

LEADER WHO SERVES AWARD RECIPIENT

LESLIE CRABBS ('22)

Coming Together VA

In which locality do you reside?

The Museum District, bordering Scott's Addition.

What brought you here, and/or what has kept you here?

After my husband retired from a lengthy Coast Guard career, we relocated to Richmond to be closer to family. To our pleasant surprise, it has become a gem in our hearts, helping us coin the hashtag - "Richmond - #CoolerThanYouThink."

What does it mean to you to be a leader who serves?

We all come with unique gifts and talents – as one of my favorite speakers says – "You are the only you in this story." As a leader who serves, you recognize that your unique skills are better shared than hidden. Figure out where the needs are, then figure out how you can use your gifts and talents to help the community grow.

Who has inspired you, or helped you grow as a leader?

Sounds corny, but my husband – Tom Crabbs, has inspired me! He is a true servant leader who always takes the time to actively listen and jump into the work wholeheartedly. He has supported and encouraged my participation in diverse community activities throughout our marriage.

Tell us more about your community leadership journey.

Ha! Long and complicated! I subscribe to the "Bloom where you're planted" philosophy! I helped create school programs, a new school following a school closing, and fundraising in cities across the U.S. In Richmond, I assist Coming Together VA, by promoting their programs and assisting with fundraising. I learn so much from them in return!

Leader Who Serves: Honors a member of the previous year's Leadership Quest class for creating an impact in their community and has exhibited attributes of a leader who serves first. Nominated and selected by fellow class members. For the first time in LMR history, two alumni were selected to receive the Leader Who Serves award.

Why did you participate in Leadership Quest? What were your biggest takeaways?

When I moved to Richmond, I was frustrated the residents were moving to other localities for schooling opportunities. I participated in Leadership Quest to help me figure out how to improve our local public schools. I learned that the challenges in our school system are complex and intertwined. I also learned to recognize that my experience is not the only reality and that there is no "one solution."

What is your vision for the future of the Richmond region?

My vision is that we take more time to truly listen to each other's stories and figure out how to work together toward a more unified community. It is not "us" and "them" – it is "we." We are Richmond – diverse, opinionated, and passionate! That is why I love the work of Coming Together, Virginia. We have a gem here with the opportunity to be a big city with a small community feel.

What is the best advice you have ever received, and from whom?

"Your voice matters, speak up" – my Father

What advice do you wish to share with other leaders in the Richmond region?

Do not be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Listen with your heart and be bold. Do what YOU CAN do and bring others along with you. It is all the more fun when you can share the journey!

Location: A mural created by Jason Van Yahres at the Morton building.

