

JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY



**DYNAMIC.
INTERACTIVE.
COLLABORATIVE.**

**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP
SKILLS THROUGH LEARNING.**



JEFFERSON CIVIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Dynamic. Interactive. Collaborative.

Dear Aspiring and Inspiring Change-Agents,

Are you looking for a **unique learning experience** to explore local and state government? Networking opportunities with peers and community leaders? **Dynamic personal growth and transformative teamwork?** A chance to make a tangible impact on the community?

Are you looking to **join a network of 250-plus civic-minded individuals** who developed their leadership skills by becoming more civically educated and engaged?

Then the Jefferson Educational Society's Civic Leadership Academy is for you.

In the JCLA, participants will get to know better the region in which they live through an examination of the form and function of local governments while also getting an up-close look at Erie's connection to Harrisburg and the rest of the Keystone State by meeting with state officials. And, participants work collectively to address a critical issue facing the region through research that produces actionable recommendations designed to effect positive changes that will shape the region's future, and inform the nation, for decades to come.

Looking for more? **Consider applying for the additional, optional Raimy Fellowship Program**, where participants study leadership theory more in-depth, and work with JES Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Andrew Roth on individual or small-group research projects to have ideas ready to share with Washington, D.C. think tank researchers and scholars during a trip to the nation's capital.

We invite you to join the 2026 JCLA cohort for a dynamic, interactive, and collaborative experience. We look forward to working with and learning from you.

Onward,



Ben Spегgen
JES Vice President



Chelsea Oliver
JES Director of Marketing and Community Engagement

Some of the companies and organizations whose employees have participated in the JCLA:



- UECDC/Quality of Life Learning Center
- Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership
- Penn State Behrend
- Printing Concepts
- Corry Area School District
- Erie County Community College
- City of Erie
- Allegheny College
- Community Access Media (CAM)
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers
- Junior Achievement of Western Pennsylvania
- Career Dreams/Booker T. Washington Center
- PennFuture
- GECAC
- expERIEnce Children's Museum

What local leaders say about the Jefferson Civic Leadership Academy

“Erie Insurance values the JCLA and its focus on equipping future leaders in the community we call home. We encourage our employees to attend the JCLA because of the opportunity they have to learn more about civic responsibility, network with other leaders in the region, and then bring those experiences and perspectives into their work. The JCLA is part of a well-rounded employee experience and one that mutually benefits the employee, their teams, and the communities they are part of.”

CHRISTINA MARSH,
*RETIRED, CHIEF DIVERSITY AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER, ERIE INSURANCE*

DEAN PEPICELLO,
*SUPERVISOR,
HARBORCREEK TOWNSHIP*

“The Leadership Academy provides those already engaged in this community with the opportunity to learn how government works at all levels, and use that knowledge to solve crucial issues right here at home and make our region an even better place. The time invested is beyond worth it for the knowledge gained and the outcomes produced.”

KEN LOUIE,
*DIRECTOR OF THE
ECONOMIC RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF ERIE*

“The Jefferson Educational Society’s Civic Leadership Academy is an invaluable resource for the Erie region and beyond. Through a rigorous program of immersive learning that encompasses the history, economy, and politics of our community, the Academy produces leaders of the future who will be well-equipped to advance Erie’s social and economic vitality.”

Launched in 2015, the JCLA prepares Erie professionals, ages 25 to 45, for meaningful, fulfilling, and impactful engagement in their community by providing a dynamic and unique environment that fosters teamwork, growth, and learning through a transformative experience for those seeking to be change-agents for their community.

Through the JCLA, participants examine the inner workings of local governments to emerge as civic leaders capable of effecting positive change for Erie County’s future with an understanding of Erie’s past and present. With a close look at Erie’s economic, entrepreneurial, and innovation ecosystems, the JCLA informs mindful leaders of Erie’s post-industrial landscape while exposing them to global ideas that can be applied to Erie County’s overall developmental health and well-being.



Employer Return on Investment

Through the JCLA, employers benefit by having employees enhance their leadership skills while simultaneously developing their abilities to work in teams. Employers gain access to a broad network of prominent contacts, as their employees participate in this collaborative experience.

JCLA participants will:

- Graduate and return to their employer with a greater understanding of effective leadership both in the workplace and in the community;
- Increase their knowledge of how Erie County functions, from its urban core to its rural communities to its relationship to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania;
- Cultivate both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through goal-oriented activities driven by collaboration, teamwork, and independent study;
- Develop strong relationships with community peers throughout diverse sectors of Erie County that will lead to a better understanding of problem solving through application;
- Increase confidence through scholarship and team-building activities.



April Soriano, Project Manager at UPMC Health Plan, JCLA participant and Raimy Fellow 2018

"The Leadership Academy is absolutely excellent because it allowed me to truly form bonds with the people in my cohort who are trying to make a difference."

Tuition

The JCLA tuition is \$1,500. Tuition covers the retreat (transportation, lodging, meals), lunches during the sessions, and Global Summit event admission. There is no additional tuition for the Raimy Fellowship Program.

Scholarship

Limited scholarship assistance is available and will be determined by the Jefferson Educational Society based on expressed need of the applicant. Those seeking scholarship assistance should express need and merit in the cover letter.

Payment

Upon recognition of acceptance to the JCLA, applicants must make arrangements

to submit partial payment to secure enrollment. The remaining balance is due Aug. 15.

JCLA ALUMNI NETWORK

The JCLA Alumni Network is a formal association of over 250+ JCLA graduates and growing who wish to remain active in their community.

The organization promotes networking among graduates, cultivating participation in activities that foster community growth, and encouraging leadership development among members. Members of the JCLA cohort will have the opportunity to meet with alumni throughout the year. Upon graduation, members of the cohort will be welcomed to officially join the network.

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CIVIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Time Commitment

JCLA is divided into three parts. The cohort will:

- **Travel to Harrisburg** for a two-day retreat to meet with elected officials and engage with leadership throughout the state. Participants will meet with thought leaders to gain insight into the work they will apply to the group-action project.
- **Attend 7 countywide sessions** geared to enrich and inform Academy participants' understanding of Erie County's government, its economy, its well-being, and more. Additionally, to gain a broader understanding of global issues and how they apply to Erie, participants must attend at least four of the Global Summit events designed to address critical issues.
- **Meet and work collaboratively on a common group-action project** designed to address critical issues facing Erie County. Participants looking to make the most of the opportunity to shape the future of their community should expect to dedicate two to three hours per week on the group-action project.



- Kenna Stevens, Chronicles - Assistant Director at WQLN PBS NPR and 2024 JCLA graduate

"I count myself so lucky to have been a part of this JCLA cohort. These past few years, I've been reconnecting with Erie after some time away. Participating in JCLA recentered my goals and efforts to build up our community. It's the connections I've made through the program that made it truly impactful: true leaders, now and in the future. We've been able to do good work, collaborative work, necessary work, impactful work. As one of the 2024 Global Summit speakers, Joe Davis, wrote, 'Collectively you will achieve more than you imagined.'"

Past JCLA cohorts have met with state leaders in all branches of state government, and Superior Court Judge Victor Stabile. Participants also meet with elected officials and other community leaders throughout Erie County, the city of Erie, and many other local municipalities. Each year, the JCLA meets with representatives of the municipalities throughout Erie County to learn about the history, challenges, and future plans of those regions. Along the way, they've met with the Erie County Executive; the Chairman of County Council; the Mayors of Erie and Corry; the President of Erie City Council; Supervisors from Fairview, Harborcreek, Millcreek; leaders from Corry and Union City; Borough Managers for Edinboro and North East; and numerous policy experts, professionals, and community stakeholders.

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CIVIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

SCHEDULE

June

- Orientation at the Jefferson Educational Society
- Retreat to Harrisburg
- History of the Erie Region / Leadership Theory

July

- Attend and participate in the annual Economic Research Institute of Erie Conference

August

- Analyzing Erie County's Urban Core – History, Challenges, Future
- Team Building Activity

September

- Understanding Erie County Government – History, Challenges, Future
- Learning about West Erie County – History, Challenges, Future

October

- Learning about East Erie County – History, Challenges, Future
- First Draft of the Findings of the Group-Action Project

November

- Gaining a Global Perspective to Erie: Global Summit Speaker Series (attend a minimum of four Global Summit lectures)

December

- Understanding Erie City Government – History, Challenges, Future
- Final Draft of the Group Action Project

January

- Graduation and Reception

Schedule subject to change



Civic Leadership Academy Application Requirements

To apply for the JCLA and/or the Raimy Fellowship Program, please submit an application at jeserie.org under the JCLA drop-down menu. Applicants will need to provide the following:

- **Personal Information**, including name; address; personal phone number; employer phone number; email address;
- **Work History**, detailing employment experiences and positions held;
- **Educational Background**, including high school; college experience (include degree and minors); any advanced degrees and/or specific training and/or certificate experiences;
- **Awards and Honors**, detailing the nature of the award and date received;
- **Civic Engagement**, listing both current and past community-oriented involvement and noting roles held within such organizations and activities;
- **Additional Volunteer Experience**, noting how much time was committed to organizations;
- **The Names and Contact Information of Three References** who should be able to attest to the applicant's qualifications for the JCLA, leadership experience and potential, as well as teamwork capacity;
- **Statement** explaining what led the applicant to seek admission to the JCLA and, if desired, to the Raimy Fellowship Program.

Application, Interview and Admission Process

- **Applications** will be accepted online at JESerie.org and in person at the Jefferson Educational Society;
- Applicants will be admitted to the Leadership Academy on a **rolling-admission basis** until the Academy class-size capacity is met;
- Interviews will be scheduled after application submission.



Selection Process

Ideal candidates will exhibit strong potential for leadership development coupled with an evident desire to positively effect change in the community in which they live, work, and play. Preferred applicants must be able to convey how both their experience and drive would translate to leadership growth spurred by team-based activities.

The Selection Committee is made up of JCLA staff and its advisory board. The Committee will be tasked with reviewing incoming applications, conducting interviews, and determining admission to the JCLA, as well as the Raimy Fellowship Program.

Research and Recommendations

As part of the JCLA, participants develop their leadership skills by engaging in research to collectively address critical issues facing their community with national implications. Every year, the cohort applies the lessons learned from the program to a topic voted on by the JCLA Alumni Network, and presents the results upon graduation.

Past projects include:

It's Broken, So Let's Fix It: Access and Barriers to Youth Mental Health Services in Erie County, Pennsylvania

Through a mixed-methods approach, the 2024 JCLA cohort's report revealed five core themes: the barriers to access, the need for coordination of services, the role of schools in accessing mental health services, reducing mental health stigma, and improvement to the youth mental health care system.



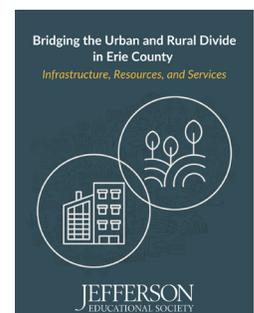
Raising the Next Generation

The 2023 JCLA cohort assessed the challenges of equitable access to child care throughout Erie County. Their group action project presented findings and key recommendations – after having spent seven months visiting, learning about, and researching various municipalities across Erie County, which tied directly to this project.



Bridging the Urban and Rural Divide in Erie County

The 2022 JCLA cohort spent seven months visiting, learning about, and researching nine municipalities across Erie County in part to inform this project. Much of what the cohort experienced and what its research reflects indicates that urban-rural divides that exist, with the exception of public transportation, are likely linked more to class and status than to geography.



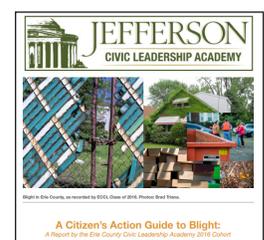
#ErieOpioidProject

In addressing the opioid epidemic, the 2017 JCLA cohort produced the media awareness campaign, *Many Stories, One Story*, to change the conversation about addiction from one of demonizing stigma to one of encouragement and compassion. The participants interviewed recovering addicts, policy experts, and medical professionals in an effort to shed light on the crisis sweeping the nation.



A Citizen's Action Guide to Blight

To highlight successful strategies for addressing blight undertaken by other cities and regions, the 2016 JCLA participants drafted "A Citizen's Action Guide to Blight." The group's work has since been cited in various meetings and remains a vital tool for the region's leaders when discussing blight and how to combat it.



An Additional, Optional Opportunity: The Raimy Fellowship Program

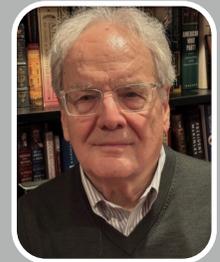
The **Raimy Fellowship Program** offers past graduates of as well as active participants in the JES Civic Leadership Academy an enhanced opportunity to hone their leadership skills and produce meaningful research to advance important conversations. Those who seek to be designated Raimy Fellows will study leadership theory and practice at a deeper level, focusing on ethical, practical civic engagement. They will also work individually or small groups on a research project guided by Raimy Fellows facilitator, Dr. Andrew Roth.

Those who complete the program, producing publishable, research-driven recommendations to advance dialogue around critical issues, will be designated Raimy Fellows and will receive an additional certificate; potentially have the JES publish or produce their project; and join the facilitator and others on a trip to Washington, D.C. for meetings in Congress and Senate to visit several policy institutes, research foundations, and to enjoy a tour of Capitol Hill and some of the capital's other attractions.

What leaders say about the Raimy Fellowship Program

DR. ANDREW ROTH,
*JEFFERSON SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE
AND RAIMY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM
FACILITATOR*

"Raimy Fellows do cutting-edge research important to the Erie area and share their insights with leaders in Erie, Harrisburg, and Washington, D.C."



**JESS TAYLOR, MANAGING
PARTNER, PRODUCER,
DIRECTOR, MENAJERIE
STUDIO**

"The Raimy Fellowship Program created structure in executing a research project and the platform to share with the community. It was a great way to connect with like-minded individuals who are passionate about civic engagement."

JEFF STYBORSKI,
*SENIOR SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATOR,
ERIE INSURANCE*

"My experience with the Raimy Fellowship Program is as rewarding as anything I've done in the last 20 years. I was able to help my community while promoting awareness to a very real civic issue all the way to the capital in Washington, D.C. The program, the participants, the experience, and the results were truly inspiring and reinvigorated my interest in local politics."

"The Raimy Fellowship Program is a hidden gem here in Erie for emerging and existing scholars looking to expand their research capacity on issues affecting the Erie region. My experience further developed my leadership skills as well as strengthened my connections to fellow researchers and public leaders. Have an issue you want to dive into? This is a great opportunity to conduct independent research and contribute to the progress of our community."

SUSANNAH FAULKNER,
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ERIE ARTS AND CULTURE*

JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

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Examine **THE PAST.**
Study **THE PRESENT.**
Explore **THE FUTURE.**

JES MISSION

The Jefferson Educational Society was created as a Pennsylvania nonprofit organization on Sept. 29, 2008 and on that same date received tax-exempt status by the federal Department of the Treasury under Employment Identification Number 26-3460486. The Jefferson operates under a 501 (c) (3) educational nonprofit charter, though it does not offer degrees or programs for formal academic credit. The Jefferson was founded to stimulate community progress through education and research activities. Its mission also includes a commitment to operate in a nonpartisan, nondenominational manner without a political or philosophical bias. As such, the Jefferson follows the examined truth wherever it leads and is neither liberal nor conservative, Democratic nor Republican in philosophy or in action.

OUR BUILDING PARTNERSHIP

The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie and the Brith Sholom Congregation of 3207 State Street, entered into a shared-use building agreement in October 2008. Under the terms of this arrangement, the Jefferson utilizes facilities in the Southern Wing, which houses an adult education facility in order to offer lectures, courses, seminars, and sponsored research. The Brith Sholom Congregation continues to use the building's Northern Wing for religious and congregational purposes. The Jefferson Educational Society purchased the building in August 2013 and has invested in its renovation.

The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie believes in offering courses, seminars, and lectures that explain the ideas that formed the past, assist in exploring the present, and offer guidance in creating the future of the Erie region.

APPLY TODAY!



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ecgra.org

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