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Center for Leadership Development receives \$1 million gift from Derica and Robin Rice

Gift to go towards scaling up programming and expanding reach to area youth

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – The Center for Leadership Development (CLD) announced a generous gift of \$1 million from Indianapolis-based philanthropists Derica Rice and Robin Nelson-Rice. For four decades, CLD has been transforming the lives of African American youth in the Indianapolis community by preparing them for academic and career success. Specializing in developing the business and community leaders of the future, CLD’s impact reaches across industries, educational institutions, neighborhoods and generations.

“I am overwhelmed and profoundly humbled by Derica and Robin’s gift to the Center for Leadership Development mission. This is a seminal gift in CLD’s history and I am moved beyond words by their generous gesture. This gift also inspires us,” said Dennis Bland, CLD president. “The Center for Leadership Development board and staff have a bold vision for Indianapolis youth and our city. We are striving to empower hundreds more youth across our city to help them excel in school, career and life. Our responsibility is to steward and strategically leverage the Rice’s magnificent contribution to make this vision reality. I am deeply grateful to Derica and Robin for their gift and for their trust in CLD.”

While the Indiana Department of Education reports an average high school graduation rate of 76.9 percent for African American students statewide, 95 percent of CLD participants have successfully graduated from high school. Furthermore, of all CLD participants, 70 percent have enrolled in postsecondary education and 40 percent have graduated from college.

This comes from a participant population that reflects the harsh realities of the wider community. Forty-four percent of CLD students come from single-parent households, 47 percent receive free or reduced lunches and 35 percent come from one of seven “hot spot” high-crime ZIP codes.

“The Center for Leadership Development is doing something that almost no one else in the nation is doing, and successfully. CLD is effectively breaking the cycles of poverty by providing a road map, tools, values and skills for young African Americans, allowing them to overcome the odds of each of their unique situations,” said Derica Rice. “We have always enjoyed being a part of this transformative program and are excited to see CLD continue to grow and shape the lives of future leaders.”

Derica Rice is a member of the CLD Board of Directors. He retired last year as executive vice president and chief financial officer at Eli Lilly and Company.

CLD was founded in response to the many obstacles facing minority youth. Since that time, CLD has developed programs and activities that deliver exceptional experiences to both students and parents.

Its programming, designed to develop and prepare youth, starting in the fourth grade, for the highest levels of academic and career achievement, is based on CLD's Five Principles for Success: character development, educational excellence, leadership effectiveness, community service and career achievement.

"As a proud Center for Leadership Development alum, there's nothing more important than educating and preparing the African American youth in our community for the future by intervening at an early age to help shape their character and leadership abilities," said Robin Nelson-Rice. "By connecting with schools, communities, businesses and higher education institutions, CLD inspires a level of academic and career achievement that is astonishing and unique. CLD had a profound impact on my life and I hope this gift can help impact the lives of others as well."

Robin Nelson-Rice serves as a volunteer on a variety of community boards and institutions throughout Indianapolis, including the Indianapolis Museum of Art and The Women's Fund.

"CLD empowers thousands of students each year to care about their futures and develop a deeper interest in education and learning," said Thomas King, chairman of the CLD Board of Directors. "This gift is going to help us scale up our programming and expand our reach to give area youth and families greater access to one of the most impactful opportunities for African American youth. We can't thank Derica and Robin enough for helping us take another giant step toward helping as many students and families as possible."

Since its founding in 1977, CLD has enriched the lives of more than 20,000 youth and their families. More than 10,000 CLD graduates are leading, serving and transforming their communities – in Indiana and nationwide.

In 2017 alone, CLD served more than 4,000 students and parents from 316 elementary, middle and high schools, including over 1,100 student and parent participants in its College Prep Institute. The program retention rate is over 80 percent.

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