



Rethinking the Meaning of Leadership **A Summary of Ed O'Malley's Keynote Address**

Leadership is the ability to mobilize people to make progress on difficult issues, according to Ed O'Malley, former state representative from Roeland Park and current CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center in Wichita. O'Malley gave the keynote address at the annual Human Service Summit hosted by UCS of Johnson County on June 9 at the Ritz Charles Conference Center in Overland Park.

At the heart of O'Malley's presentation was a challenge to the audience to rethink the definition of leadership. "Think of leadership as an activity, not as a position of authority or expertise in a subject or cause," he said. He added that the key activity required to be an effective leader is "mobilizing people to difficult work."

O'Malley noted that results are the critical measure of one's effectiveness as a leader. As simple or obvious as that might sound, O'Malley has found that community group leaders too often mistakenly believe they are succeeding because they dedicate a lot of time and effort.

O'Malley shared some of the lessons he has learned at the Kansas Leadership Center over the past two-and-a-half years. His presentation left participants with five key take-aways to consider as they work to promote leadership in their own roles:

1. **Leadership is an activity** – something that happens- not a position or authority;
2. **Making progress should be more about learning about the system within which the problem exists** and less about learning content;
3. In order to make progress, **a problem needs to be clearly defined as technical or adaptive**;
4. **Civic leadership is more difficult than business-type leadership** that provides an authority structure so specific skills must be sharpened.
5. Whether or not someone is demonstrating **leadership should be measured by the results of actions, not the amount of effort** expended.

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