

## **Kansas Leadership Center**

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Yemi is looking for leadership - especially the kind of leadership which seeks the common good in society. This is not a casual quest. In fact, in his search to learn about such leadership, he traveled all the way from Nigeria to Kansas. Why would someone travel 27 hours to learn about civic leadership in Kansas? It's today's Kansas Profile.

Ed O'Malley is President and CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center in Wichita. Ed recently hosted a global gathering where Yemi and more than 50 other people learned about the Kansas Leadership Center and its work in civic leadership.

The Kansas Leadership Center was launched in 2007 with an initial thirty million dollar grant from the Kansas Health Foundation. After extensive listening sessions around Kansas, the Health Foundation staff knew that leadership was vital to healthy communities and healthy people.

So the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) was created to foster civic leadership for healthier Kansas communities. Ed O'Malley, a native Kansan and former state legislator, came on as the KLC's first President. For training, he participated in a leadership development program at Harvard.

Ed came back to Kansas and built a staff and program to foster civic leadership development. Today, KLC offers many leadership development opportunities, organized into five areas: Leadership and faith, community or place-based programs, role-based programs (for city managers or state legislators, for example), open enrollment, and faculty development. Four regional KLC consultants work with Kansas towns large and small.

KLC has been part of programs in larger cities as well as in rural communities such as Greensburg, Marion, Eureka, and Tipton, population 240 people. Now, that's rural. More than 2,000 Kansans have participated in these programs to date.

In early 2012, Ed was invited back to Harvard to help with their leadership program as an alumnus. Participants in the program seemed intrigued by what the Kansas Leadership Center was doing, so Ed sent out an email inviting anyone who was interested to come to Wichita and learn about KLC.

“I was thinking a couple of people might travel in for a visit,” Ed said. Instead, the interest level was much higher.

In November 2012, the Kansas Leadership Center hosted an informational gathering for people interested in the center's civic leadership development work. Participants came from 13 countries and 17 American states plus DC.

They came from Norway, Japan, Australia, Nigeria, India, Mexico, France, Ireland, Canada, Romania, the Netherlands, Singapore, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming. Wow.

“Our mission is Kansas, but we’re starting to get more attention outside the state,” Ed said. Interest in this commitment to civic leadership is what motivated people to travel to Kansas from around the globe.

“I am moved and inspired,” Ed O’Malley wrote about the global gathering. “These individuals coming here affirm much of the Leadership Center’s work. They came to Kansas to learn with and from the Kansas Leadership Center. There is a hunger in Kansas and beyond for authentic leadership for the common good.”

For more information, go to [www.kansasleadershipcenter.org](http://www.kansasleadershipcenter.org).

“Because of this gathering there are dreams being hatched to create leadership centers for the common good in Mexico, Ireland, India, Nigeria, Canada, Norway, Romania and elsewhere,” Ed O’Malley wrote. “Edgar and four colleagues came from one of the most violent states in Mexico and hope to return to begin the process of creating a leadership center for the common good. Govind, a retired general in the Indian Armed Forces, feels his country needs a massive infusion of leadership development.

“Someday people will reflect on the origins of those great civic ventures,” Ed wrote. “They’ll discuss the visionary local founders who didn’t give up. They’ll discuss the difference those centers have made in their communities and countries. And, they’ll reflect on this gathering in Kansas, where their founders came together with citizens of the world to dream of a better way forward and to learn from Kansans working for the common good.”

We salute the Kansas Leadership Center for making a difference with its work. That's worth traveling around the world.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.