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The scholarship provided by ALF allowed me the ability to financially participate in the program. My place of employment was not able to cover the entire cost of the program and I could not personally cover the remainder of the amount needed.

The impact ALF has had on me is immeasurable. The ability to meet professionals that I would not normally encounter, in a setting so intimate, allowed for the creation of new friendships and the development of a wider network. Without ALF, there would not have been the opportunity to create the level of a network that was built through this program or at the very least, would be very small in comparison and take years to build. It is unlikely through my professional or personal interactions alone that I would have met many (if any) of my ALF classmates, as they are so different from me. They have different professional backgrounds, political beliefs, racial and ethnic heritages, and more. ALF provided me the introduction to a group of extremely inspiring leaders and then created opportunities for us all to fast-forward the development of our relationships by offering us an enriching and trusting environment/community, over the course of a year, to get to know one another and learn about each other's lives.

The ALF network is huge and the link that we all share as Senior Fellows is something very special. It is as if we understand each other before getting to really know each other. Being part of the ALF network means being part of a fraternity that is willing to dialogue and assist one another at a moment's notice, for the betterment of the community. We are a group that wants to make effective change. For example, immediately after Hurricane Harvey, in part of my work with the City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department, we were interested in exploring technology to track individuals at the George R. Brown Convention Center. I placed a call to a Senior Fellow in the network that I thought could help provide insight and resources. She immediately responded to my call and opened the door for me to a major corporation. That introduction started a fantastic dialogue. Ultimately, we couldn't implement their suggestions (due to limited time and financial resources) but I was extremely appreciative of their willingness to help. This experience is an amazing example of the power of the ALF network and the ability to reach out to important resources and decision makers and to get answers very quickly.

In yet another example of the power of the ALF network, my team at the City of Houston has done 'a complete 180' as a result of a relationship born out of an opportunity that came to us through ALF. Henderson Smith, an ALF Senior Fellow, reached out to Dan Snare, President of ALF, to offer an 8-week Mind-Body Skills Group program developed by Dr. James Gordon, of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine to Hurricane Harvey first responders. The program, coordinated by the Greater Houston Healing Collaborative and funded by the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund of the Greater Houston Community Foundation, and Rotary Clubs of Houston, has offered my team a transformative Mind-Body Skills building curriculum, that has brought us all much closer together. My team feels more empowered, both professionally and personally, to do their jobs and feel more productive in the work that they do because of this program. I'm deeply grateful to ALF and the Greater Houston Healing Collaborative for this opportunity.

Before ALF, I admit, I tended to interject and at times interrupt others. Today, I am a much better listener. Through my ALF experience, I learned that dialogue allows us to engage in conversation with others without having arguments or debates. I notice a tendency of many to begin conversations expecting to convince others of their opinions. ALF taught to refrain from placing

judgement on others and to approach conversations as learning opportunities. There is so much to be gained from this approach to conversations.

On a personal note, ALF lit a spark in me that has turned me on to camping. I never in my wildest dreams expected for this to happen, when returning from our wilderness experience in Colorado. I suppose that once you use an outhouse, you can do anything!

Likewise, my ALF experience introduced me to a deeper understanding of my own personality traits and those of my eldest son. It is no surprise that I scored a 28 on a 30 scale for being an extrovert. My eldest son would most likely score the same on the opposite end. We have been able to engage and develop our relationship beautifully; and I understand him and the way he thinks, a bit better. I am deeply appreciative and grateful for these gifts.

Before embarking on this journey, my expectation was that this ALF experience was going to feel like participating in an MBA, university-style program. Now, it is clear that ALF's approach is not this method at all. We enter this ALF journey as leaders. ALF helps to expand our skill-set and, through our classmates, supports us all by looking at leadership through other lenses.