

BEWARE DOUGLASS!

By CFN Staff
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The Douglass Alumni Association established in 1978 has always stated that its mission consisted of a commitment to community, its people and the Douglass High School. Since the opening of the new Douglass High School, a greater emphasis has been placed, and rightfully so, on scholarships to graduates.

IRS Policies and Procedures

Members say they want to see each graduate receive a scholarship. Yet if their children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and other relatives did not receive scholarships they would NOT be giving their financial support to the alumni. In all actuality, this is not support at all but an underhanded way of receiving tax write offs for education while funneling money through a 501(c)3 for tax benefits.

The Cover Up

No Transparency

The vote in December 2010 by the general membership to NOT have a financial audit amidst serious allegations of financial mismanagement is proof in itself that this organization's leadership is not in search of the truth and does not operate under policies of transparency. That was then, hopefully the Renwick Smith administration will incorporate a higher degree of transparency than what we have seen to date.

This membership has shown very little interest in getting to the bottom of a \$40,000 discrepancy as reported to the IRS for the fiscal year 2008/2009. One of the most financially rewarding years for the alumni, yet allegations of mismanagement and possible fraudulent activity was not enough to seek out the truth.

A thorough inquiry would have fostered greater support and an increase in the confidence of the DAA amongst current and non-members. Long lost integrity to the organization would begin to be reestablished. Membership would increase as confidence to an ailing organization is born.

Some of the members are only part of a systematic problem already identified to plague the DAA. All attributed to a lack of confidence in our DAA.

Selfish Acts and Motives

There are those that will tell you that its all about the children. They will tell you how much they want to see scholarship dollars go to each and every graduate. Others will tell you how much they love Douglass. There is some truth in these statements, but that truth is overshadowed by individual greed for control and use of this organization's name and tax-exempt status for personal reasons.

Statements like, "I've put a lot of money into this organization...", commenting regarding the young people that had started coming to meetings, from one of the longest standing members are indicative of the systematic problems that are present today. As if this non-profit organization owes them or their family something for their charitable donations.

For too long of a period we have seen those that clearly act as though this organization is theirs. They feel that the Douglass community, its high school, and the alumni organization is all theirs.

Their deeds are neither genuine nor sincere to Douglass but to their own selfish and egotistical motives. Their hearts are not in the right place, and they are not in search of the truth and honesty as it relates to the business of this organization.

And while their choice for President or Vice President is not in office, they have NOTHING to do with Douglass or the alumni. So much love for Douglass.

Such selfish acts have been enough to keep this organization struggling for members and the support of the entire Douglass community.

These efforts by a few are in effect holding this organization hostage by attempting to make it their own while driving other possible supporters away. New and fresh ideas, technology and transparency are kept out in order to maintain their control. Technology alone would even more so reveal the inadequacies of this organization by merely increasing accountability and responsibility.

Such selfishness and greed has been enough to sour the interest for the DAA.

Non-Members

And it's no secret as to why there has been such a great divide between previous and the existing administration and members of the DAA as well as non-members.

Those that have watched this organization from a far have been disgusted and ashamed at what they have seen yet not surprised that such behavior could come out of Douglass.

Members have had the most difficult time at recruiting fellow classmates and getting them involved with this alumni organization.

No strategic DAA administrative efforts seem to have made a difference in the past 3 years this writer has been actively involved. No substantial increase in membership has been widely reported. There are several hundred Douglass graduates that are non-members some four times as many that are current members today.

Some Douglass Red Devils have almost sworn to have nothing to do with the DAA because of the infighting. This must not be allowed to continue if DAA is ever going to engage all of those Douglass graduates that want to support their alumnus.

I submit to you as a first hand witness to these facts. These are the reasons for a sagging and sluggish membership. A few bad apples have spoiled the entire bunch. The distance these fellow Red Devils have created between themselves and their alumni organization is real and must be addressed and reversed.

Why the Division

Many people will say that much of the negative tone that surrounds the DAA has come about just in the past couple of years. Sufficient evidence exist that points to great division having been created when the organization split into two, thus we have today the National (the National Douglass Alumni Corporation) and the DAA.

The Class of 1981's Responsibility

Remember my fellow Red Devils there are no other classes after the Class of 1981 until some 29 years later with the new Douglass High graduates from the Class of 2010.

The Class of 1981 has an inherent greater responsibility than other classes to bring up the rear. We must adhere to the highest of standards, principles and guidelines as set by the IRS, the State of Tennessee as well as ourselves, in making this organization better. We must incorporate the willingness to include All Douglass graduates along with the efforts it takes to make and keep them members. And at all cost we must use existing technology to enhance administrative functions.

As we incorporate these basic leadership qualities, we will begin to see our membership grow along with the credibility at which our organization needs so desperately.

CFN's Recommendations

The administrative functions, policies and procedures must be upgraded from the old to the new. Technology exist that can enable the DAA to operate with speed and accuracy competing with similar sized more widely known organizations. We must demand this change and the current leadership can spearhead these efforts.

Non-members that are Douglass graduates must be engaged in order to establish and secure an increase in membership. These non-members still love Douglass and would like to be apart of the solution but do not want to add to its problems.

The saying that, "those that are not members does not count", is no longer acceptable. DAA's non-membership base is crucial to the longevity of the DAA.

These non-members are the ones that are needed in order to preserve the history and culture of this alumnus.

Those that are not members are an important part of the future for Douglass. Their ideas are important, their concerns are real, and their membership dollars are needed to sustain this organization's mission. These members are apart of the future and hold much of the original culture and history of the Douglass community.

The window to continue this great name and the history that follows is not yet lost. We cannot afford to wait until the class of 2010 becomes involved with this alumni organization. The time to act is now. Action is needed immediately.

Remember, with a governing board consisting of whomever shows up at its monthly meetings, change can come about rather quickly when properly planned.

GO DOUGLASS!

The world is watching.