



Dear Alumni,

As you know, our alumni and supporters strive to build and strengthen communities.

A couple weeks have passed since the racially motivated shooting in our beloved Jacksonville, Florida, which made national news. It's hard to understand how this could happen in a city we know and love, and have fought to make progress in for decades.

Many of us are confused, hurt, and asking "why?". We seek to understand how at times we have come so far, and then are reminded in moments of violence and hate, we have so far left to go.

I too struggle with the actions in light of this horrific act of racism, but am lifted up by actions of the brave. Many partners have collaborated to reignite the First Coast Relief Fund. If you'd like to learn more, click [here](#).

Leadership Jacksonville's work is also centered on bringing community and leaders together to learn and engage in meaningful discussions. Oftentimes we have difficult conversations, but there is no room for hate or racism in our work or our city. We vow to continue to create gracious spaces and to ignite important and tough conversations.

I hope you will find in this newsletter small nuggets of optimism. There are many community trustees doing incredible things and I still remain hopeful that our small actions coupled together will result in tremendous momentum.

"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sincerely,
Gracie

**Thank you for supporting
future leaders by paying it
forward.**



Contribute your annual dues payment today!

Annual alumni dues are \$100 for in-town or \$40 for out-of-town alumni members.

Select the option that's easiest for you:

- Make an online payment [here](#).
- Request an invoice for your company [here](#).
- Mail a check made out to Leadership Jacksonville at: 40 E Adams St, Ste 230, Jacksonville, FL 32202.
- Call Administrative Assistant Natalya Rolek to make a payment over the phone: 904-396-6263



Leadership Jacksonville 2024 Opening Retreat

LJ 2024 held their Opening Retreat on August 18-19 at the World Golf Village. Participants kicked off the program year by connecting with one another, studying various aspects of leadership, and learning about Jacksonville's assets and potential through its history.

Thank you to all participants, including the many Leadership Jacksonville Alumni, volunteers, facilitators and presenters for making it a success!





Next Generation 2023 Closing Retreat



NextGen 2023 enjoyed their Closing Retreat at the Jessie Ball duPont Center on Saturday, August 5. The program day gave participants an opportunity to understand their individual leadership styles, share Jacksonville's unique assets and opportunities, and connect with members of the Young Professionals Delegation to learn about various organizations involved in the growth and development of Northeast Florida.

Congratulations to NextGen 2023 on their graduation!

Meet the Next Generation Class of 2023 by clicking [here](#).

Youth Leadership Jacksonville 2024 Opening



The YLJ 2024 Opening Retreat brought together a diverse group of high school sophomore students on August 25-26, which included team building activities that fostered creativity and collaboration. Participants enjoyed discussions on a variety of community issues facilitated by NextGen and LJ Alumni volunteers.



LJ Alumni Spotlight: Paola Parra Harris (LJ 2003)

Paola Parra Harris (LJ 2003) learned about LJ from various friends who were LJ graduates in Junior League including **Sandra Hull-Richardson** (LJ 1993) and also from her husband, **Robert Harris** (LJ 1993). "I am not a Jacksonville native and I learned so much about Jacksonville's history, its unique consolidated government and the current issues it was facing at the time. I met so many wonderful community leaders and made lifelong friendships and connections that are resourceful to this day. I enjoy catching up with LJ friends by attending Alumni lunches and events."

"LJ was definitely a life changing experience and cemented my desire to remain engaged in my community, serve, and lead to make Jacksonville and Florida better. Through my many friends in LJ, I was also encouraged to apply to Leadership Florida and am proud to be a LJ Cornerstone 39 graduate with many other LJ friends. I absolutely recommend LJ - it is such a unique opportunity to join a group of diverse thought leaders, and learn from each other about how to engage and contribute to our city's growth and success."

UPCOMING LEADERSHIP CONNECT DATES

Leadership Connect continues to build relationships and foster new alumni connections across YLJ, NextGen, LJ and Honorary members.

Click on the dates below to sign up.



**Leadership Connect Lunch with
Quint White (LJ 1988)
Southside
Wednesday, September 13**



**Leadership Connect Lunch with
Leonard Chatman (LJ 2023)
Avondale
Thursday, September 28**

**Leadership Connect Happy Hour with
Susan Main (LJ 1992)
Neptune Beach
Tuesday, September 19**

**Leadership Connect Lunch with
Kimberly Allen (LJ 2023)
Town Center
Tuesday, October 10**

2023 EVENTS & PROGRAM DAYS

**YLJ 2024 "In Living Color" Day
Thursday, September 7**

**LJ 2024 Leading From Within Day
Thursday, September 21**

**LJ 2025 Nominations Open
Friday, September 29**

**YLJ 2024 "Leading For A Lifetime" Day
Thursday, October 5**

**LJ 2024 Poverty Day
Thursday, October 19**

UPCOMING LJ CLASS SOCIALS

Do you have an upcoming LJ Class social? Please email Manisha Joshi at manisha@leadershipjax.org and we will include it in the monthly newsletter.

Mark your Calendars!

Special invite: LJ 2023 is hosting and inviting ALL Alumni members to attend "It Takes a Village, Raising Awareness for Pediatric Cancer and Sickle Cell Disease" on September 14th from 5:30-7:00 pm at Nemours Children's Health.

Moderated by **Ali Jaffery** (LJ 2023) and hosted by **Maggie Hightower** (LJ 2010), the evening includes a tour of the new state-of-the-art PLAYERS Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders and a panel talk with **Keli Coughlin Joyce** (LJ 2009) pediatric hematology/oncology doctors, nonprofit leaders, and former patients. RSVP to **Ali Jaffery**: ali.jaffery@nemours.org.

LJ 1993 will have their 30th year Class Reunion on Thursday, October 12 from 5-7pm at Midtown Table. RSVP to **Janice Donaldson** at donaldsonjanice77@gmail.com.



LJ 2014 enjoyed their 10th anniversary dinner on August 7 at Season's 52.



LJ 2019 enjoyed Happy Hour on August 24 at Intuition Ale Works.



LJ 2021 gathered for a Class Social on August 24 at Florida Juice & Bowl.



LJ 2023 enjoyed a Class Social on August 24 at Myrtle Avenue Brewing Company.



ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

Submit your news to manisha@leadershipjax.org

1985

Chauncey Lever (LJ 1985) has retired from Foley & Lardner.

1991

Nina Waters (LJ 1991) was [featured in the Jacksonville Daily Record](#) sharing her personal and

professional journey.

1994

Richard Sisisky (LJ 1994) and wife Kimberly Sisisky will be honored with the Art of Giving award at [The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville 2023 Arts Awards](#). Celebrating the organization's 50th anniversary, the event will take place on September 21 at Venue 841.

1998

Karen Brune Mathis (LJ 1998) and her colleague Mike Mendenhall [won third place](#) in the In-Depth Reporting (NonInvestigative) category for *"This could be the future of Brooklyn"*.

2002

Maria Hane (LJ 2002) joined ReWritten Counseling Services as a Mental Health Therapist in Brunswick, GA.

2007

Blake Harris (NextGen 2007) was [interviewed by Authority Magazine](#) on his career as an Asset Protection Attorney, and how he utilizes social media to enhance his online presence.

2010

Congratulations to **Rose Conry** (LJ 2010) on her new position as President for Staffing Delivered.

2011

Will Smith (LJ 2011) has joined 5th Century Partners as an Operating Partner.

2012

Brett Fine (NextGen 2012) graduated with a Master of Science in Hospitality Management degree with a focus in Mega Events from Florida International University.

Michael Mayo (LJ 2012) has been elected to the American Hospital Association Board of Trustees.

2014

Kim Holland (LJ 2014) joined the Florida Department of Transportation as an Assistant Secretary of Strategic Development.

Aundra Wallace (NLS 2014) joined the Cathedral Arts Project Board of Directors.

2015

Congratulations to **Jason Spencer** (LJ 2015) on his new position as Senior Vice President, Middle Market Banking at Regions Bank.

2017

Chayne Riggs (NextGen 2017) joined Eagle Strategies, LLC as a Financial Advisor.



2019

Gracie Simendinger (LJ CEO) was joined by members of LJ 2019 at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida's A. L. Lewis Black Opportunity and Impact Fund Fundraiser at WJCT.

Marcus Isom Jr. (NextGen 2019) was the keynote speaker at Florida State College at Jacksonville's Student Mentorship program kick-off event on August 22.

Robert Williams (NextGen 2019) graduated with a Master of Business Administration degree in

Healthcare Management from Florida Southern College.

2021

Jason Kirk (LJ 2021) joined Black and Veatch as Vice President (Special Projects Corp.) to serve in the role of Federal Solutions Director and Resilience Program Liaison.

Y. Michelle McGriff (LJ 2021) joined the UF Lastinger Center for Learning as a Regional Partners Project Manager.

2022

Charles Garrison (LJ 2022) recently joined WGI as Market Leader, Public Infrastructure and was also appointed to the City of Jacksonville's Planning Commission.

Congratulations to **Courtney Harris** (LJ 2022) on his new position as Chief of Staff, Office of the CEO at Florida Blue.

Ashley Pratt (LJ 2022) received the 2023 Bishop Moore Catholic High School 40 Under 40 Award.

2023

Allison Bovee (LJ 2023) joined Seacoast Bank as Jacksonville Market President.

Leonard Chatman (LJ 2023) was the keynote speaker for River City Science Academy's Innovation Day in August.

Darrin Eakins (LJ 2023) was selected into the 2023 Class of Florida A&M University's 40 Under 40.

2024

Angela Campbell (LJ 2024) and co-worker Codi Gildberg [won a silver award](#) in the 2023 Florida Newspaper Advertising & Marketing Executives' Creative Excellence Contest at the Florida Media Conference in July.

COMBINED CLASSES, HONORARY NOTES AND EVENTS

LJ Alumni members honored in the Jacksonville Business Journal list of 2023 Ultimate CEOs include: **Kimberly Allen** (LJ 2024), **Michael Brannigan** (NLS 2014), **Jennifer Brown** (NLS 2019), **Moez Limayem** (NLS 2023), **Paul Martinez** (LJ 2013), **R. Lawrence Moss** (NLS 2019), **Ju'Coby Pittman** (LJ 1993), and **Jennifer Ryan** (LJ 2012). Honorees have been in their role for at least one year and demonstrate organizational leadership, community engagement, and other attributes that help create the Jacksonville of the future. They will be honored in October.

The following LJ Alumni members were recognized by US News in the 30th edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* for 2024: **Jeptha "Jep" F. Barbour** (LJ 1991), **Jill Bechtold** (LJ 2015), **Crystal T. Broughan** (LJ 2010), **Julianna Favale** (NextGen 2023), **Mary Bland Love** (LJ 1989), **Tyler Oldenburg** (LJ 2022), **Sabrina Marcos Smith** (NextGen 2019), and **Gerald Weedon** (LJ 1985).

Connie Hodges (LJ 1998) was appointed by Mayor Donna Deegan to serve on the Kids Hope Alliance board. **Kevin Gay** (LJ 2015) and **Marsha Oliver** (LJ 2001) will remain on the board. LJ Alumni members recently appointed to Mayor Deegan's administration include Chief of Sports & Entertainment Division **Alex Alston** (LJ 2017), Executive Director of the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission **Rudy Jamison Jr.** (LJ 2021), and Diversity Manager for the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission **Jimmy Midyette** (LJ 2018).

Tra'Chella Johnson Foy (LJ 2007) and **Aaron Miri** (NLS 2022) were [featured on CNBC](#) discussing how AI technology can help physicians.

EVENTS

Scenic Jacksonville Board members **Tracey Arpen Jr.** (LJ 1986), **Oliver Barakat** (LJ 2000), **Ben Bishop** (LJ 2005), **Laura D'Alisera** (LJ 1989), **Michael Dunlap** (LJ 1986), **Bill Hoff Jr.** (LJ 2023), **Barbara Ketchum** (LJ 1984), **Ted Pappas** (LJ 1979), **Melinda Powers** (LJ 2023), and **Rebecca Williams** (LJ 2023), along with Executive Director **Nancy Powell** (LJ 2024) are planning Scenic Jacksonville's Great Cities Symposium on Wednesday, October 4 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville. For more information, [click here](#).

The TEDxJacksonville Leadership Team including **Allishia Bauman** (NextGen 2012), **Mario Barrozo** (NextGen 2022), **Doug Coleman** (LJ 2013), **Stacy Ellison** (LJ 2024), **David Johnson** (LJ 2024), **Sabeen Perwaiz Syed** (LJ 2016), and **Ale'ta Turner** (NextGen 2012) is gearing up for the TEDxJacksonville 2023 Human/Nature Conference on Saturday, October 14 at WJCT Studios. LJ Alumni members include speaker **Diana Greene** (Honorary) and emcee **Hope McMath** (LJ 2006). For more information, [click here](#).



IN SYMPATHY



Our sympathy is with the family of **Clark Vargas** (LJ 1989) who passed away on August 1.

Our thoughts are with **Mike Freed** (LJ 2008) on the passing of his father, Allan Freed on August 3.

Our condolences to the family of **Ceree Harden** (Honorary), father of **Christian Harden** (LJ 2015), who passed away on August 14.

STAY IN TOUCH!

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[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LJ Alumni Facebook Group](#)

[NextGen Facebook Group](#)



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