

American Leadership Form forms new chapter

STOCKTON — The Great Valley Center has formed a new chapter of the American Leadership Forum (ALF) to bring together experienced leaders in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced Counties. Led by a founding board of recognized leaders from the region, this effort will significantly build the region's capacity to meet the challenges of great growth in a place where educational outcomes, community health, and economic prosperity are under fire. A new chapter of ALF presents a special opportunity to create better lives for the people who live in the region.

This will be the newest ALF chapter in the nation, joining the 11 existing chapters, two of which are in California. Since ALF was founded in 1980 nearly 2,000 ALF Fellows throughout the country have completed the original program, bringing to their disparate communities a new sense of commitment, understanding, and interconnectedness.

This Great Valley Chapter will bring together leaders from the Northern San Joaquin Valley together for a year of discussion, personal and professional insight, and acquisition of new skills and relationships to address tough issues that must be solved if a regional break through is ever to occur.

The new Great Valley Chapter decision makers in businesses, educators, elected officials, and heads of community organizations will have the opportunity to build a network and work together to address the challenges their communities are facing in a new way, strengthened by bonds of friendship, trust, and respect for one another.

Over the course of a year, with monthly day-long sessions augmented by six days in the wilderness and several two-day retreats, ALF Fellows are sharing and learning. Guided by three faculty members for the entire year, the group is also joined by a half-dozen experts in the Sierra Nevada during the wilderness retreat.

The focus is on how groups work together, the role of diversity of thought and experiences in building community, and how constructive conversation and action can take place in a region that is growing and changing rapidly. While participants will at times work as individuals, a majority of their time will be spent in small groups, larger teams, and working as a whole to learn new ways of facilitating difficult conversations, understanding complex issues, and developing techniques for strategies and action steps. In the second half of the program, participants will think about their own leadership paths and where they would like to be in the future. How the ALF class might play a role in achieving a higher functioning regional consensus is also addressed, along with the role of spirit in leadership. The participants have opportunities for civic engagement and to apply their new skills and knowledge through a class project.