



Participants of the 2014 Leadership Academy class. The Nebraska State Bar Association program began in 2006 as an initiative of then-president Linda Crump.

Photo Courtesy Nebraska State Bar Association

## Program Prepares Young Lawyers for Leadership Roles

Lincoln – Participants of the 2014 Leadership Academy class gathered on the first floor of the Hruska Law Center in Lincoln recently. The meeting was the second of six for a program aimed at grooming lawyers with 3-15 years of practice experience for leadership roles in the law, the community, and life.

Omaha Lawyer and executive coach Susan A. Koenig led the Friday session, and has taught sessions on leadership for five of the program's eight-year existence. Koenig, a 32-year member of the NSBA, stressed the importance of leadership skills for today's practicing lawyers.

The most important skill for leadership, she says, is "having your words and actions match up with your values every day. It's a great challenge but a great guide to being a successful leader."

The Leadership Academy, a program of the NSBA, began in 2006 as an initiative of then-president, Linda Crump. The program lasts a full year and recruits lawyers from diverse ethnic and practice backgrounds from across the state.

"I noticed that a lot of the newer

attorneys were not involved in the bar association," says Crump, "and the Leadership Academy was a way to develop their skill sets."

By bringing together attorneys from various practice areas and locations, the academy works on two levels, explains Crump. "It develops professional and leadership skills for those who participate; and it also helps form relationships between attorneys who would otherwise never meet. Lawyers are so isolated," she says, "it's good to create opportunities for these friendships that are so hard to form."

The early and mid-career lawyers study a number of topics including leadership, legislation, governance and community service, media relations, and judicial administration – all in the hope of expanding practical legal and professional understanding. In one session, attorneys watch and critique mock interviews between their peers and real media professionals. In another, they meet and speak with Supreme Court, Appeals Court or Drug Court judges to learn the particulars of each court system.

"In just a few years, this program has become a real success," says NSBA Associate Executive Director Sam Clinch. "A lot of our past participants have gone on to become very active members of the bar. They've become committee members, section chairs, members of the House of Delegates and CLE faculty. And we're happy to have them."

In addition to the lawyers who participate, the community benefits as well. The program culminates each year with a service project chosen, organized and executed by participants. Last year, the class organized a book drive for the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative, an annual program led by the Supreme Court that focuses on foster care and permanency planning. The books are donated to children and families involved with the initiative.

Since 2006, the Leadership Academy has trained 199 attorneys and is always looking for more qualified candidates. Attorneys may nominate themselves by returning the annual application letter that is mailed to all active NSBA members each spring.