



## Human Service Summit 2009 Panel Discussion Summary

During UCS' Human Service Summit on June 9, five panelists who are in top management positions from area nonprofit agencies were engaged in a dialogue about leadership. The panel was moderated by **Ed O'Malley**, president and CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center. Panelists included:

- **Mary Lou Jaramillo**, president and CEO of El Centro;
- **David Renz**, director of the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership;
- **Janet Schalansky**, president and CEO of Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL);
- **Brent Stewart, Sr.**, president/CEO, United Way of Greater Kansas City; and
- **David Wiebe**, executive director of Johnson County Mental Health Center.

O'Malley kicked things off by asking panelists about their take on the **difficulty of leadership**, especially during challenging times. Responses included statements about balancing scores of demands, focusing on broader issues while keeping the bigger picture in focus, being comfortable with one's own limitations, and creating a sense of urgency, which results in risk-taking and action.

His second question focused on **how to leverage current conditions** in order to make a difference. Collaboration – working together among agencies – to leverage resources was a major theme. Panelists agreed that while the current down economy presents challenges, it also offers an opportunity to engage people and increase the awareness of human service needs.

When O'Malley asked **what leadership looks like in this climate** and what needs to be different, one panelist said that "very little will change if the same people (same voices) do the same thing. Unusual voices need to be heard." Further, true leaders need to be clear about the mission and vision of organization – keep people engaged so they are part of the solution.

Members of the group also addressed **what the human service infrastructure is doing well** to respond to current economic climate and what needs it needs to do differently. Educating legislators about the issues was a positive. However, it was noted that it is important to approach legislators collectively – as system partners – with solutions. Panelists said that non-profits are dedicated, responsive to the changing environment and resilient, but there are not enough resources so it's very important to work together and create alliances.

Finally, O'Malley asked **what the biggest barrier to exercising leadership** is. Reactions included:

- overcoming the tendency to deal with day-to-day problems;
- maintaining the energy needed to be a leader;
- looking at all the things we can do, rather than what we should do. "We can't do all things – we need to focus on what we *should* do;" and
- being certain that you have the answers (i.e., other people have different values and frame of reference; there are more than one answer).

Attendees found the panel to be though-provoking. Discussions were continued as part of the morning's small group break-out sessions that included all participants.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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July 2009