RULE Alumni Spotlight:
Kleiner Cultivates New Community in Lancaster

Greetings from Lancaster County, PA, our new home after retiring from Penn State Extension as the Associate Director, after 36 rewarding years with the organization. My wife, Kathy, and I reside in Mt Joy, PA, while working with my son, Justin, who is the Multi-Area Director for the Scholarship of Christian Athletes (FCA) in Central PA. We cover eight counties in South Central PA working with Coaches and Athletes around the region. The fun part of the position is coaching basketball at FCA Power Camps and soccer with Justin for the 7th grade Hempfield Middle School. Coaching keeps me young and in shape, so I can keep up with my daughter Deanna’s three sons, who live in North Carolina.

I am a graduate of RULE V, with no argument the best class, and haven’t left serving the organization since the 1990’s. I was a facilitator and speaker for RULE VI, XVII and now XVIII. From 2001 to 2008, I served on the RULE Advisory Board and was President in 2007-2008.

In our culture today, civil discourse seems to be lacking in many of our leaders. As part of the RULE Management Team, I have been involved with guiding the RULE Scholars in a discussion about “Civil Discourse” and applying it while developing their own “Ground Rules” for their class. We believe in building capable leaders, who can have a civil dialogue on any subject, anywhere, anytime, and with any person, no matter their point of view, value systems, allegiances and individual beliefs.

Many people say the United States has become a more polarized nation than ever before! Let’s take a step back and think about it? Think of Jeffersonians versus Hamiltonians, Jacksonians against the Establishment, the Civil War (now there was a culture war), labor versus capital a century ago, and the civil-rights and Vietnam upheavals in the 60’s. No cultural conflict in America today approaches any of those. With that said, we have been a country that has always had issues that divided people and it continues today. We have learned how to live together, even though we have many different world views and cultural differences. That is why we spend time with the PA RULE program developing leaders who know how to carry on a civil dialogue with the many issues that they are faced within their communities.
Our guided discussion gives RULE Scholars a chance to think and apply what constitutes a good conversation. They learn how to treat classmates and speakers with respect and dignity, while trying to find common ground. They will learn how to understand the other person’s perspective, even though they might not agree with them. Most of all, they will learn conflict opens up opportunities to learn and grow in their own personal leadership abilities, so that they can take it back to their families, work life and communities leaving a leadership imprint.

PA RULE program has become a great learning ground for many of us, launching us into areas we never have gone before. I am grateful for the many opportunities I have had with RULE, going through the class and most of all serving as a volunteer to help many of you reach your leadership potential in your life. If you ever get the chance to serve in the RULE program, I highly recommend it!

Kathy and Bill at Thomas Jefferson’s home at Monticello.