



THE LEAD Story



Dear Alumni,

May was a memorable month for us for many reasons.

Celebration 2023 recap: More than 330 supporters gathered to recognize Celebration 2023 honorees **Melanie Patz** (LJ 2006), **Lynn Sherman** (LJ 2011) and **Kevin Gay** (LJ 2015) for their countless community contributions. Attendees shared that they loved hearing remarks from the YLJ students, seeing friends new and old, and celebrating our 2023 honorees. Constructive feedback from the event included challenging acoustics in the building (consider a new venue?) and requesting more seats for viewing. Thanks for your suggestions!

More than \$150,000 was raised to benefit YLJ from sponsors, class fundraisers, and ticket proceeds, which is the most to date! Thanks again for your support. If you were not able to join us on May 10, please take five minutes to watch our honorees in the [Celebration 2023 video here](#). You're in for a treat!

New LJ Graduates: We welcomed [LJ 2023](#) into the Leadership Jacksonville alumni family! The LJ 2023 Closing Retreat and Graduation took place on May 19 – 20 in St. Simons, GA, and we can't wait to recognize the 2023 class at the Annual Alumni Reunion Luncheon later this fall.

New Classes Confirmed: The new NextGen 2023, LJ 2024 and YLJ 2024 class participants have been notified of their acceptance into their respective programs. The formal announcements will be made after the mandatory Opening Retreats, and we look forward to sharing more about these classes in the coming months.

We hope to see you at a future [Leadership Connect gathering](#) soon.

Warmly,
Gracie and team

Photos from Celebration 2023





[Visit our Facebook page for more event photos](#)



Leadership Jacksonville 2023 Closing Retreat



The LJ 2023 Closing Retreat and Graduation was held at the Sea Palms Resort in St. Simons Island, GA on May 19 and 20. As they reflected on the program year, activities focused on lessons in leadership, collaborating with fellow class members, and identifying ways to put leadership into action. Thank you to Program Sponsor [PwC](#), the party planning committee, and speakers for ensuring a successful completion of the LJ 2023 program year!



Next Generation 2023 'Meet the Class' Event





Thirty-eight NextGen 2023 participants met at their initial gathering at the 'Meet the Class' event on May 25 at the Jessie Ball duPont Center. The evening event was an opportunity for individuals to get to know one another before the Opening Retreat June 2 and 3. We look forward to an incredible summer program with these passionate young professionals!



Ten YLJ 2021 Alumni Receive \$30,000 in Meninak Scholarships

Congratulations to the 10 Youth Leadership Jacksonville 2021 Alumni members who each received a Meninak College Scholarship at the 27th annual Meninak Leadership Grant Awards Luncheon on May 22. Since 1997, [the Meninak Club](#) has awarded more than 150 college scholarships totaling \$690,000 to YLJ high school seniors to help further their education. Thank you to the Meninak Club of Jacksonville for providing \$30,000 in scholarships this year and continuing to recognize the attributes of leadership among Jacksonville's youth.

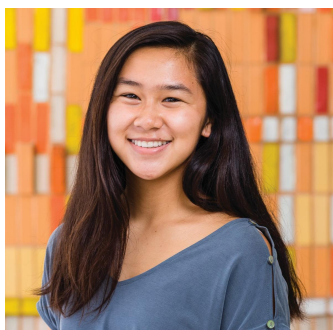


From L to R:

Jeanley Boursiquot (Paxon School for Advanced Studies/Princeton University), **Kendall Ford** (Stanton College Preparatory School/University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), **Taylor Frazier** (River City Science Academy/Florida State University), **Diego Knowles** (Episcopal School of Jacksonville/Georgia Tech), **Dorothy Kowkabany** (Sandalwood High School/University of Alabama), **Scott Logan** (Fleming Island High School/University of Florida), **Joseph Rainbolt** (Samuel Wolfson High School/Johns Hopkins University), **Kaitlin Stallings** (Sandalwood High School/University of Central Florida), and **Brady White** (Fleming Island High School/University of Florida) and **Meg Folds** (LJ 1999 and LJ Programs Director).
 Not pictured: **Cathleen Kivett Smith** (Ridgeview High School/University of Central Florida).



A Special Spotlight on YLJ 2021 Alumni Members



Charlotte Caccam (YLJ 2021)



Kendall Ford (YLJ 2021)



Joseph Rainbolt (YLJ 2021)

Charlotte Caccam (YLJ 2021): "The most impactful day for me was 'Leading for a Lifetime' Day because it helped me hone my leadership skills, especially in terms of public speaking and organizing groups of people. I remember talking to the Mayor of Jacksonville Beach, **Chris Hoffman** (LJ 2016), about being a woman in a position of leadership. Her perspective informed me of the challenges and rewards of her occupation, and I admired how she balanced all of her duties with grace and efficacy. It was highly encouraging to hear from her and other leaders in Jacksonville about how our great community was built and maintained." **Charlotte will be attending Harvard University** and hopes to concentrate in History of Science with a focus on

Kendall Ford (YLJ 2021): Kendall credits his Godbrother, **George A. Pratt** (YLJ 2018) for being the driving force of the YLJ program. "One of the most impactful days was 'Everyday Creativity' Day which showed me the importance and value in including creativity and art not only in my leadership, but in all aspects of my life." **Kendall will be attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** with the hopes of pursuing a degree in Environmental Science and Public Policy or Public Health. "With this degree, I hope to pioneer a career advocating for the environment through eco-conscious initiatives and equitable reform." Kendall was also recently awarded one of the Meninak college scholarships.

Joseph Rainbolt (YLJ 2021): "I valued my time learning about my community and getting to know our classmates through fun events such as Noodlecize with **Mike Huskey** (LJ 2016). We got to stretch with pool noodles after spending hours sitting on Zoom learning (our class was virtual), which was great! The most impactful day for me was 'Dollars and Sense' Day because it showed me how to budget from both a personal and business perspective." **Joseph will be attending Johns Hopkins University as a baseball pitcher**, and plans on majoring in applied math and statistics, minoring in linguistics with a focus on Spanish to pursue becoming trilingual (French, English, Spanish). He will also complete the pre-med track through his major with the end goal of becoming a trauma surgeon. Joseph was recently awarded one of the Meninak college scholarships.

LEADERSHIP CONNECT

More than 75 Alumni members have attended breakfast, lunch or happy hour meetups with members from LJ, NextGen and YLJ. Created to foster alumni connections and build relationships across our diverse communities, we hope you will sign up for a future gathering [here](#).



2023 UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAM DAYS

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 Our Community' Program Day
Saturday, June 24

NextGen 2023 'Exposing Our Community's Culture' Program Day
Wednesday, July 12

NextGen 2023 'Building Bridges to the Future' Program Day

UPCOMING LJ CLASS SOCIALS

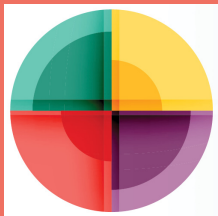
The **LJ 2021** class social will be at [The Sugar Factory](#), St. John's Town Center on Thursday, June 22 at 11:30 am. To RSVP, contact classmate **Madelen Salter** at MSalter@oesjax.com.

- Another opportunity to connect: Class members are also invited for a personalized tour of Jacksonville's [Martin Coffee Company](#) on Tuesday, June 20 at 8:30 am. RSVP to Madelen to attend.

LJ 1993 will have their 30th year Class Reunion on October 12 from 5-7 pm. Venue to be announced soon. To get involved in planning, please contact classmate **Janice Donaldson** at donaldsonjanice77@gmail.com.

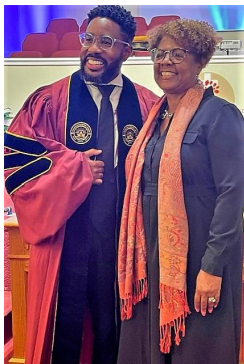
If you have a LJ Class social coming up, please email Manisha Joshi at manisha@leadershipjax.org and we will include it in the monthly newsletter.

LJ 2018 got together for a class social at the home of **Alicia Somers** on May 16.



ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

Submit your news to manisha@leadershipjax.org



1996

Pat Warren (LJ 1996) is the first female to ever be ordained at the First Baptist Church of Oakland (The Church of Oakland) in its 143-year history.

2004

Rena Coughlin (LJ 2004) announced she will be retiring from the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida December 2023.

2006

Connie Stophel (LJ 2006) announced she will be retiring from Episcopal Children's Services December 2023.

2007

Rosa Beckett (LJ 2007) was appointed as Chief Executive Officer of The Jackson Municipal

2011

Lynn Sherman (LJ 2011) received the Leadership Excellence Community Hero Award at the Shades of Green Mental Health Awards of Excellence Gala on May 21.

2013

Lori Richards (LJ 2013) announced she will be retiring from Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM) December 2023.

Colleen Rodriguez (LJ 2013) was **featured** in Florida News Line on her 25-year anniversary with The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services (JFCS).

2014

Dot Brown (YLJ 2014) graduated from Boston College with a dual Masters in Social Work and Theology on May 22, and plans to remain in the Boston area.

Pictured: **Nora Brown** (YLJ 2016), **Dot Brown** (YLJ 2014), **William Brown** (YLJ 2019) and grandmother, **Mary Alice Phelan** (LJ 1984).



2015

Kathy Miller (LJ 2015) received the annual WoLF Award by Jacksonville Women's Leadership Forum (JWLF). This award recognizes an outstanding woman in the community who demonstrates intelligence, loyalty, survival, discipline, communication, compassion, family, teamwork, and work/life balance.

2016

Sabeen Perwaiz Syed (LJ 2016) was elected as the 2023-2024 Vice Chair for the National Council of Nonprofits Board of Directors.

2017

Patrick Krechowski (LJ 2017) was selected as one of the inaugural AEC Network Counselors for the Urban Land Institute District Council.

2019

Sel Buyuksarac (LJ 2019) received the 2023 Mayor's Asian American Advisory Board (MAAAB) Business Impact Award at the Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration on May 16.



Courtney Hance (NextGen 2019) married Wayne Hance at Epping Forest Yacht Club on April 29.

Marcus Isom Jr. (NextGen 2019) received the 2022-2023 Community Service Award from the State Attorney's Office, 4th Judicial Circuit. Marcus was also recently appointed to serve on the 2023 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee for the Florida Bar.

Pascal Rathle (NextGen 2019) was selected as one of five American Youth Delegates under the

age of 30 to represent the U.S. at the Group of Twenty (G20) conference hosted by the India Secretariat in September. He is serving as the Future of Work: Industry 4.0, Innovation & 21st Century Skills Delegate, responsible for negotiating policy recommendations for the G20 heads of state.

Wendy Norfleet (LJ 2020) was [featured](#) in the online magazine WomLEAD, which highlights her career path and the importance of having strong leadership.

2021

Congratulations to **Kaci Barnes** (LJ 2021) and her husband Colin on the birth of their son, Beau on May 11.



David Thompson (LJ 2021) was appointed as Vice Chair of the Florida Bar Leadership Academy Committee. He will also continue his service on the Florida Bar Civil Procedure Rules Committee.

Sarah Higgs (NextGen 2021) was the speaker on the subject of Best Social Media Practices for Emergency Management in Hurricanes at the National Hurricane Conference in New Orleans, LA, the Governor's Hurricane Conference in West Palm Beach, FL, and at the Texas Emergency Management Conference in Fort Worth, TX.

Shekinah Mitchell (NextGen 2021) was elected as the 2023-2024 UNF Student Physical Therapy Association's (SPTA) President.

Kate Adams (YLJ 2021) was named to the 29th Annual Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team. The Florida High School Athletic Association announced the team which honors 24 graduating student athletes who excel both in athletics and academics.

2022

Congratulations to **Basma Alawee** (LJ 2022) on her new position as Director of External Affairs at the Community Sponsorship Hub.

Andre Ayoub (LJ 2022) was appointed as Interim Chief of the Emergency Preparedness Division for the City of Jacksonville.

Maria Hane (LJ 2002) graduated from Florida State University with a Master's in Social Work.

Sang Cho (LJ 2022) graduated from Harvard Kennedy School with a Master in Public Administration degree in May.

Kathy Schofield (LJ 2022) led the STEM2 Hub 2023 National STEM Learning Ecosystem Community of Practice Convening May 1 - 3 at the Sawgrass Marriott. Kathy also facilitated a lunch discussion with former Florida Governor Jeb Bush.

Congratulations to **Mario Barrozo** (NextGen 2022) on his new role as Vice President of Marketing for the UNF Presidential Envoys' Executive Board.

2023

Andy Carroll (LJ 2023) graduated from the University of North Florida with an Executive Master's degree in Healthcare Administration.

Maritza Choisser (LJ 2023) graduated from the University of North Florida with a Master's in Public Administration and began a new position at the University as an U.S. Immigration Law Adjunct Instructor.

Darrin Eakins (LJ 2023) was selected to be a member of ForbesBLK. ForbesBLK champions a global community of Black entrepreneurs, professionals, leaders and creators that are driving systematic change in business, culture and society.

Ulysses Owens Jr. (LJ 2023) performed at the Jacksonville Jazz Festival May 25 - 28.

Christina Stallings (LJ 2023) was elected as the 2023-2025 President of the Jacksonville, Florida Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

COMBINED CLASSES & HONORARY



LJ Alumni members participated in the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP Global) Florida First Coast Chapter's Community Impact Panel Discussion on May 17 at the University of North Florida.

Pictured L to R: **Andi Williams** (LJ 2019), **Whitney Meyer** (LJ 2022), Amber Wilson, **Ashley Pratt** (LJ 2022) and **Kemal Gasper** (LJ 2019).

LJ Alumni members celebrated the 2023 Meninak Scholarship recipients at the Meninak luncheon on May 22.



Pictured in photos:

Peggy Bryan (LJ 1987), **J.F. Bryan** (Honorary), and **Gracie Simendinger** (LJ CEO); **Davy Parrish** (LJ 1988), **Jill Dame** (LJ 1987), **Dan Wolff** (LJ 1978), **John Godfrey** (LJ 1983), **George Rainbolt** (NLS 2018; LJ 2020), **Meg Folds** (LJ 1999), **Helen Jackson** (LJ 1995) and **Karen Mathis** (LJ 1998).

Not pictured: **Irvin 'PeDro' Cohen** (LJ 2014) and **Cynthia Griffin** (LJ 2011).

LJ Alumni members **Lakesha Burton** (LJ 2019), **John Delaney** (LJ 1986), **Kevin Gay** (LJ 2015), **Nat Glover** (LJ 1989), **David Miller** (LJ 2008), and **Darnell Smith** (LJ 2000) were announced as the six-member transition team for the City of Jacksonville's Mayor-Elect Donna Deegan.

Moderated by **Melissa Ross** (LJ 2013), LJ Alumni members **Charles Moreland** (LJ 2008), **Melanie Patz** (LJ 2006), and **Lisa Rinaman** (LJ 2017) participated as panelists in the ADAPT and JEA community conversation regarding JEA's plans for the future energy mix for Northeast Florida on May 25 at WJCT Studios.

Parthiv Reddy (YLJ 2023) and **Matt Salek** (YLJ 2022) are part of a group of Episcopal School of Jacksonville students that won at the State Science and Engineering Fair of Florida.

NOTES OF SYMPATHY



Our condolences to **Paula Bides** (LJ 2023) and her family on the passing of her father-in-law, Eddie Bides on May 4.

Our thoughts are with **John Peyton** (LJ 1991) and his family on the passing of his mother, Marilyn Stephens Peyton on May 16.

STAY IN TOUCH!

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