**“Power Couples: What they’ve Learned about Leadership, Life & Legacies” featuring Dr. Bob Turknett, CEO and Lyn Turknett, President- Co-founders of the Turknett Leadership Group**

It can clearly be said that Bob and Lyn Turknett exemplify leadership and integrity within the community and throughout their careers. Their full bios are available at www.turknett.com. During this seminar, the 163rd consecutive monthly WIL program, they were asked to share personal and professional lessons learned along the way. One specific lesson they shared is the importance of developing your character daily and how it translates to every area of an individual’s life.

Using an interview format, Susan Hitchcock moderated an informative and invigorating question and answer exchange with Bob and Lyn that left everyone inspired.

Susan began by asking each of them to describe the other. Lyn said, “Bob’s extroverted, engaging, and empathetic.” Bob followed with a longer list of admirable qualities for Lyn including eager learner, intelligent, and insightful.

Next came this **question**: “Tell us about your upbringing and some of your early influences.”

**LYN**: “I grew up in a small town in Georgia (Winterville) near Athens with parents who were always active in church and community. Our financial resources were pretty modest! I credit my parents and my small elementary school with giving me the desire to help others. I realized at a very young age that the kids from very modest backgrounds often didn’t have a fair start – I could answer the grammar questions just because I’d heard that language at home, but other children struggled with subject-verb agreement. My mother was a huge influence as she was a life-long learner, started in accounting when there were few women, and ended up teaching at UGA having received her doctorate in her 60’s. I went on to attend Mount Holyoke and graduated from UGA with an undergraduate in math and a masters in sociology. If I have any regrets, it’s that I didn’t stay and finish at Mount Holyoke.”

**Bob**: “I grew up in Jacksonville, Florida with five older siblings. My fourth grade teacher, Sarah Taylor was a real godsend for me. I told a story about her powerful influence in a commencement speech and will share the link to the speech (<http://www.turknett.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/JU_Commencement_Speech050209.pdf>). Other key influencers aside from my family were Ken Kelley, a peer from school who was killed in a helicopter crash in Vietnam, but was a true leader and peer mentor to many at a very young age. A very inspirational role model for me was and continues to be Dr. Frances Bartlett Kinne, my former professor, mentor, and the chancellor emeritus at Jacksonville University. She will be 100 in about three months and is as sharp in mind and spirit today as she ever was! I attended JU for my undergraduate degree, taught school for one year, and continued my education at UGA, completing both a masters’ degree and doctorate in psychology. Later, as the chief psychologist in a large mental health system in Kentucky, I learned a lot about Rational Behavior Theory, which included a truly important life lesson about not letting someone else’s behavior determine your reactions or your feelings. I/we all are responsible for how I/we respond to any situation.”

**Note**: Changing the trajectory and course of both of their lives, Bob met Lyn at UGA - and - when they knew they had found “the one,” they got married and later had two sons, Rob and Josh. Both are very successful, multitalented men today, a computer scientist and innovator, and a neurologist and entrepreneur. “The most exciting development of all though,” said Lyn, “is becoming grandparents to Jules and Tucker.” And Bob, with a big smile, agreed!

(Interjecting a current and future plan, Bob mentioned their new partnership with Josh to create an access point for web-based leadership principles that align with the Leadership Character Model).

**Question**: “What are some of the lessons you’ve learned as both a married couple AND business partners – especially as it relates to weathering both the good times as well as the tough times.”

**Lyn**: A quote that Lyn lives by is “Life is too important to take seriously, and, life is too important not to take seriously.” She went on to say, “Always keeping perspective is important in life. Realizing if you mess up one area of your life, you mess up the other area of your life if you are working with your partner.”

Lyn also talked about emotional mastery – the ability to manage emotions by recognizing how important our thoughts are to the way we feel – and how important it has been for the success of their partnership. She quoted Epictetus from over 2000 years ago – “It’s not the facts and events that upset man, but the view he takes of them.” Emotional mastery is one of the attributes of the model the Turknetts are known for, i.e., the Leadership Character Model [http://www.leadershipcharacter.com/model.php}

Bob agreed and further stated that forgiveness is a fundamental characteristic of a healthy relationship or partnership. And, he said, “If the bond is there you can work through anything.”

**Question**: “Discuss how you came to develop the Leadership Character Model including the scale that’s used to represent it. Also share some examples of how clients / individuals you’ve worked with have been able to use the model to impact their leadership, take it to a higher level of effectiveness.”

**Lyn and Bob:** The start of the model began with the question - what makes a leader an influencer? Leaders as influencers engender trust through integrity and balance the two principles of Respect and Responsibility. And we believe that leadership is fundamentally grounded in character. While your personality may be formed in your twenties and thirties, if you want to be a leader, your character must grow every day. These two principles (and there are four attributes under each of them) are represented on a SCALE with Integrity as the base. Bob went on to add, “To be a successful leader, you must be kind and encouraging towards people, while being courageous and bold to continue to move forward. It’s not enough to just show Respect; you also have to deliver results (Responsibility.) And it’s also not enough to just deliver results and watch the bottom line; you must do it while encouraging people, not blaming them, etc.”

**Question:** “Tell us a little about your involvement in the community where we know you are also leaders there.”

**Bob**: He strongly encourages service to the community saying, “There’s a need for everyone to get involved where they feel led. I’m very passionate about United Way, as well as other nonprofits, which include PADV, and the American Cancer Society. I believe in contributing financially, volunteering, and pro bono work.”

**Lyn**: “I continue to look for ways to contribute in areas involving children, a life-long focus for me, and what I love most is encouraging them, showing them their potential. United Way is where I feel I and others can have the most influence. I especially admire United Way’s strength to bring people and organizations together to accomplish things none of us can do alone.”

**Q & A with attendees**: One question was “how do you know if your company is progressive in terms of using these kinds of principles to develop people and to lead?”

**Lyn**: “Look for companies that invest in people, ask employees what they think, and provide coaching for employees. There’s a Google study that found that the most productive, creative, and highest functioning teams were ones in which every member speaks the same amount of time and develops the ability to read others.”

Other comments: The concept of Rational Behavior Theory (the foundation of Emotional Mastery) was a constant thread in subsequent questions and answers about how to better parent and teach kids.

**Bob**: He also shared a story about his first client. At the beginning, Bob did not think he could help improve the leadership character of this man because he did not appear to want to change or to learn. However, through consistent and long-term coaching and using the Leadership Character Model, the client not only improved but became a huge champion of Bob’s coaching. He later agreed to be interviewed and featured in the Wall Street Journal and on Fox News, saying that if his story could help even one person, he wanted to tell it. The client is a successful and respected CEO and gives Bob the credit for guiding him to make changes, especially in his interpersonal relationships. Bob closed with this statement, “I would not write anyone off - everyone can grow.”

**Final Question**: “Do you have any unfulfilled aspirations and/or how do you want to be remembered, i.e., what do you want your legacy to be?”

**Lyn**: “I’m excited about our collaboration with Josh, our younger son who is a neurologist. We are writing a book we’re writing together that blends principles of learning based in neuroscience with our knowledge of leadership. We are also exploring web-based consulting options that would allow the application of the principles of the Leadership Character Model in a much broader way. For that new venture to be successful would be a nice legacy, especially if it allows the Leadership Character Model to outlast us. And personally, I want to blog once a week and spend more time with my grandchildren.”

**Bob**: “I’m also excited about our work with Josh to make our Leadership Character Model more accessible to all. My vision is to share what we have learned about life, leadership and how to bring out the best in all of us. I want to make the world a better place, professionally and personally – I want to be remembered as a person who always helped and cared for people in the largest way possible.”