

May 2023



CELEBRATION 2023
WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 5-8 PM

We can't wait to see you at the Jessie Ball duPont Center as we celebrate the accomplishments of our three outstanding honorees, Melanie Patz (LJ 2006), Lynn Sherman (LJ 2011), and Kevin Gay (LJ 2015).

For event information, click [here](#) or email Gracie Simendinger at gracie@leadershipjax.org.

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LEADERSHIP CONNECT
OPENINGS IN MAY AND JUNE

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.

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



LEADERSHIP
JACKSONVILLE

Leadership Jacksonville 2023 Arts and Culture Day

LJ 2023 Arts and Culture Day on April 27th focused on the arts and cultural ecosystem of Jacksonville and its influence on economic development and quality of life. We would like to thank Program day sponsor, **PNC Bank**, and the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts Foundation for sponsoring the after-hours reception.





Alumni Spotlight Sel Buyuksarac LJ 2019



Sel Buyuksarac (LJ 2019) has always been known for his community outreach with various organizations. As the Director of Public Affairs and Co-Founder of River City Science Academy, Sel has met many LJ Alumni leaders along the way. "Hearing the wonderful things they said about the program got me excited to be part of the organization. Poverty Day and Justice Day were the two program days that really stood out to me. Being behind the scenes brought me real perspective and gave me insight on how to help," says Sel. Through his LJ 2019 class, Sel made long-lasting friends from diverse backgrounds who have become like family to him. Sel enjoys staying involved with LJ by volunteering for the Youth Leadership Jacksonville program, serving on the Alumni Relations committee, and supporting Alumni members by attending their events.

On a personal level, Sel and his family enjoy opening the door to his home every year for the Ramadan holiday. [Featured on First Coast News](#), Sel and his wife Angie have hosted more than 1,500 community members in 14 years while sharing food and friendship. "A great leader isn't just someone who is in charge, they are someone who cares and shows others how to do the

right thing to solve issues in the community."

2023 UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAM DAYS

Celebration 2023
Wednesday, May 10

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

NextGen 2023 Meet the Class
Thursday, May 25

NextGen 2023 Opening Retreat
Friday & Saturday, June 2 & June 3

LJ 2024 Opening Reception
Tuesday, June 6

NextGen 2023 "Creating a Caring Community" Program Day
Tuesday, June 13

NextGen 2023 "Exploring the Community" Program Day
Saturday, June 24

UPCOMING LJ CLASS SOCIALS

The **LJ 2020** class social will be at [Fore Score Golf Tavern](#) on Wednesday, May 17 from 5-7 p.m. To RSVP, please contact classmate Sunil Ancha at anchatm@gmail.com.

The **LJ 2021** class social will be at [The Sugar Factory](#), St. John's Town Center on Thursday, June 22 at 11:30 a.m. To RSVP, please contact classmate Madelen Salter at MSalter@oesjax.com.

SAVE THE DATE: **LJ 1993** is planning their 30th year Class Reunion for October 2023. To get involved in planning, please contact classmate Janice Donaldson at donaldsonjanice77@gmail.com.

If you have a LJ Class social coming up, please email Manisha Joshi at manisha@leadershipjax.org and we will include it in the monthly newsletter.



LJ 2020 got together for a class social at Prati



LJ 2021 enjoyed a class social at Bitty and



ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

Submit your news to
manisha@leadershipjax.org



1991

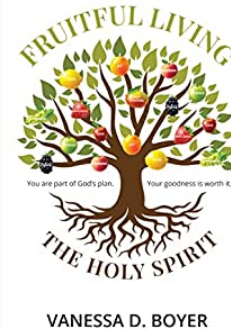
Nina Waters (LJ 1991) was presented with a Resolution recognizing her service with The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida spanning more than 22 years.

1993

John Bottaro (LJ 1993) has retired as Executive Vice President from RS&H.

1997

Vanessa Boyer (LJ 1997) published her first book, *Fruitful Living*.



1999

Meg Folds (LJ 1999) joined the Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital as one of the 2023-2024 Florida Forum Chairs.

2001

Marsha Oliver (LJ 2001) was named one out of four Jacksonville women to the inaugural Bizwomen 100, the first national listing of women who are making an impact in their local business communities.

2015

Jill Bechtold (LJ 2015) joined Rivkin Radler LLP as Partner.

Kathy Miller (LJ 2015) has retired as Senior Vice President, Tax from Regency Centers.

2016

Sabeen Perwaiz (LJ 2016) celebrated 7 years with the Florida Nonprofit Alliance as President and CEO.

2018

Kathy Nelson Barbour (LJ 2018) and her husband Sean completed the Ironman 140.6 triathlon in Texas, which included a 2.4 miles swim, 112 miles of cycling, and a 26.2 mile run on April 22. Kathy was also a April 2023 Volunteers in Medicine "Women with Heart" Honoree.

Emma Towler (YLJ 2018) and **Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hartzog** (YLJ 2018) were inducted into the University of Florida Hall of Fame. Only 25 students are selected annually for their

demonstrated commitment to campus and community involvement, participation in campus activities, and scholastic achievement.

2019

Colleen Bell (LJ 2019) was awarded the Public Affairs Award by the Florida Psychiatric Society at the annual Spring meeting.

Lakesha Burton (LJ 2019) joined WJXT as the new Crime and Safety Analyst.

Congratulations to **Adriel Rocha** (LJ 2019) on his promotion as the Jacksonville Jaguars' new Vice President of Community Impact and Football Development. Adriel was also [featured in The Florida Times Union](#) sharing his career journey into the NFL.

2022

Nelrae Pasha Ali (LJ 2022) was recognized as one of Forbes 2023 Best-in-State Wealth Advisors as well as Forbes 2023 Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-in-State.

Dion Bass (LJ 2022) joined Rivkin Radler LLP as an Attorney.

Rachael Tutwiler Fortune (LJ 2022) joined the Baptist Health Board of Directors.

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

2023

Andrea Barnwell Brownlee (LJ 2023) [was featured in Forbes online](#) for the new "Flamboyance" garden installation at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens.



Andrea Myers (LJ 2023) received the 2023 Outstanding Programmer Network Innovation Award for a State Department project focused on Leaders in Latin America working to end gender-based violence.

Melinda Powers (LJ 2023) and **Rebecca Williams** (LJ 2023) joined the Scenic Jacksonville Board of Directors.

Congratulations to **Moez Limayem** (NLS 2023) on his inauguration as the University of North Florida's 7th President.

COMBINED CLASSES & HONORARY

Three Baptist Health leaders were [recognized as Executives to Know by Becker's Hospital Review](#): **Timothy Groover**, (LJ 2015), **Melanie Husk**, and **Aaron Miri** (NLS 2022). Tim was selected as one of 110 system chief medical officers, Melanie was selected as one of 53 chief experience officers, and Aaron was selected as one of 35 health system chief digital officers.

The following LJ Alumni have been accepted into the Hightower Emerging Leader Fellowship, Class VII: **Megan Bush Del Pizzo** (LJ 2016), **Darrin Eakins** (LJ 2023), **Megan Hayward** (LJ 2023), **Tyler Morris** (LJ 2021), and **Andrea Williams** (LJ 2019).

LJ Alumni enjoyed a special JAX Chamber Trustee Chalk Talk event with Quarterbacks Coach Mike McCoy at EverBank Field on April 20th.



Pictured: **Sel Buyuksarac** (LJ 2019), **Charlie Jimerson** (LJ 2013), **Heather Schatz** (LJ 2022), **David McGowan** (NLS 2018), **Gracie Simendinger** (LJ CEO), **Will Landreth** (LJ 2023), **Carrie Davis** (LJ 2007), and **Doug Wilder** (LJ 2009).

Not pictured: **Jason Roth** (LJ 2022) and **Amanda Patch-Oliver** (LJ 2022).

Andrea Barnwell Brownlee (LJ 2023), **Nat Ford** (LJ 2014), **Eric Mann** (NLS 2012), and **Gracie Simendinger** (LJ CEO) participated in the KIPP Family Feud event on April 13 at WJCT Studios.



The Friends of James Weldon Johnson Park added LJ Alumni **Michael Corrigan** (LJ 1997), **Diana Donovan** (LJ 2021), **Darryl Willie** (LJ 2016), and **Marlo Zarka** (LJ 2020) to their Board of Trustees, and each will serve a three-year term.



LJ Alumni members came together for the Florida Blue Sapphire Awards Dinner in Orlando.

Pictured: **Al Emerick** (LJ 2004), **Bill Haley** (LJ 2018), **Michael Howland** (LJ 2012), **Chandra Manning** (LJ 2023), **Teresa Miles** (LJ 2016), and **Kari Bates** (NLS 2023).

Co-chaired by **David Miller** (LJ 2008) and **Brian Wolfburg** (LJ 2019), the following LJ Alumni will be honored at the [OneJax 2023 Humanitarian Awards](#) on Thursday, May 4th: Gold Medallion for Lifetime Achievement honoree **Nina Waters** (LJ 1991), Silver Medallion honoree **Cindy Funkhouser** (LJ 2014) and Acosta-Rua Young Professionals Award recipient **Kimberly Allen** (LJ 2023).

LJ Alumni members involved in the Jacksonville Business Journal's [African American Small Biz Forum](#) on Thursday, May 4th include: Keynote Speaker Nicole Hamm (LJ 2022), Moderator Carlton Robinson (LJ 2021), and Panelist Michele Godfrey-Watson (LJ 2022).

NOTES OF SYMPATHY

Our thoughts are with **Mary Fisher** (LJ 2006) who lost her brother Donald on April 13.

Our condolences to **Andrew Wheeler** (LJ 2005) for the loss of his sister, Michelle Lee Smith on April 17.



Our sympathy to **Mary Pat Corrigan** (LJ 2017) on the passing of her father John F. Corrigan on April 18.

Our condolences to **Anne Borngesser Bean** (LJ 2021) on the passing of her father John Slater on April 24.

STAY IN TOUCH!

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