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Plano International Festival Corp.

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What can companies do to attract and retain younger workers?

What makes diversity initiatives truly effective?

Why is Plano a great place to start a new business?

Plano's Next Generation Leaders answered those questions and more at a panel discussion co-hosted by the Plano Multicultural Outreach Roundtable on Aug. 25

[August 29, 2022; Plano, Texas] On the evening of Thursday, August 25 at the Center for American and International Law in Plano, a group of “next generation” leaders shared lessons learned while heading up local civic, non-profit and entrepreneurial entities in a panel discussion co-hosted by Plano’s Multicultural Outreach Roundtable and the Plano International Festival. This Business Leadership Reception was a lead-up to the 18th annual Plano International Festival to be held on October 15 in downtown Plano.

After a welcome message from Plano Mayor John Muns, moderator Kyle Ray, Pastor of Sent Church in Plano, introduced the panelists who spoke about how their approaches to leadership and entrepreneurship are informed by their experiences and viewpoints as part of the millennial generation.

Dr. Lauren Tyra, Chief Scientific Officer at Green Park & Golf Ventures and Trustee of the Plano ISD School Board, mentioned how younger workers she encounters tend to be very open about discussing mental health in the workplace, but they still fear repercussions for such openness. Dr. Tyra noted, however, that many managers were expressing their own issues with mental health during the pandemic, which reinforces the ubiquity of such issues in the workplace and underscores the challenge to be open about the topic of mental health without stigmatizing those who are affected. She shared tips on finding mental resources via city and school district websites:

- Comprehensive list of local and national mental health resources: <https://www.plano.gov/1142/Helpful-Resources>
- List of family resources on the PISD website including counseling and other mental health support plus resources for healthcare, clothing, daycare, and more: <https://www.pisd.edu/familyresources>

Plano Mayor Pro Tem Kayci Prince spoke about mental health in terms of training and resources for the Plano Police Department. It is a key aspect of their training and Plano has created a Mental Health Coordinator position to improve the city's already established Crisis Intervention Teams which help first responders in their interactions with the community when mental health issues are involved. Ms. Prince also encouraged attendees to reach out to people of other backgrounds to form closer

connections. Plano is a very diverse city, but interactions between cultural groups tend to be limited to school and the workplace. She stressed the need to get to know people on a deeper level outside those confines.

Michael Thomas, Executive Director of the non-profit My Possibilities which serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), spoke about the benefits companies can achieve when they intentionally seek to hire IDD workers. And he cautioned that any diversity initiatives must be authentic in order to retain younger workers. Organizations should go beyond merely expressing support for diversity to building these key aspects into their actual policies and procedures:

- Equity—Enacting policies that treat workers fairly no matter their life circumstances, gender, ethnicity, disability status, etc.
- Inclusion—Intentionally giving diverse workers the same opportunities as everyone else
- Belonging—Showing in tangible ways that diverse workers are an integral part of the organization.

Financial entrepreneur Samuel Danache, an immigrant from Haiti, spoke about his reasons for moving to and starting his business in Plano. After researching communities around the country, he chose Plano for many of the reasons the panelists highlighted—diversity, safety, and a sense of belonging and inclusion. He has found Plano to be an ideal place to launch and grow his business and enjoys having a diverse client base for his financial services.

Pastor Ray summed up the event perfectly: “It was great to hear a variety of perspectives from the next generation. I learned so much and could only wish that more leaders in our community could experience it. As a former engineer now leading a multiethnic and multigenerational congregation, the insights shared by the panelists will help me to care better for the next generation in my church.”

The Leadership Reception was founded to precede and highlight the Plano International Festival, which will be held on Saturday, October 15 in downtown Plano’s Haggard Park. The reception is co-sponsored by the City of Plano Multicultural Outreach Roundtable (MCOR) whose mission is to partner with the Plano City Council and the citizens of Plano to encourage understanding of and participation in the government process and promote the needs and desires of its diverse citizens.

The Plano International Festival was conceived by MCOR in 2005 to showcase and celebrate the many cultures represented by the people of Plano. It is designed to promote awareness of cultural diversity and facilitate communication between all cultural groups. It also serves to advance Plano’s visibility and standing as an international city. The Plano International Festival is sponsored by the Plano International Festival Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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