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Program opens eyes to community needs

In 1973, an automobile accident inspired a mother to create a dynamic memorial to the accomplishments of her son and for the benefit of the community in which he lived. For 30 years, the Stanley K. Lacy Executive Leadership Series has offered a unique perspective to 25 individuals on the issues confronting our city and region.



**BRIAN
WILLIAMS**

Commentary

Guided by a moderator through tours, seminars, reading and interaction with experts, the participants debate education, government, health and human services, the justice system, diversity, quality of life, and economic development.

Following in the footsteps of more than 700 men and women who have participated in the program, I joined this year with 24 other professionals in the Lacy series. My classmates came from business, law, education and not-for-profits. Several had been involved in statewide political campaigns; others had helped shape the debate on Indiana's economic-development strategy.

The perspectives of our moderator, Dan Evans of Clarian Health Partners, helped shape the discussion among my classmates. But the true value of the program resided in the class members, whose perspectives on the issues confronting Indianapolis as it struggles to overcome its geographic disadvantages

in creating an economic and culturally vibrant community enlivened the debate and reflected a uniform desire to make a welcoming and dynamic city and region.

Our discussions touched on the billions spent on professional sports facilities, the millions spent on promoting our life sciences resources, and the few dollars left over to help those most in need of our help—the young, the aged and the disadvantaged. For Indianapolis to truly be a world-class city, we must have citizens whose education prepares them to be productive members of our community, whose skills are competitive in the global marketplace, and whose wages allow them to provide for their families. We must also have a community with a cultural, physical, financial and social infrastructure robust enough to offer citizens and their children an opportunity to pursue their ideal of the American dream. The allocation of scarce financial resources to achieve these goals was the greatest debate we confronted.

Toward the end of our class, I was offered an opportunity to ride along with Indianapolis Police Department Officer Scott Childers in IPD's East District, affectionately known as the "swamp." Officers in the East District respond to more calls for assistance than any other IPD district or the Marion County Sheriff's Department. The topics we addressed in the Stanley K. Lacy program were animated during the few hours I spent with Officer Childers.

In our time together, Officer Childers

had to serve as parent, friend, guardian and counselor to several residents of our fair city. For many, he represented the face and the soul of Indianapolis. The apprehension and exhilaration that are a part of the job as an IPD officer were hidden under a veil of professionalism necessary to succeed in a dangerous and litigious profession.

For our city to realize its full potential, more citizens should participate in the outreach programs of our law-enforcement community. The understanding of what so many of our neighbors confront on a daily basis would benefit all of us as we engage in a discussion about the future of our city. We must find the resources necessary to fully equip and support the men and women who are the first point of contact for many residents, the men and women in law enforcement.

Finally, we should thank the Lacy family for their vision in creating a program that has richly rewarded our city over the years with men and women committed to making Indianapolis a great place to live and work. Challenges still confront Indianapolis, but with inspiring people like those in the Stanley K. Lacy program and Lacy Leadership Association, our community will be able to nurture and support the men and women who can help us grow and prosper. •

Williams is regional venture partner of Hopewell Ventures, a Midwest-focused private-equity firm. His column appears monthly. To comment on this column, go to IBJ Forum at www.ijb.com or send e-mail to bwilliams@ibj.com.