

April 2023



# THE LEAD Story



## WILL WE SEE YOU AT CELEBRATION 2023?

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, May 10, 2023 from 5-8 pm at the Jesse Ball duPont Center as we celebrate the accomplishments of our three outstanding honorees. Tickets are \$150 each.

For event details, tickets and sponsorship information, [click here.](#)



Behind the scenes at the filming for Celebration 2023. Pictured: **Melanie Patz** (LJ 2006), **Kevin Gay** (LJ 2015), **Lynn Sherman** (LJ 2011) and **Gracie Simendinger** (LJ CEO).

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LJ Class of 2015



Toni Crawford



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## LEADERSHIP CONNECT NEW DATES RELEASED

Leadership Connect is an initiative that fosters alumni connections and builds relationships across diverse communities in Northeast Florida. Meeting options include breakfast, lunch or happy hour with rotating Alumni Leads at

predetermined venues and times. Please note: LJ 2023 class members are eligible to attend upon graduation in May.

[To reserve your seat at a gathering, please click here.](#)



## Leadership Jacksonville 2023 Economy, Growth and Preservation Day 2

LJ 2023 Economy, Growth and Preservation Day 2 was facilitated at the Jacksonville Regional Transportation Center (JRTC) on March 30. Discussions with speakers and panelists focused on the current and future economic outlook of Northeast Florida with an emphasis on transportation, environmental sustainability, and resiliency. Participants were given the opportunity to ride the Skyway and enjoy a downtown development tour. We would like to thank Program Day Sponsor **Heritage Capital Group**, Lunch Sponsor Clare Berry (LJ 2016) of Berry & Co. Real Estate, Jacksonville Transportation Authority, and the Innovation Center for providing transportation, space, and technology.



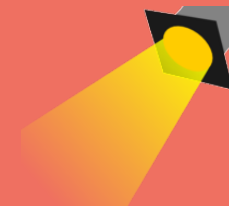
## Youth Leadership Jacksonville 2023 Closing Retreat and Graduation





The Youth Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2023 enjoyed their Closing Retreat and Graduation on Saturday, April 1 at the Jessie Ball duPont Center. Participants engaged in civil discourse activities, reflected on the program year, and discussed their goals for the future. NextGen and YLJ Alumni joined the class at lunch to share insights into college and their career experiences. A special thanks to **Wells Fargo** for sponsoring the day and to all the volunteers for their collaborative efforts. Congratulations to the YLJ Class of 2023!

## Alumni Spotlight Jeffrey Bernardo LJ 2016



When **Jeffrey Bernardo** (LJ 2016) heard about Leadership Jacksonville from alumna Karen Mayfield (LJ 2006), he was grateful for the opportunity. "The LJ program covered so many areas in terms of the opportunities and challenges we face in our city. You meet wonderful people who can encourage and inspire you to see things differently, and along with their efforts, help you make Jacksonville a better place." Jeffrey shares how LJ motivated him to get more involved with different organizations in town. He is currently serving as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the City of Jacksonville Retirement System and serves on the Jacksonville Symphony Foundation Board. Jeffrey's daughter Sarah was also a graduate of the 2022 Youth Leadership Jacksonville Program. "The LJ program is perspective-widening and a great way to understand the diversity of thoughts, opinions and conclusions in the city. There's something nice about having camaraderie with class members and using our individual gifts and talents in different ways yet knowing that we are all on the same team."

**2023 UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAM DAYS**

**LJ 2023 Arts and Culture Day  
Thursday, April 27**

**Celebration 2023  
Wednesday, May 10**

**LJ 2023 Closing Retreat  
Friday & Saturday, May 19 & 20**

**NextGen 2023 Meet the Class  
Thursday, May 25**



## ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

Submit your news to  
[manisha@leadershipjax.org](mailto:manisha@leadershipjax.org)

### 1997

**Julie Negrete Anderson** (LJ 1997) retired from Medius, which was acquired by OnPay Solutions.

### 1999

**Cindy Stover** (LJ 1999) was named Chair of JAXUSA Partnership.

### 2006

**Glenda Washington** (LJ 2006) received the Global Life of Impact Award by iChange Nations. Glenda oversees the entrepreneurial and minority business development programs for Shawnee County in Topeka, Kansas.

### 2010

**Jeremy Miller** (LJ 2010) was elected Chair of the OneBlood Board of Directors.

**MaliVai Washington** (LJ 2010) was featured in the Jacksonville Daily Record on his post-tennis career in real estate.

### 2011

Congratulations to Celebration 2023 Honoree **Lynn Sherman** (LJ 2011) on her new role as Executive Director, Community Transformation at Baptist Health.

### 2012

**Eric Mann** (LJ 2012) was appointed as Chairman of the Board at Brooks Rehabilitation.

### 2014

**Rory Diamond** (LJ 2014) is the new Judge Advocate General Officer with the Florida National Guard and the U.S. Army.

**Ruth Ann Hepler** (LJ 2014) has retired from Janet E. Johnson P.A. and will be moving to Valencia, Spain.

### 2019

**LJ 2019** enjoyed a social at the G.O.A.T. Tapas & Bar on March 30.



### 2020

**Chris Kalin** (LJ 2020) was appointed to the Museum of Science & History Board of Trustees.

### 2021

**Jason Kirk** (LJ 2021) joined Black and Veatch as Vice President, Federal Solutions and Resilience Program Liaison.

### 2022

Several **LJ 2022** class members gathered at Season's 52.



**Heather Schatz** (LJ 2022) joined the Yoga 4 Change Board.

**Rebecca Ackerman** (NextGen 2022) joined Acosta as the new Strategy and Transformation Director.

**Cole Gabriel** (NextGen 2022) received the Silver Beaver Award from the North Florida Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

**Kyla George's** (NextGen 2022) article, "*Black Spaces Matter*", was chosen for publication in the Southern Journal of Policy and Justice. Kyla was also chosen for 2023 Class of the University of Florida's Hall of Fame, which annually recognizes 25 graduating students who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to campus and community involvement, participation in organized campus activities, and scholastic achievement.

**Maleah Thomas** (NextGen 2022) and her husband Leofric welcomed baby girl, Mehlanie Janae Thomas on April 1.

### 2023

**Chriss Brown** (LJ 2023) was honored by the Women's Food Alliance with the 2023 Golden Pineapple Award. Chriss was also recently featured in an article in Folio Weekly on her business journey and how she serves the community.



**LJ 2023** class members and friends came together to support fellow class member **Rebecca English Williams** and her organization, Fruit of Barren Trees LLC, on the groundbreaking ceremony of the Birmingham Building at the English Garden in the historic Durkeeville neighborhood on March 31.

The Girl Scouts of Gateway Council Northeast Florida 2023 Women of Distinction will honor LJ Alumni **Rachael Tutwiler Fortune** (LJ 2022), **Kristin Keen** (LJ 2016) and **Wanda Willis (LJ 2002)** for their embodiment of the Girl Scout Promise and Law and commitment to being a role model for today's girls. The event will be held on Thursday, April 13 at the UNF Adam W. Hebert University Center.

The following LJ Alumni were featured in the Jacksonville Daily Record's annual Top Entrepreneurs edition: **Terri Davlantes** (LJ 2012), **Erik Kasper** (LJ 2021), and **Wendy Norfleet** (LJ 2020).

Regency Centers promoted **Barry Argalas** (LJ 2021) to Managing Director and **Patrick McKinley** (LJ 2023) to Senior Vice President and Senior Market Officer.



Pictured: **Sel Buyuksarac** (LJ 2019), **Gracie Simendinger** (LJ CEO), **Sunil Ancha** (LJ 2020), **Martha Barrett** (LJ 1981), and **Darnell Smith** (LJ 2000).



Pictured: **Mariam Shpeen Feist** (NLS 2023) and **David Emanuel** (NLS 2023)

**LJ Alumni** were spotted at the Gen W conference on March 24 at the UNF Fine Arts Center.



LJ Alumni pictured: **Melinda Powers** (LJ 2023), **LeAnn Daddario** (LJ 2017), and **Madelen Salter** (LJ 2021)

Not pictured: **Kaci Barnes** (LJ 2021), **Michelle Braun** (LJ 2017), **Debbie Buckland** (LJ 2009), **Lisa Thoele Dugan** (LJ 2022), **Cynthia Griffin** (LJ 2011), **Moez Limayem** (NLS 2023), **Ashley Pratt** (LJ 2022), **Lynn Sherman** (LJ 2011), and **Andi Williams** (LJ 2019)

## NOTES OF SYMPATHY



Our condolences to **Katie LeMaster** (LJ 1990) and her family upon the passing of her mother Harriet Cook LeMaster on February 28, 2023.

## STAY IN TOUCH!

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