

**GRASSROOTS  
LEADERSHIP**

---

A C A D E M Y <sup>SM</sup>

**2022 Reflection**

“

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

”

Howard Thurman



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“

The possibility of men living together in peace and to their mutual advantage, without having to agree on common concrete aims, and bound only by abstract rules of conduct, was perhaps the greatest discovery mankind ever made.

”

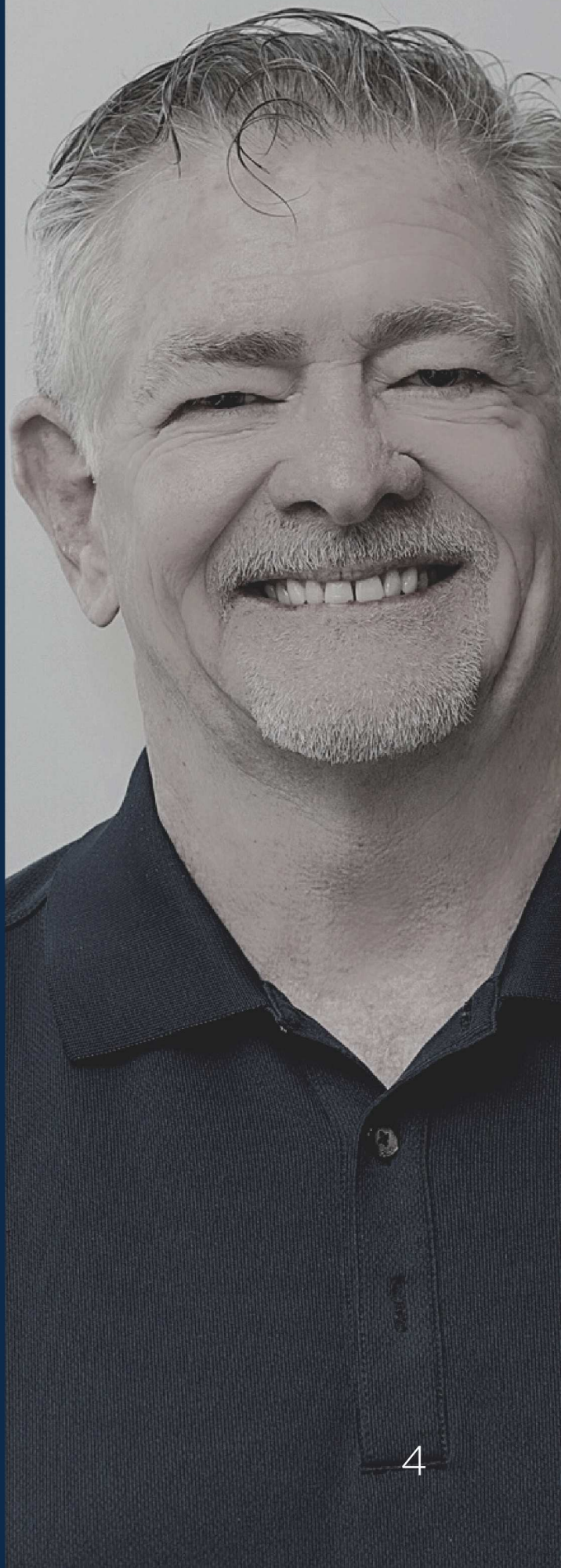
Charles Koch

# 2022 REFLECTION

**SLADE O'BRIEN**

CO-FOUNDER, GRASSROOTS  
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

"We want to provide you with a home, among like-minded citizens who put forth solutions to America's biggest problems without the extreme tribalization and inflammatory rhetoric or use of coercion. We will work with anyone to do good and no one to do harm."



# *freedom is not free.*

Are you fed up with the extremes in both parties ruining our country's self-governance process? The country has never been more divided, and it's collectivism and socialism on the left and extreme nationalism and populism on the right causing this tribalism and polarization. Most Americans are being pushed away from the process, destroying the greatest advancement in self-government, individual freedom, and economic prosperity in human history.

But there's still hope. It's time we return to the principles this country was founded on - being a government of the people - and for that government to return to its proper, limited role of securing our natural rights instead of taking them from us. We need to hold our elected officials and ourselves accountable to living up to the promise of America as defined in the Declaration of Independence.

It's up to us, 21st-century Americans, to act and demand that the United States lives up to its promise. We can't be passive and silent when the government uses coercion to restrict our freedoms or be unresponsive when the government rigs the system in favor of the few, the connected, and the powerful. We must stand up for what our Founders envisioned and for what self-government is supposed to be about!

Bottom-up solutions and the freedom to solve problems closest to their source is what made this country thrive, not government coercion, excessive regulations, social engineering, and one-size-fits-all government programs. The United States is the greatest and most powerful self-governing nation the world has ever known, but to sustain it, advocates for freedom and liberty must participate in the process and do our part to ensure its survival.

That's why we formed the Grassroots Leadership Academy in 2015 - to educate and train citizens on how they can be more effective advocates for the principles of human progress, freedom, and liberty. Now we're committed to building a nationwide community of GLA Certified Advocates, Mobilizers, and Leaders who, when working together, and with our sister organization, Americans for Prosperity, can pass significant policy reforms at the state and federal level and hold all elected officials accountable to America's Founding Principles.

We want to provide you with a home, among like-minded citizens who put forth solutions to America's biggest problems without the extreme tribalization and inflammatory rhetoric or use of coercion. We will work with anyone to do good and no one to do harm.

**Slade O'Brien**

CO-FOUNDER GRASSROOTS  
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

“ I would unite with  
anybody to do right  
and with nobody to do  
wrong. ”

Frederick Douglass

# GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Since 2015, the Grassroots Leadership Academy has been dedicated to empowering individuals to effect bottom-up change through grassroots advocacy. Our goal is to create a nationwide community of leaders who can affect bottom-up change in their community, state, or nation.

Like you, we are discouraged by politics that only divide people and roadblocks that reduce opportunity for all. That's why we partner with thousands of like-minded individuals to find common ground on the most important issues relevant to them and elevate them into positions where they can affect real change.

As a project of Americans for Prosperity Foundation, we provide educational programs and partner with local organizations to inform the public about some of the biggest challenges facing our communities.





# GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

## A C A D E M Y <sup>SM</sup>

The Grassroots Leadership Academy is committed to equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to drive bottom-up change in their communities through grassroots advocacy. Our goal is to create a nationwide network of visionary leaders who can effect change at the local, state, and national level.

We believe that everyone has the potential to make a positive impact in their community. That's why we offer two types of training programs to equip citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to remove barriers to opportunity and create positive change.

### Flagship Certifications



GLA offers a comprehensive three-tier certification program, including Advocate, Mobilizer, and Leader. Each certification provides an in-depth understanding of the tools, strategies, and principles needed to create change in the community.

### "How-To" Trainings



"How-To" trainings offer focused coaching on specific topics, designed to empower activists to create change in their communities in a convenient, one-session format. These trainings are designed to be completed in one session to seamlessly fit into your schedule.

# Flagship Certifications

## BECOME A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

The Grassroots Leadership Academy's certification program is designed to empower individuals to drive change in their communities.

Our three-tier program, including Advocate, Mobilizer, and Leader levels, equips individuals with the skills, techniques, and strategies necessary to effectively advocate for equal rights and mutual prosperity, allowing all members of the community to reach their full potential.



## FLAGSHIP CERTIFICATIONS

### Advocate

As a Certified Advocate, you'll be empowered to drive cultural transformation and advance human progress in a free society. Through organizing your community, engaging lawmakers, and effectively communicating the principles of freedom and openness, you'll have the tools to create real change.

### Mobilizer

As a Certified Community Mobilizer, you'll be equipped to effectively identify, educate, and mobilize others to take action and create meaningful change in your community from the ground up. You'll learn how to rally fellow advocates and influence decision-makers in your community.

### Leader

As a Certified GLA Leader, you'll possess the necessary tactics and knowledge to run a successful, issue-based campaign in your community, state, or nation. You'll learn how to identify allies and opposition, develop a strategic plan, fundraise and effect change in your community by shifting paradigms.

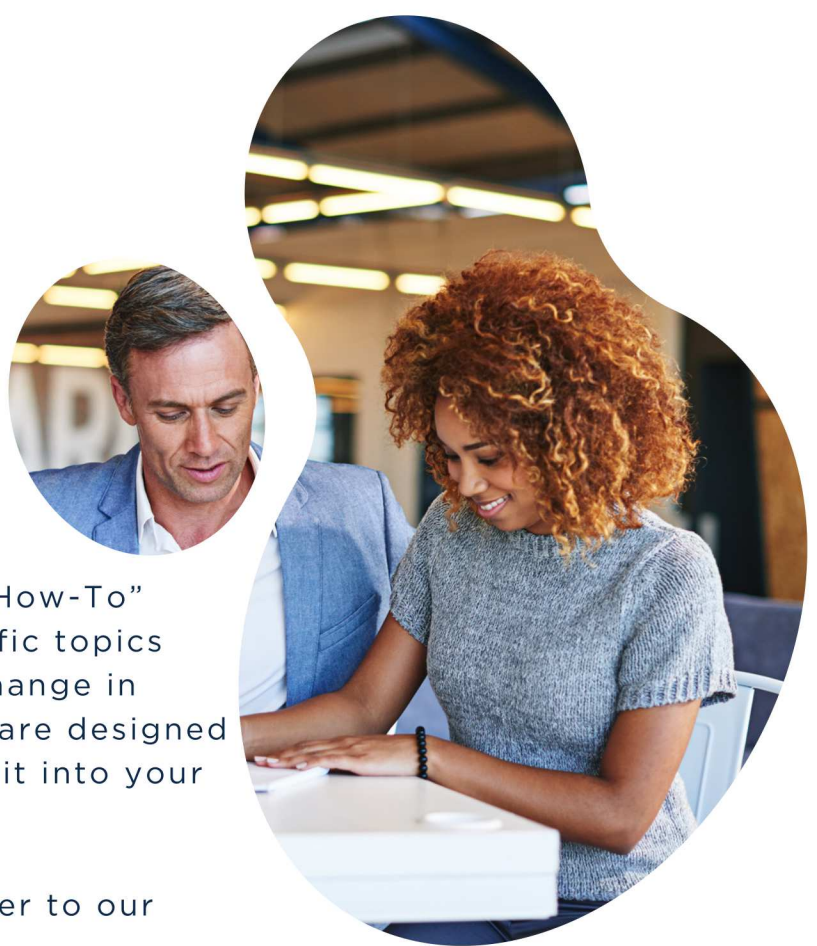
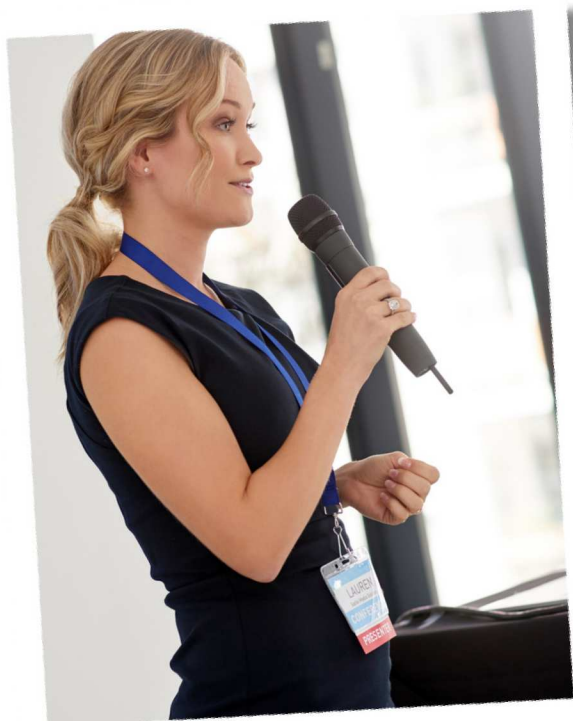
# "How To" Programs

## WHAT COURSES DOES GLA OFFER?

Grassroots Leadership Academy's "How-To" trainings provide coaching on specific topics that empower activists to create change in their communities. These trainings are designed to be completed in one session to fit into your busy schedule.

Below is a sample of courses we offer to our community:

- How To: Run for School Board
- How To: Sell Freedom Without Starting a Fight
- How To: Tell Your Story
- How To: Public Speaking



## ALUMNI FAVORITE "HOW TO" COURSE

# public speaking

## COURSE HIGHLIGHTS:

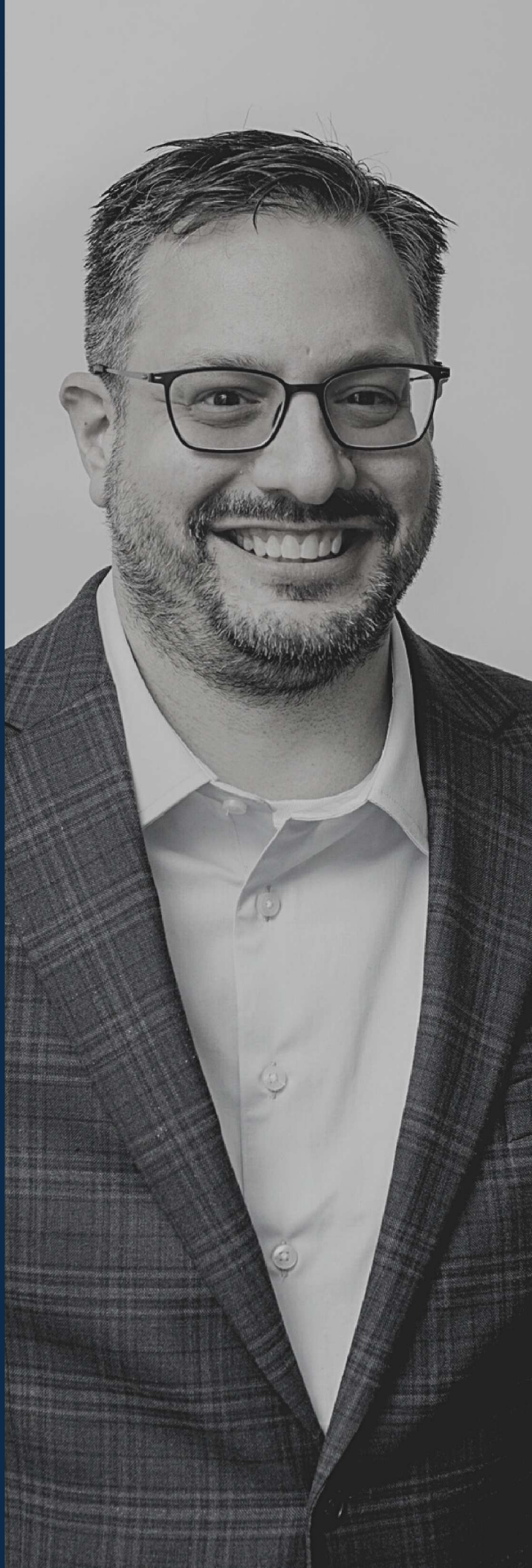
- ✓ Identify your "why" when speaking
- ✓ Craft and build content
- ✓ Strengthen your delivery technique

# GLA REGIONAL REFLECTION

CHRISTOPHER STIO,  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

"I am proud to be a part of a team that is making a positive impact on individuals and communities through the power of personal storytelling and grassroots leadership. It is truly rewarding to see the difference our work is making, and I am committed to continuing to support and empower leaders across the country."

**Regional States: Virginia, Ohio, Illinois,  
West Virginia, South Dakota, and  
Minnesota**



# *a letter from Christopher*

In my role, I have learned firsthand the power of personal storytelling. When I think about our mission to empower individuals, sharing one's story does this in two ways.

First, many people may not believe their story is worthy of sharing out of false humility. We help guide people to understand that their story is not only important, but it is a powerful tool for creating change. Sharing their story among their community can empower them and help them realize their own potential as leaders.

Second, when someone shares their story at a training or beyond, it can inspire and empower others who may feel alone in their struggles. This creates a community of leaders and advocates who can unite and work towards creating bottom-up change on issues that affect all Americans. With the efforts of our team across 35 states, we can build a nationwide community of aligned leaders who are making a difference in their communities.

I am proud to be a part of a team that is making a positive impact on individuals and communities through the power of personal storytelling and grassroots leadership. It is truly rewarding to see the difference our work is making and I am committed to continuing to support and empower leaders across the country. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this meaningful work.

Christopher Stio

Strategic Director, Education & Training

# Empowering Activism

## THROUGH BOTTOM-UP SOLUTIONS

Empower yourself to create real change with the Grassroots Leadership Academy. Learn to craft your unique story and communicate it effectively to elected officials, alongside a diverse community of fellow activists.

We arm you with powerful tools like the Snowflake Management Model, which empowers individuals by delegating organizational goals to trained volunteer leaders, allowing for organic and efficient growth within an organization. This means each individual acts as a multiplier for the group's efforts, making the impact far greater than what one person alone could achieve.

## GLA trainers, what is your favorite part of training?



Facilitating training on how to impact legislation is my favorite. It's incredibly fulfilling to see individuals take the knowledge they gain and use it to positively impact their communities.

### Thomas Bingham, Trainer



The connection I have with training participants during the story telling lecture is truly empowering. Connecting them with the fact that the key to everyone's success is already inside each one of them is powerful and they feel that the success of our policy efforts lies with them helps them to step up. It's fantastic to connect with them on it.

### Hyrum Robinson, Trainer

## GLA Alumni Spotlight

# Ken Bowman

Ken Bowman joined GLA in Cincinnati in 2018 and quickly proved himself as a valuable asset to the team. Despite the group facing setbacks in 2020, Ken stepped up to keep the team engaged and connected, building a sense of community.

In 2022, with the help of new Grassroots Engagement Director, Jeremy Irwin, the group was reinvigorated, and Ken was instrumental in its relaunch, attending every meeting and bringing new members into the fold. He even put his veteran experience to work, knocking on over 5,000 doors. Ken is a true leader and community builder and a vital member of Team Concerned Veterans for America.



“  
*Whenever I go to a GLA education event, I learn something new.*  
”

David Stolfus  
GLA Alumni  
Harrisonburg, VA

# Igniting Impact

## ONE ACTIVISTS JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

The Grassroots Leadership Academy team conducted a transformative training session in Dayton, OH, where a group of determined citizens came together to learn how to make real change in their communities. The future of Education was at the top of their list of concerns, particularly as they grappled with the ongoing 130-school district lawsuit against private school vouchers in Ohio.

Throughout the training, attendees learned the art of building a movement, recruiting volunteers, and honing their message to effect change. The topic of testifying was particularly inspiring, as participants practiced incorporating their personal stories into their testimony; learning how to speak from the heart. One participant, Jeremy, stood out with his passionate argument against the unfairness of the lawsuit to parents and teachers in his community, Xenia.

With the support and guidance of his peers, Jeremy refined his testimony and even had the opportunity to present it before the entire class. And thanks to the skills and confidence he gained during the GLA training, Jeremy was able to deliver his testimony with conviction and impact in front of the school board. In the end, Jeremy's community's school district pulled out of the lawsuit and is a powerful example of how one person's voice, when amplified through the power of community, can create real and lasting change.



**"What makes the Grassroots Leadership Academy unique is it takes ordinary citizens who want to change the world. But you can't change your world without changing your community."**

**Jeff Crank**

Regional Vice President  
Americans for Prosperity

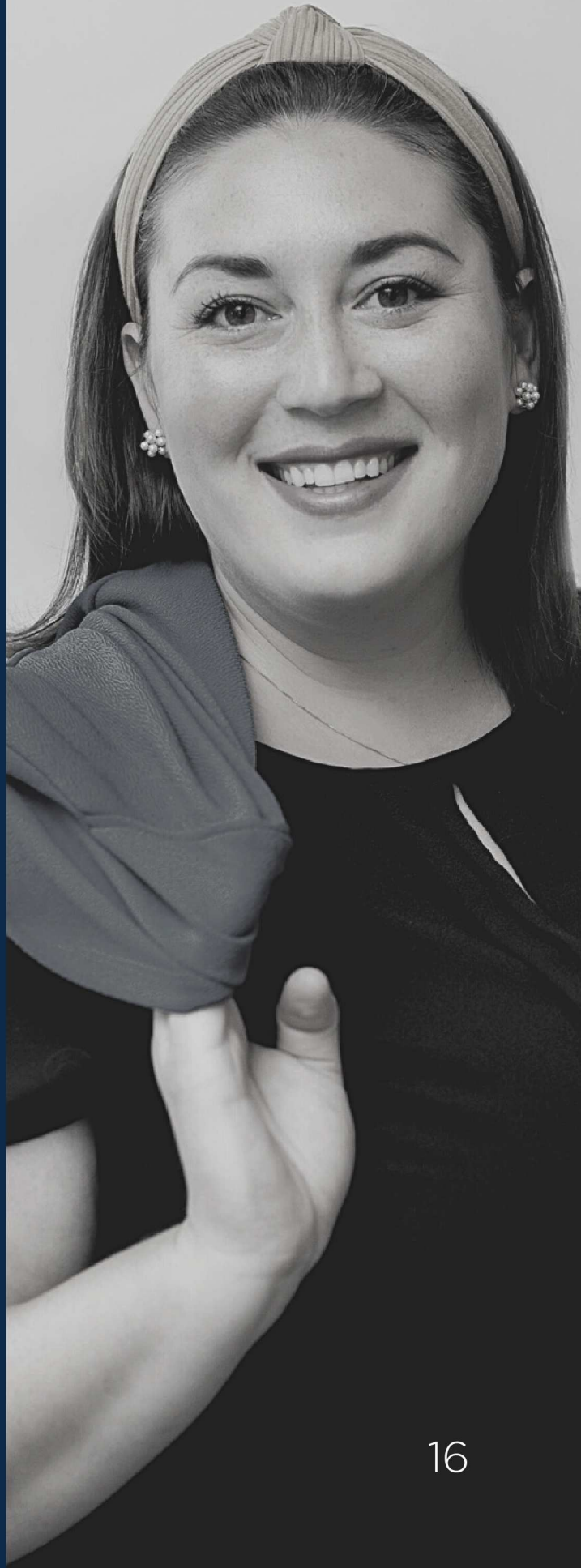


# GLA REGIONAL REFLECTION

LEEANN MCLAUGHLIN,  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

"I am proud to work with our advocates. I am proud to work with this team. I am proud of what we do at the Grassroots Leadership Academy."

**Regional States: Florida,  
Pennsylvania, New Hampshire,  
Wisconsin**



# *a letter from LeeAnn*

The role of Strategic Director has given me the opportunity to view the Grassroots Leadership Academy from a different perspective. It's my job to look across the different teams we work with and ensure all the parts are running smoothly.

The unique perspective I get from this is getting to see a snapshot of many different communities all at once. And while there are a lot of differences between them, there is always one constant...the high degree to which they care.

The advocates that we train are deeply connected to the needs and struggles of their communities and are devoted to finding effective, bottom-up solutions. From New Hampshire, to Pennsylvania, to Florida I have seen advocates embrace who they are and what they know to work tirelessly in the name of freedom.

My team shares this same passion; whether it be travel over a weekend, evening trainings, extended office hours to accommodate the realistic needs of an advocate. They do it without complaining because of their belief in what we do. They understand that their gifts can be used to help others improve their lives. I am proud to work with our advocates. I am proud to work with this team. I am proud of what we do at the Grassroots Leadership Academy.

LeeAnn McLaughlin  
Strategic Director, Education & Training

“

*Thanks to GLA I was able to leverage the practical grassroots and community building skills not only to help win my election, but have already started building coalitions on the issues I'm passionate about in the State House. Without GLA I wouldn't have the foundation necessary to be immediately successful as a newly elected State Representative.*

”

NH State Representative  
Tom Mannion (District 1)

## GLA trainers, what are you looking forward to most in 2023?



My goal for 2023 is to help people grow and learn. I want to make strong partnerships and be a helpful source of knowledge, creativity, and business ideas for our state groups. I will work to create a safe and fair environment and programs that give power and resources to the U.S. Hispanic community and other groups in each state. I want to inspire people to care about making a difference and to take action to protect our country's freedom.

**Annie Ocasio, Trainer**



I am most looking forward to the relationships and trust we will build within the grassroots. Through these relationships, we will have the capabilities to create grassroot leaders from Miami to Lancaster and everything between. Creating these grassroots leaders will equip them with the knowledge to tear down the barriers in their communities and empower individuals to live their most fulfilling lives.

**John Goodnight, Trainer**

# Mothers in Action

## A Quest for Better Education

At the 2022 Florida Parent Educators Association conference in Orlando, Rebekah, a mother of three young children, met trainer Cheryl Couture and learned about GLA training and programs.

Late during the summer, at an event for education leaders, Rebekah and Cheryl reconnected. They began planning training sessions to equip mothers throughout the state to testify before elected officials at Legislative Delegation meetings. Virtual sessions were scheduled for both daytime and evening hours to aid attendees in developing a clear and consistent message to present to legislators in support of educational opportunities.

Rebekah expressed her enthusiasm for the program, stating, “We would love to have someone at as many delegation meetings as we can to promote Education Savings Accounts!!” In 2023, more in-person trainings are planned for locations such as Orlando, Palm Beach, and Sarasota, with opportunities for Moms for America leaders to work with local engagement directors Durell Tootle, Mary Sturm, and Lance Wissinger.



“

*GLA gave me the tools needed to up my game as an advocate, and it indeed made me a more effective New Hampshire State Representative. Top-notch professionals conduct the trainings. It's simply the best — GLA has my highest recommendation!*

”

Honorable Bob Greene  
GLA Alumni

# Age is a Mindset

## UNLEASHING CHANGE AT EIGHTY

For 30 years, Jerry Rutherford diligently attended school board meetings in Naples, Florida, all the while homeschooling his daughters with his wife Jeanene. However, it wasn't until he and Jeanene attended a GLA Advocate Certification series in Estero, FL, led by Engagement Director Roxanne Buckels, that Jerry discovered his true calling.

A defining moment of the training was the storytelling session, where Jerry learned to narrate his ideas in a way that would motivate others to rally behind him. Armed with these powerful communication techniques, Jerry knew it was time to act. He courageously decided to run for school board and, buoyed by a persuasive story and a coalition of like-minded supporters, Jerry emerged victorious with 65.4% of the vote.

Jerry's experience illustrates the power of grassroots training and emphasizes that it's never too late to make a meaningful impact. Despite his age of 80, he demonstrated that through sheer determination and perseverance, one can overcome any obstacle and effect real change. His journey serves as an inspiration to others seeking to make a difference in their own communities.



Jerry Rutherford

Photo provided by Jerry Rutherford Collier County School Board District 1

**“One of my favorite things about GLA is the investment they make in people. After all, this government is for the people and by the people. GLA empowers people to reach their fullest potential.”**

**Rebecca Dow**

GLA Alumni & Former State  
Legislator

# GLA REGIONAL REFLECTION

RACHEL BURGIN,  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

"It has been truly inspiring to witness the growth of our organization and see the impact it has had on leaders across the country. Our trainings have empowered individuals to take action and break down barriers at all levels of government."

**Regional States: Nebraska, Iowa,  
Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri,  
Tennessee, and Georgia**



# *a letter from Rachel*

I am so thankful to have served as a member of the Grassroots Leadership Academy team for the last eight years. It has been a pleasure to watch our organization grow into an inspiring movement that empowers leaders across the country to take actions that break barriers at all levels of government. I have seen firsthand how our trainings and the follow-up from our state partners, have impacted students and community members.

In Des Moines, Iowa, where Deb Davis came to our Advocate Certification training and was inspired to run for school board and won. In Wichita, Kansas, a father was inspired to mobilize some of his business colleagues to come to an activism training for the first time because they were tired of just “talking politics.” In Oklahoma, Kendra Wesson left one of our trainings so excited to make a difference she filed to run for the state legislature, though not successful, she still made a difference. Every training makes an impact in the lives of those who attend, and our team is so grateful every day to be a part of inspiring others to take actions that impact our society to be a better more prosperous society.

When people are trained with the skills to make changes in their community, there is absolutely no limit to what they are capable of accomplishing. Every single training makes a difference, and I am thankful for the many talented members of our entire community who work so hard every day on behalf of grassroots organizing and social change.

Rachel Burgin  
Strategic Director, Education & Training

## GLA Alumni Spotlight

# John Gianola

John Giancola is a grassroots leader in Jefferson County Missouri. As a Grassroots Leadership Academy graduate, he has demonstrated a passion for moving knowledge into action that has led him to mobilize and organize a group of other GLA trained advocates in his community. He led this group in an effort to defeat a massive sales tax increase in their county. They won the tax fight 75-25% (when most local tax measures passed in other places throughout the state). This tax would have added 3/8ths cent increase to sales tax to increase the parks department budget by nearly 400%. John is a true grassroots leader in his state and he utilized his training to accomplish a victory for his community.

During a 2022 training in Missouri, he said “Getting leaders trained so that we can train other leaders to grow our group so that we can be more effective when we work on campaign setup strategies. All those things that takes people, and it takes people leading people. The idea of mentorship and discipleship, creating new members, new leaders, new people to participate. Not people who sit in seats, but people willing to participate that's what I have learned from the Grassroots Leaders Certification.”

## GLA trainers, what was your favorite memory from 2023?



The storytelling workshop for 100+ grassroots leaders in Anchorage, Alaska stood out as the most memorable training of 2022. Participants' passion for making a positive impact in their community was inspiring, and I am excited to see their future impact in the state.

**Mike Sylvester, Senior Trainer**



My favorite moments are seeing individuals transition from cynicism to hope as they understand their ability to impact local government and society. Building relationships with elected officials leads to recognition of their leadership and respect for their ideas and solutions.

**Jenna Netherton, Senior Trainer**



I attended a training in South Dakota and enjoyed one-on-one conversations and the community that formed among the diverse group. Participants were excited and discussed their challenges, planning next steps to address them.

**Adam Masters, Trainer**



## GLA Alumni Spotlight

# Helena Hayes

Helena Hayes attended a Grassroots Leadership Academy, Legislative workshop in November, 2022 in Pella, Iowa. She left that training inspired about what she could do to make an impact in her community.

She began mobilizing parents and student to go to the Iowa State Capitol to talk with legislators about education options for students. During those visits she got to see first-hand some of the challenges and decided to take action by filing to run for office.

Helena ran against the sitting Chairman of Education and was untimely victorious in winning her primary and general election. She is now a member of the legislature in Iowa. Helena is a great example on how one person can make a significant impact for change within their community.

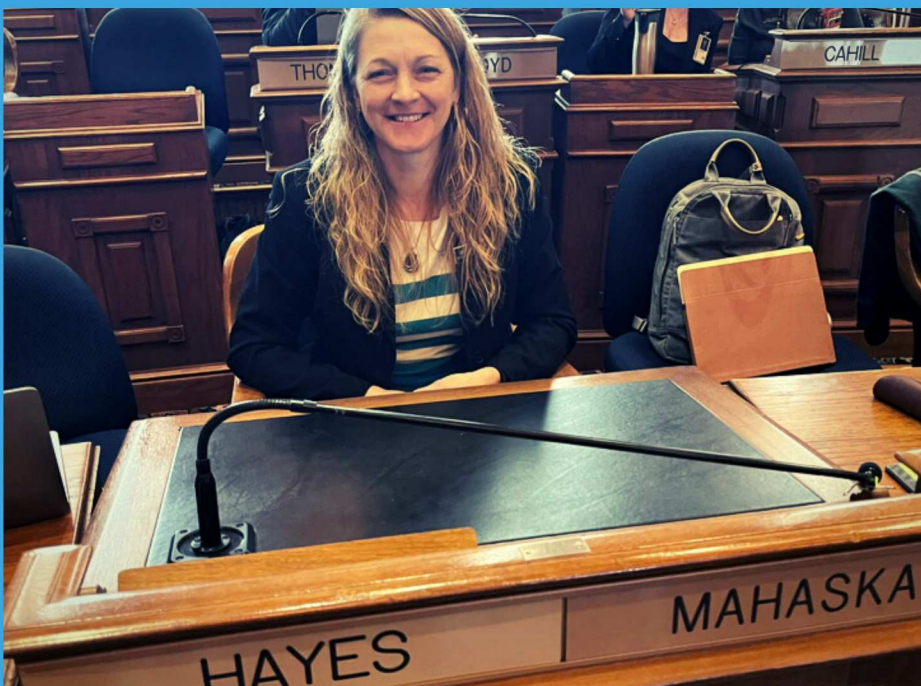


Photo provided by Helena for House Facebook Page

“  
*I came to the Grassroots Leadership Academy training to learn how to be more effective in the legislative process, communicate better to my constituents and colleagues, and influence positive policies. I wanted to learn how to be more effective as a legislator.*  
”

MO State Representative  
Darin Chappell (District 137)  
GLA Alumni  
Branson, Missouri

## GLA Alumni Spotlight

# Laura Williams

Laura Williams started coming to Grassroots Leadership Academy trainings as an activist before joining the AFPF chapter as a staff member in 2021.

During her time with the state chapter, she hosted several trainings with GLA around education, and worked to build an education reform coalition in Johnson County, Kansas. As a result of this coalition, legislators and the incoming Speaker of the House have committed to learning about education reform legislation from educators who are closest to the problem.

Earlier this year, Laura resigned from Americans for Prosperity and followed her passion to run for office and has been elected to the House of Representatives in Kansas. Laura is a true example of a social change entrepreneur - from Advocate to Social Changer to Legislator.



Laura Williams, GLA Alumni

Photo provided by © 2022 Laura Williams for Kansas

**“America is more than a country, it’s actually an idea. It’s an idea that has led to all kinds of human flourishing...We need to continue to fight day in and day out to live up to that standard of living, to that standard of principle, and to allow everybody an equal opportunity to advance in this country.”**

**Slade O’Brien**

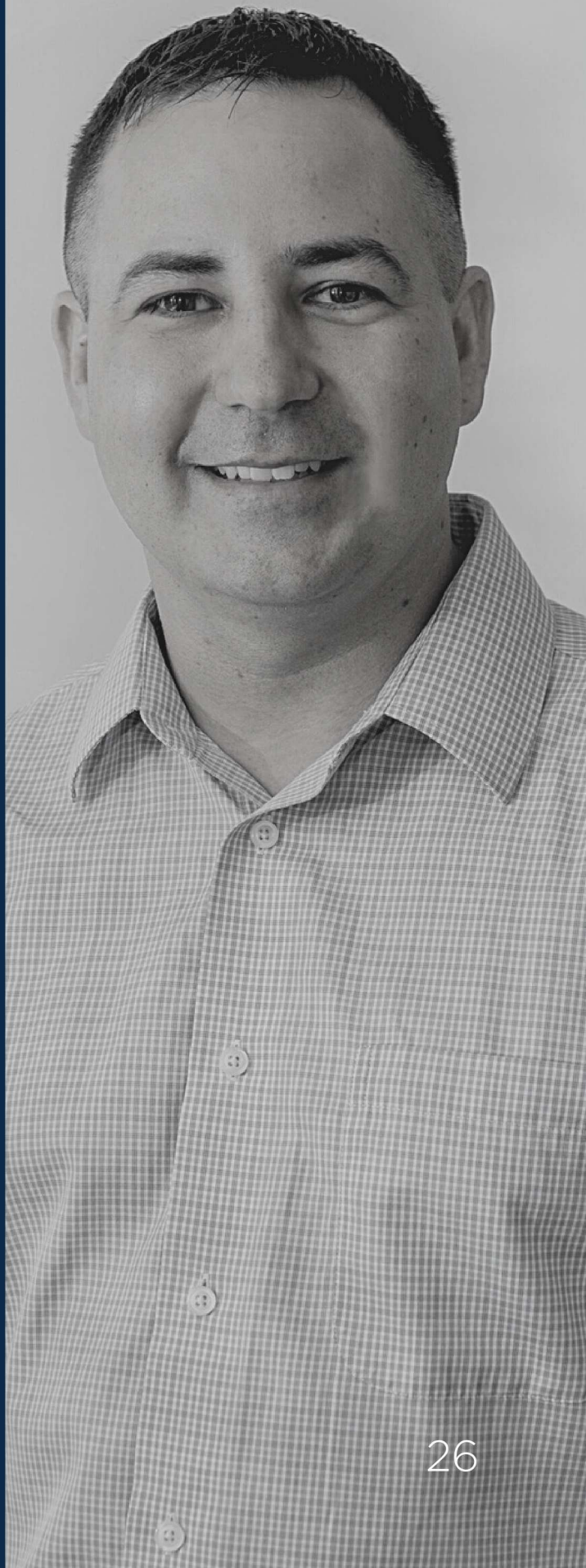
Co-Founder Grassroots  
Leadership Academy

# GLA REGIONAL REFLECTION

ZAK KUBAN,  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

"Our region [brought] together 120 of our top community leaders and staff for the inaugural Western Leaders Summit [in 2022]. Attendees learned vital skills and policy knowledge from state directors, GLA trainers, and policy experts, which helped boost leaders' ability to make a change in their communities."

**Regional States: Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and Montana**



# *a letter from Zak*

The Western GLA team began 2022 with a clear focus: to identify and train grassroots leaders. We got off to a strong start by partnering with team Alaska to host a series of weekend boot camps in Anchorage, which attracted nearly 200 volunteers, many of whom were new to our community. The enthusiasm generated by these events helped inspire our region to bring together 120 of our top community leaders and staff for the inaugural Western Leaders Summit. Attendees learned vital skills and policy knowledge from AFPF state directors, GLA trainers, and policy experts, which helped boost leaders' ability to make change in their communities.

In addition to our core grassroots training with AFPF offices, our team used their individual passions and gifts to reach new audiences. Cait Oponski-Luca, our resident cowgirl, worked to expand our reach beyond the city limits by organizing training events with rural, entrepreneurial women, and has big plans to bring our presence to the rodeo markets.

To break down barriers across all communities, our newest trainer, LaNiqua McCloud, created a coalition of leaders in the Las Vegas market under a project she refers to as the Black Renaissance. Kiran Hill, relying on his extensive military service as an intelligence officer in the Marines, defense contractor, and interpreter, continued to explain US foreign policy in layman's terms to audiences across the nation.

Looking ahead to 2023, our team is eager to continue our efforts working with grassroots leaders, growing our reach to new audiences, and educating the public on previous policy wins they may not be aware of via a new project code-named "It's Working." None of this would have been possible without the support of our generous donors, AFPF state partners, and the excellent team of employees at GLA.

Zak Kubin

Strategic Director, Education & Training

“

*GLA was the impetus for my growth in politics. I learned how to become a more effective advocate in all things, which gave me momentum to achieve greater heights and confidence to explore proffered opportunities in the political arena. I became a more serviceable and knowledgeable individual with the skills honed in each level. The instruction was invaluable to my personal development. I strongly encourage everyone to take advantage of this phenomenal resource!*

”

Heidi Balderree, Utah  
Community Engagement Director  
Americans for Prosperity Foundation

## GLA trainers, what part of being a trainer gives you energy? What part drains you?



The ability to travel across the country and see positive results from the time and effort I invest in our advocates is energizing. The only draining aspect of my role is the administrative side of tracking the details of our trainings and participants.

**LaNiqua McCloud, Trainer**



Delivering presentations and seeing attendees who initially disagreed become engaged in learning and later enthusiastic about volunteering gives me energy but doing my monthly expense report reconciliation drains me.

**Kiran Hill, Trainer**



Traveling the country and visiting small businesses on main streets across America before training talented, passionate activists in the evening is the highlight of my job. The most draining aspect of traveling for work is the unavoidable hiccups of travel, like delayed flights, canceled flights, and lost bags.

**Cait Oponski-Luca, Senior Trainer**

## GLA Alumni Spotlight

# Janet Campbell

Janet Campbell was exposed to the concepts of freedom and equality at a young age through her father's advocacy for an Asian immigrant family to move into their neighborhood. "In my day, you had to ask all the neighbors or have their acceptance to move into our neighborhood," she recalls. Her father's efforts ultimately won over the minds of their neighbors, allowing the Asian family to live among them.

This experience instilled in Janet a belief that all people should have the right to economic opportunities and that their inalienable rights must be protected. Fueled by this passion, she partnered with the Grassroots Leadership Academy and became a proud graduate of their program, completing all three levels of certification.

For her commitment to learning, education, and helping mobilize her community to promote liberty-minded, bottom-up thinking, Janet received the Bob Sussy Award at Americans for Prosperity's end-of-the-year gala for her commitment to learning, education, and helping mobilize her community to promote liberty-minded, bottom-up thinking.

“

*GLA has been beneficial for my community by creating a nationwide picture about what we do and why we do it, which has strengthened my relationships with my activists and helps grow my community throughout Montana.*

”

Hannah Allen  
Grassroots Engagement Director  
Americans for Prosperity

# Western Leaders Summit

## UNITING ACTIVISTS IN THE CO. ROCKIES

A highlight of the 2022 Grassroots Leadership Academy training year was the Western Leaders Summit held in Colorado Springs. The event brought together some of the top advocates from several Western states and provided them with the opportunity to share their stories more effectively using social media. A total of 120 citizens were hand-selected by AFPF state partners and sponsored by AFP Foundation which provided individual scholarships for them to attend. Additionally, the GLA was able to invite several teenage advocates from Texas to participate in the summit who had previously attended a GLA training.

During the training, participants honed their communication skills to more effectively promote change across their state, federal, and local communities. The attendees were able to come together and share their success stories, inspire one another to hold their respective state governments accountable, and build community.

The Grassroots Leadership Academy had the opportunity to host a Storytelling workshop for 65 female small business owners in Washington as a business-to-business partnership. This workshop was a powerful experience for all involved, as it allowed concerned citizens and business owners to come together and brainstorm ways to grow their businesses, communities, and remove obstacles to pursue the American Dream and reach their full potential. Overall, the training was a true joy for the Grassroots Leadership Academy and its attendees.



**“When you have the support of an organization like the Grassroots Leadership Academy, you can’t go wrong. One of the most powerful aspects is that you no longer feel alone. You have people supporting you and standing behind you. You start to believe in yourself and you start to see change. Everybody should be part of the change.”**

**Louis Koorndyk**

GLA Alumni & Non-Profit Leader

# GLA REGIONAL REFLECTION

RACHEL RITTER,  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

"This past year, my world changed when I became a first-time mother to a beautiful baby boy. Not only did my perspective shift, but so did my motivation for what we do at GLA. Now, it's not just about my ship rising, but his and all those who come after us. My love for him inspires me every day to empower other parents to advocate for a better future for our children, one where they can live free and prosper."

**Regional States: Texas, Colorado,  
Michigan, and South Carolina**





# *a letter from Rachel*

For the past six years, it has been my personal mission to empower my fellow citizens to overcome obstacles to prosperity at the state and local level. Each time a participant acquired a new skill, gained command of a policy issue, or discovered a renewed sense of hope that things could get better, I felt that the tide was rising and would eventually lift all our ships.

This past year, my world changed when I became a first-time mother to a beautiful baby boy. Not only did my perspective shift, but so did my motivation for what we do at GLA. Now, it's not just about my ship rising, but his and all those who come after us. My love for him inspires me every day to empower other parents to advocate for a better future for our children, one where they can live free and prosper.

My most cherished training moment occurred during a Grassroots Leader Certification in Lubbock, Texas. An advocate named Esther shared her story about her daughter who had faced challenges as a young teenager that led her down a path of drug abuse and crime. Her daughter made amends and began to turn her life around, but has been hindered every step of the way due to laws and norms surrounding her record. Witnessing the hard work her daughter has put in to build a life for her and her son, Esther decided to lead an effort to reform the criminal justice system and give people like her daughter a real chance at a better life. Esther absorbed every skill, tool, and model we presented and crafted her strategy for change. Since then, she has been organizing others and communicating with lawmakers to push for criminal justice reform in her community.

I am truly honored and blessed to have the opportunity to empower advocates like Esther, who are working to raise the tide that will lift the ships of her daughter, my son, and all our fellow Americans.

**Rachel Ritter**

**Strategic Director, Education & Training**

# Lonestar Leaders

The Grassroots Leadership Academy traveled to Brook Hill High School in Tyler, Texas, where they had the opportunity to work with a select group of students who are interested in pursuing public policy.

The training was made possible thanks to the efforts of Mr. Stephen Dement, the Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Brook Hill School. GLA would like to express our gratitude to Brook Hill High School for hosting us and providing a valuable learning opportunity for the students. The training focused on developing essential skills such as public speaking and sharing one's personal story. The GLA team inspired the students to see the value in their voices and challenged them to use their voices to stand up for their American rights. The students eagerly accepted the challenge and were motivated to make a difference in their communities.

GLA's curriculum is designed to equip students with the tools and knowledge they need to become effective advocates for their communities. The training was designed to help students think critically about the role of government, community, business, and education in shaping the future of our country. The GLA team was impressed with the students' enthusiasm and participation, and they look forward to partnering with Brook Hill High School in the future to continue developing the next generation of leaders.

## GLA trainers, what made you want to join the Grassroots Leadership Academy?



I was drawn to GLA because of my passion for teaching the art of storytelling and framing. My background in communication and public relations in higher education has been a valuable asset in the GLA classroom.

**Jess Mears, Trainer**



I find great fulfillment in teaching The Advocacy Toolbox in the Grassroots Advocate Certification. The course focuses on strategic ways to influence lawmakers and make meaningful change, which aligns perfectly with my personal beliefs and goals.

**Mike Armstrong, Trainer**



It's difficult for me to pinpoint exactly why I chose to be a part of GLA, but my passion for Grassroots Relational Organizing and The Power of Storytelling were certainly factors. I look forward to learning more and contributing to the curriculum in the future.

**Elizabeth Flores, Trainer**

# Texas Youth Leadership Summit

The Texas Youth Leadership Summit of 2022 was truly one-of-a-kind. This 3-day intensive grassroots summer camp trained high school and college students on the essential skills of public speaking, navigating the political arena, organizing grassroots communities, and effectively working with legislators to bring about positive change. The students were not just confined to the classroom, they also enjoyed outdoor activities such as kayaking, hiking, and astronomy.

Joel Castro, an Engagement Director based in Houston, saw firsthand the impact the Summit had on one of his attendees, Lavonte. At first reserved, Lavonte became a passionate participant, engaging in discussions on the roles of government, community, business, and education in solving the various issues facing the nation. Fueled by his desire to improve the country for his child, he absorbed every skill and piece of knowledge he could. Trainer Cait Luca noted that this training equips and reminds young adults like Lavonte that, despite their age, they have the power to make a difference in the future trajectory of their country.



“

*The partnership of the Grassroots Leadership Academy in Texas has allowed the communities of our Engagement Directors to flourish. We've been able to professionally train, activate, and grow our reach within the grassroots with exponential growth. We have grassroots activists who are leaders in their communities.*

”

Mack Morris  
Texas Deputy State Director  
Americans for Prosperity Texas

# Liberty's Emerging Leaders

Grassroots Leadership Academy's trainer Lyda Phillips Stokes traveled to America's High School in El Paso to work with students eager to learn about liberty-minded ways of thinking. Through interactive activities, facilitated discussion, and engaged conversations, students walked away with a deeper understanding of liberty and the importance of defending freedom as young advocates.

GLA's curriculum focuses on providing students with the tools and knowledge they need to become effective community advocates. The activities and discussions were designed to help students think critically about the proper role the Four Key Institutions: government, community, business, and education and how they shape the future of our country.

The students actively participated in discussions and debates, which helped them to see different perspectives and understand the complexity of issues. GLA's approach of fostering an engaging learning environment was evident as the students walked away with a deeper understanding of how they can make a difference in their community and defend their freedom.



**“Grassroots Leadership Academy has taught these young folks how to use their voice. GLA teaches students to stand up and how to be an effective communicator, and most importantly, an effective leader. GLA takes them from followers to leaders.”**

**Jesse Ramos**

GLA Alumni & Former Millennial City Councilman

# GLA REGIONAL REFLECTION

SHAWN HATMAKER  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

"From Kensington, Philadelphia to Jackson, MS, we partner with citizens to build movements that will bring about a new era of freedom and prosperity for all Americans. Opportunities... exist all over our country, and our organization is relentlessly pursuing them. I am forever grateful to play a small part in this."

Regional States: North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Alabama



# *a letter from Shawn*

My purpose in life is to coach and empower people to reach their potential. It is an honor to do so through my work at GLA. We work with amazing people who are looking for a partner to help them overcome inequality, burdensome regulations, and policies that impede people from reaching their potential. From Kensington, Philadelphia to Jackson, MS, we partner with citizens to build movements that will bring about a new era of freedom and prosperity for all Americans.

One of my most memorable partnerships was with a group from Kensington, Philadelphia. Their community has been ravaged by addiction and failed criminal justice policies. Many have written off Kensington as hopeless, but GLA and our state partners saw an opportunity. We found a group of individuals who were committed to improving their community but needed help with the skills and knowledge to do so.

This partnership left a lasting impression on me for a couple of reasons. First, even in the worst of circumstances, there is a bright shining light in Kensington that has the courage to believe that they can change their community, not the government. Second, the group trusted GLA to guide them in doing so. Many times the leader of the group told me, "If you teach us how, then we will do the work." This group had a different vision for their children and trusted us to show them the path to get there.

Opportunities like this exist all over our country, and our organization is relentlessly pursuing them. I am forever grateful to play a small part in this.

Shawn Hatmaker  
Strategic Director, Education & Training

“

*The Grassroots Leadership Academy has transformed my role in Louisiana. When I joined Americans for Prosperity full-time, I had many areas I needed to grow in. Throughout 2022 GLA taught me about public speaking, grassroots operations, and team vision just to name a few. With the help of GLA, I am now prepared thrive at my position to make a lasting impact in my home state and beyond! I cannot thank the GLA team enough for the personal development gained from these classes.*

Clayton Rasche

Grassroots Engagement Director  
Americans for Prosperity Louisiana

”

## GLA trainers, what is your favorite training to give?



My favorite training to give is on the Mission Act. It is an honor to educate other military and veteran families on what rights veterans have to see they have better healthcare. I enjoy educating the community on what issues veterans' healthcare is facing and how they can help change policy for the better.

**Elizabeth Chatham, Trainer**



My favorite training to give is Legislative Series and Storytelling. I love empowering people to have an impact on their legislatures. Helping someone find their voice and use it effectively is very fulfilling!

**Seth Blakenship, Trainer**

## Christi Barber

Christi Barber is a social change superstar who's shaking things up in her community. Christi attended a GLA training in 2019 and since then, she's been a valued member of her community. Christi's not content to sit back and watch change happen - she's out there making it happen. She's started her own organization to train and educate citizens on Narcan usage and harm reduction, and she's not afraid to knock on the doors of state government officials to make sure her voice is heard.

What truly sets Christi apart is her dedication and involvement in our Grassroots Leadership Academy trainings, which have propelled her to become a formidable force for positive change in her community. She's a true believer in our vision and a true social change entrepreneur in every sense of the word. If you want to see real change in action, look no further than Christi Barber.

“  
*The GLA team is an integral part of how our state chapter empowers others to grow with us, lead with us and create a society where everyone can thrive.*”

Isaiah Turner  
Community Engagement Director  
Americans for Prosperity Indiana



## GLA Alumni Spotlight

# Finding Your Voice

When Jeanie first joined Americans for Prosperity Foundation-Indiana, she was just a concerned citizen who felt passionately about the issues but didn't know how to get involved. But after attending our Advocate and Mobilizer certification trainings in 2022, everything changed. The programs sparked a fire within her and gave her the confidence and motivation to take action.

Jeanie started asking how she could make an impact and soon she was out in the field, canvassing with our team and spreading the word about our state priorities. She even took time off from her job to knock on doors, because she knew how important our work was. Her commitment and passion for the cause impressed us so much that we ended up hiring her as a Grassroots Associate.

Jeanie especially found the training on storytelling impactful, and she now regularly speaks out on the importance of sound fiscal policy and educational freedom for her grandchildren's future. Thanks to GLA, we have no doubt that Jeanie will be a long-term activist in the Southern Indiana area.



“GLA means impact. It means changing the future for the better. It means when I have my children, they’ll come up in a world knowing that their father was not only one of the advocates for freedom and justice, but he’s one of the reasons that they’re able to go to the school of their choice. That’s what GLA means to me.”

**LaVonte Holt**

GLA Alumni & College Student

“

Watch your thoughts, they become your words. Watch your words, they become your actions. Watch your actions, they become your habits. Watch your habits, they become your character. Watch your character, it becomes your destiny.

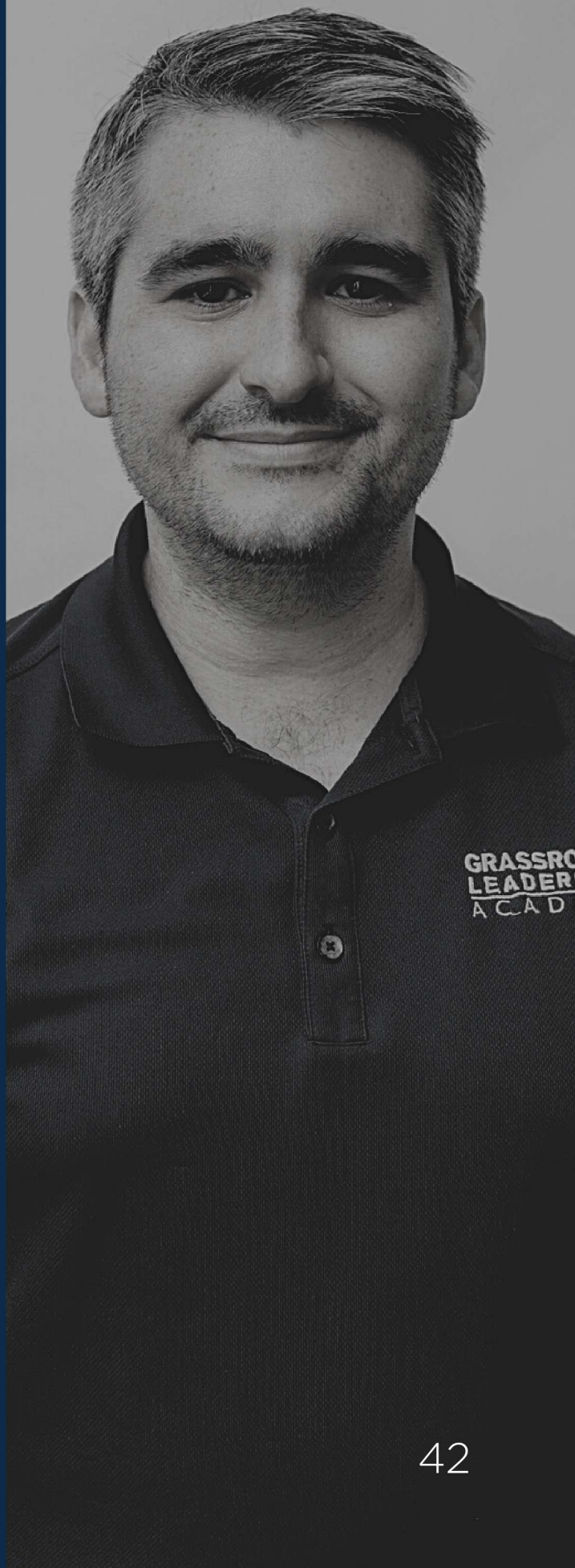
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Lao Tzu

# EXTERNAL PROGRAMS

**ROBERTO GUTIERREZ**  
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF  
PROGRAMS

"As we look forward to the new year, we are excited to continue our mission of empowering individuals to drive change in their communities through our programs, events, and resources. We are confident that our GLA community will continue to be leaders in their communities, championing liberty-minded thinking, and driving bottom-up change that benefits all."



# *a letter from Roberto*

As the Senior Director of Programs at the Grassroots Leadership Academy (GLA), I am honored to share with you the outstanding accomplishments of 2022. Our team has been dedicated to cultivating connections with GLA alumni and external partners who are committed to making a lasting impact in their communities across America.

One of our most notable achievements in 2022 was the launch of our new website. It has been designed to serve as a comprehensive resource for members of the GLA community, providing information about our programs and certifications, alumni testimonials, upcoming training opportunities in their area, and a platform to meet our GLA trainers. The website also serves as a powerful tool to illustrate the impact our alumni are making in their communities.

To amplify our impact, GLA has formed strategic partnerships with outside organizations that share our vision of promoting liberty-minded thinking. These partnerships have been incredibly successful, and we've trained over 900 GLA advocates this year alone. The positive change that our alumni are making in their communities is a testament to the effectiveness of our programs and the transformative power of our approach.

To further strengthen our community, we launched an alumni relations program that has allowed us to reconnect with our alumni and foster a sense of community among them. With this program in place, we can now provide ongoing educational support, leadership training, and resources to help our alumni continue to drive positive change in their communities.

As we look forward to the new year, we are excited to continue our mission of empowering individuals to drive change in their communities through our programs, events, and resources. We are confident that our alumni will continue to be leaders in their communities, championing liberty-minded thinking, and driving bottom-up change that benefits all.

Roberto Gutierrez  
Senior Director of Programs

# Alumni Relations

It has been an honor to connect and engage with our 20,000+ GLA alumni. These dedicated individuals are the backbone of our community and play a vital role in making positive change in their communities. Throughout the year, we made a concerted effort to reach out to our alumni and collect inspiring GLA highlights and testimonials that showcase the impact of our training.

Additionally, we partnered with our Development team to share these impact stories with Stand Together donors, highlighting the effectiveness of our program and raising resources to continue our mission. Creating this Reflections book was the perfect way to cap off the year, and I look forward to continuing to gather and share stories in 2023.



Lyda Stokes  
Director of Alumni  
Engagement



Angelette Aviles,  
Director of Brand

## Communications

As the Director of Brand for Grassroots Leadership Academy, I am proud to reflect on the accomplishments of 2022 and the progress we have made. One of our most notable achievements was the launch of our new modern website, which offers more detailed information about upcoming trainings and resources for our audiences. This has greatly improved our online presence and accessibility to potential trainees and partners.

In addition, our social media presence on multiple platforms has grown significantly, leading to requests for trainings from states and organizations we have never worked with before. The positive feedback and testimonials we have received are a testament to the impact of our programs and the dedication of our staff.

We also supported our staff in large conferences and speaking opportunities, allowing us to share our expertise and knowledge with a wider audience. Furthermore, we are proud to have produced a new promotional video that is being used to better explain the services we provide and the outcomes of our programs.

As we move into 2023, I look forward to continuing our efforts in expanding our reach and impact, and working closely with our trainers, strategic directors, and alumni relations to provide the best possible training and support for our participants. Now...Please give us a Like and Follow on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter!



Jonathan Torres,  
Content Manager

# Issue Education

As we reflect on the past year, we are excited to highlight some of the accomplishments of our Issue Education team. We were thrilled to welcome Jason Edson as our new Deputy Director of Issue Education.



Duane Lester  
Director of Issue  
Education

Duane Lester, Director of Issue Education, Jason, and Jess Mears, Grassroots Trainer, delivered a compelling main-stage presentation on Talking to Conservatives About Cannabis Reform at LibertyCon in Miami, Florida.

Additionally, due to popular demand, we are excited to announce that we will be restarting our podcast "Top Priority," with new episodes starting in February.

We look forward to continuing to educate and inform on our Priority Initiatives in the coming year.

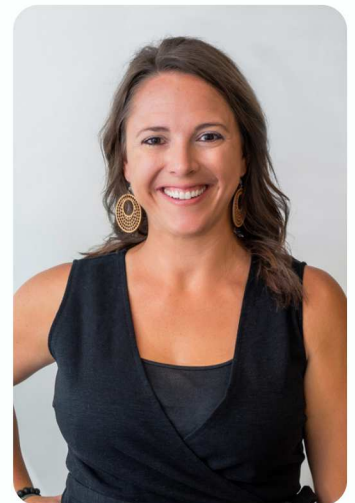


Jason Edson  
Deputy Director,  
Issue Education

# External Partnerships

In 2022, External Partnerships trained over 900 advocates to become more effective leaders in their communities. Our partnership with external organizations allows us to provide additional leadership training and support to those who are already making a positive impact in their communities. By working with the Grassroots Leadership Academy, organizations can take their grassroots organizing efforts to new heights and create more effective bottom-up change.

Our training programs are designed to help organizations and citizen groups create a clear vision, effectively communicate their message, and bring their organizers together to work towards a common goal. To get started, identify a group of individuals in your area who share a common passion and have a goal in mind. Then, reach out to us to request a call and learn more about how we can help you achieve your vision.



Meghan Norton  
Director of  
Partnerships

“

Allowing people the freedom to pursue their own interests is the best and only sustainable way to achieve societal progress...[they] must be free to make their own choices and mistakes, rather than be forced to accept choices made for them by others.

”

Charles Koch

# LOOKING FORWARD

**DARYN IWICKI**

VICE PRESIDENT,  
EDUCATION & TRAINING

"As GLA advocates, it is our duty to empower and educate individuals in our communities. Through our efforts, we can create a more balanced and harmonious society, where everyone has the opportunity to self-actualize and reach their full potential, much like the way the wolves changed Yellowstone Park for the better."





# *a letter from Daryn*

The power of a small group can bring significant change. The wolves of Yellowstone National Park serve as an inspiring example of this. Reintroduced to the park in the 1990's, this small pack of gray wolves had a ripple effect on the entire ecosystem, leading to a resurgence of numerous species and a more balanced environment, including changes in the shape and direction of streams and rivers. Just as the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone led to the rejuvenation of the park's rivers and streams, our activism can lead to a revitalization of society.

In the same way, our actions as citizens have the potential to bring about meaningful transformation in our society. Small groups of advocates have a long history of bringing about significant change. The American Revolution, the Women's Suffrage Movement, and the Civil Rights Movement are just a few examples of how dedicated individuals come together to bring about lasting change.

If we continue to grow liberty-minded communities that can embrace education, discipline, and a strategic plan, our small groups will transform society in a similar fashion. As GLA advocates, it is our duty to empower and educate individuals in our communities. Through our efforts, we can create a more balanced and harmonious society, where everyone has the opportunity to self-actualize and reach their full potential, much like the way the wolves changed the Yellowstone park for the better.

Extreme ideologies, such as socialism, communism, populism, and nationalism, are creating divisiveness and tribalism in our society. Such tribalism is harmful as it limits dialogue and silences opposing views. We must steer away from such divisive thinking and work with people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs to fight for a society based on equal rights and mutual benefit.

As a network of advocates, we are the wolves of Yellowstone, leading the way towards a more balanced and harmonious society. In 2023, let's continue to be the wolves of our communities, working together to bring about lasting change and create a better future for all.

Daryn Iwicki

Vice President, Education & Training

# INVESTMENT

## Empowering Individuals to Effect Bottom-Up Change

At the Grassroots Leadership Academy, we believe that true change begins at the community level. **Your investment enables us to offer scholarships to all participants. This allows advocates to attend in-person trainings and educational programs across the United States at no cost.** Our training equips advocates with the necessary tools and strategies to make a positive impact in their communities.



# Grassroots Leadership Academy

## INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Your support is crucial in helping us continue to offer educational programming at no cost to participants. By investing in GLA, you are investing in the future of our communities, our states, and our country.



### EMPOWERMENT FOR ADVOCACY

By investing in a singular GLA certification, you are equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills to drive positive change from the ground up. Our 6-week certification programs, including Advocate, Mobilizer, and Leader, provide comprehensive education and training to empower individuals to become effective leaders and advocates in their community.



### COMMUNITY IMPACT

By providing a community with all three levels of the GLA certifications (Advocate, Mobilizer, and Leader), you are providing advocates with 18 weeks of comprehensive education and training. These individuals will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and network necessary to drive meaningful change in their communities.



### STATE-WIDE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

By supporting a state-wide leadership summit, you are making a powerful impact on the grassroots change efforts in that specific state. This invitation-only summit brings together GLA alumni within the state, we can provide state-specific training and networking opportunities to help advocates become more effective leaders. This creates a strong network of bold leaders who can lean on each other and work together to effect bottom-up change within their state.



### TRANSFORM A STATE

By investing in a state, you are providing the full GLA experience to individuals in that state. Your support grants access to all three levels of GLA certifications (Advocate, Mobilizer, and Leader) as well as a state-wide leadership summit, creating a powerful network of leaders who can effect bottom-up change in their home state.

## REGIONAL IMPACT



The Regional Leadership Summit is specifically designed to connect top GLA alumni from different states within a specific region. This invitation-only summit provides a unique opportunity for advocates to network and collaborate with one another, as well as connect with legislators from their region. By bringing together our top grassroots leaders within a specific region, the summit creates a space for attendees to share their knowledge, experience, and strategies, allowing them to take home valuable insights and apply them to their own communities, strengthening their ability to effect change at the local level.

## GROW A NATIONAL MOVEMENT



By supporting the National Leadership Summit, you are investing in the development of our top grassroots leaders from across the country. These individuals have demonstrated a strong commitment to their communities and actively champion liberty-minded thinking. The national conference provides them with the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, share knowledge and strategies, and gain valuable insights that they can take back to their communities and apply to effect change.

## BE A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Your investment in the Grassroots Leadership Academy will empower individuals across the nation to effect bottom-up change and create a more just and equitable society for all. Together, we can build a bold community of leaders who will shape the future of our country by championing liberty-minded thinking.



# LET'S STAY CONNECTED



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