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**For More Information Contact:**

Una Martone, Leadership Harrisburg Area  
President; 717-213-5035;  
[umartone@leadershipharrisburg.org](mailto:umartone@leadershipharrisburg.org),

### **Second Generation Builder Learns Values of Community Stewardship**

HARRISBURG, PA. Ralph Klinepeter, Jr., president, Pyramid Construction Services, Inc., was just 33, when he was selected to participate in a pilot program of Leadership Harrisburg in 1987. Then an up-and-coming employee at H.B. Alexander & Sons, Inc., a third generation construction firm, Klinepeter was exposed to a side of the community he hadn't been aware of before.

The experience guided him as he set the tone for community service and building community relationships when he and others founded Pyramid Construction Services eleven years ago.

Now as his son, Michael, operations manager at Pyramid, joins the 22<sup>nd</sup> class of Leadership Harrisburg's Community Leadership Series (CLS), he hopes the experience will propel the young businessman to an even greater level of leadership and community involvement.

Nancy Dering-Martin, one of Leadership Harrisburg's founders and a mentor to the elder Klinepeter during the pilot program, was pleased to learn that his son was participating in the program during its opening retreat in September.

"What a wonderful tribute to the continuing value of this program in this region. A whole next generation of people are participating and enhancing the network of graduates," she says.

According to Dering-Martin, the charter members of the board of Leadership Harrisburg were individuals who wanted to widen the circle of faces and voices around the table of the community's non-profit boards.

"We would continually bump into the same people at those meetings," she explains. "But now, increasingly, on the different boards on which I serve, I'm seeing a mix of generations, and it's a wonderful legacy for our graduates and for the program in terms of

passing down the trusteeship for this region. That's really the most compelling aspect of the program."

Area business leaders are selected for the nine-month CLS series through a competitive application process. An in-depth look at quality of life, economic development, justice/public safety, human services, health care, government/politics, education and non-profit organizations is part of the course designed to engage, develop and mobilize a diverse group of community leaders by exposing them to the challenges and opportunities that face the Harrisburg community.

"I think the greatest benefit to me was to understand how the rest of the community operates," the senior Klinepeter explains. "Although H.B. Alexander had a strong commitment to the community, I was really more focused on finding building opportunities. I left Leadership Harrisburg with a realization of how business can contribute to the community."

The elder Klinepeter credits the program with initiating his participation with the Hospice of Central PA, and his involvement with many other organizations including Bethesda Mission, American Cancer Society, Harrisburg Area YMCA, American Heart Association, United Way and the Multiple Sclerosis Society. More importantly, community service is a core value at Pyramid.

"What I've learned is that it's a win-win-win scenario. It makes you feel good, it's good for the community, and frankly, it's good for Pyramid," Klinepeter explains, noting the strong relationships he has forged with other business leaders through his community involvement. "We want to give back to the community that we live and work in. That's a message that I try to convey to all of our employees, new and not so new, young and not-so-young. We can't get so caught up in ourselves."

The senior Klinepeter proudly lists the many ways Pyramid employees are involved in the community from leadership in the Boy Scouts to weekly service at Grace House, involvement in churches, school boards, sports programs and community government as well as annual participation in the United Way Day of Caring. While Pyramid's Web site lists numerous community organizations that receive the company's support, Klinepeter says they are actively searching for a cause to link to Pyramid's name.

The depth of Leadership Harrisburg's impact on Klinepeter is evident as his son Michael explains that his parents have always instilled in him the importance of giving back to the community.

As he begins his discovery of the Harrisburg community in a new light, Klinepeter, 29, hopes to find a way to use his skills to make a positive impact in the community. He is pleased to see a diverse group of participants with a mix of backgrounds, ages and experience in the class.

“The people in the class are in a position to affect change, they are the decision makers, so I think the experience can really make an impact,” he says.

The elder Klinepeter says he’s not surprised that Leadership Harrisburg is still in place after 22 years. He hopes his son takes away an understanding of the wide ranging issues, needs and challenges in the community and will be inspired to get involved to the best of his ability.

As his son begins the journey of community leadership and service, the senior Klinepeter has a sense that its time for businessmen of his generation to step up their involvement, especially as the community braces for the fallout of an uncertain economy.

“It’s going to take a partnership between public and private to meet the coming challenges,” says Klinepeter. “This community has risen to the occasion countless times, and this will be a real test moving forward. It’s time for my generation to take another step forward as the likes of Bill Alexander, Roy Zimmerman, Hal McGinnis, Derek Hathaway, Cliff Jones and others have before. I hope everyone can give of themselves as their situation permits. I think everyone has something they can contribute to the community, and I try to encourage that here.”

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***Leadership Harrisburg Area is a private, non-profit organization serving Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry Counties. It began in 1986 as a Capital Region Chamber of Commerce initiative to provide a forum for leaders from all segments of the community to address common concerns and implement shared goals.***