advisory Council."

The initial concept of a multi-disciplinary group of Central Florida Professionals teaming together for a higher purpose had its genesis three years ago. Nperspective CFO Services Principal Gary Cohen engaged CenterState commercial banker Chris Cucci and Fringe Benefit Plans' President, Doug Foreman in a discussion to form such a group. Cohen professes, "when like-minded professionals in the market for at least 25 years come together, great things like the Valencia College program are born."

Long-time friends and colleagues, Cucci and Foreman agree – "The CEO Leadership Forum's partnership with Valencia College has been beneficial for all. The attendees receive great content to help them focus on the future of their business," says Cucci. Foreman adds, "Valencia students can connect with successful business leaders while cultivating opportunities for internships. Sponsor partners like us within CEO Leadership Forums are able to give back to participating businesses and students alike."

The CEO Leadership Forums is an educational organization for CEOs, which was founded by CFO Services firm Nperspective, in collaboration with other advisory companies. In addition to CenterState and Fringe Benefits, CPA firm Grennan Fender, law firm Swann Hadley, wealth management firm Griffis & MacClary, recruiting company REMX and Risk Management Company IOA round out the team. Others are joining the ranks for the 2017 campaign. The organization mentors middle-market CEOs in Central Florida and provides scholarships to students who will fill the needs of those participating companies.

Geoffrey Gallo, with Nperspective during the inaugural year of the Forums, continues to facilitate the structure and process for the group in his current role as Sr. VP with fellow CEO Forums sponsor company, Grennan Fender. “It’s an educational experience where we utilize different methods to engage participants, including stand-up presentations, interactive panels and break-out sessions,” Gallo said. According to Gallo, the target industries in Orlando are construction, healthcare and manufacturing/distribution with revenues between \$2M and \$70M.

Gallo adds, “The idea here is to get business owners in an environment where they are learning, connecting, and ultimately, through our post-event process, engage in a 360 degree diagnostic on the company which not only identifies business planning action steps, but also can potentially reveal opportunities for part-time jobs for students, things like that.”

“Ultimately, what we want to come out of this is a direct connection of the small-midsize business owners in the various communities in Florida with some of the state colleges and universities that are participating as part of this program, not just as potential employers,” Gallo said. “I have witnessed close mentor relationships between participating CEOs and college students emerge out of this process, an extremely mutually rewarding experience for both.”

Attendee and event speaker, Jim Tharp, CEO of Tharp Plumbing Systems, Inc. states, “When someone believes that they have learned all of it, they are surely cutting themselves short and they could be within 6 months of being replaced by something better. As owners, we need to be sponges and should never stop learning. “

“We as the facilitators and sponsors have developed great working relationships with each another as well as with the attendees. We are still relatively early on in this venture and already seeing so much progress,” says Cucci. “We have only just begun.” Gallo confirms, “When business and education come together, communities prosper.”

#30#

For more news from Valencia College, please go to www.valenciacollege.edu/news