



# THE LEAD Story



## Celebration 2024

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

5 - 8 pm

WJCT Studios

100 Festival Avenue, Jacksonville, 32202



**H. Wade Barnes, Jr. MD**  
S.A.F.E. Medical Director  
Women's Center of Jacksonville



**Debbie Buckland**  
Senior Vice President, Area  
Manager, Client Advisory  
Pinnacle Financial Partners



**Eric Mann**  
President & CEO  
YMCA of Florida's First Coast

These exemplary leaders have helped build a stronger Northeast Florida region and will be honored at our annual Celebration 2024 event benefiting Youth Leadership Jacksonville. Funds raised from Celebration provide more than 50 participants access to Youth Leadership Jacksonville (YLJ). Since 1989, the yearlong YLJ program brings together a select and diverse cross section of Northeast Florida high school students with demonstrated leadership ability to prepare them to become ethical leaders committed to active community involvement.

Individual tickets are \$150.

For Celebration 2024 tickets and sponsorship information, [click here](#).

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**Next Generation 2024 Applications open today, February 8**



Next Generation is a rewarding summer program for young professionals between the ages of 21-30 years old who are interested in gaining community knowledge, making connections and having a greater impact on their communities. Applicants are your rising stars, colleagues, friends or current undergraduate/graduate students. All applicants will be scheduled for a Zoom interview.

**The Next Generation 2024 program will take place from June 7 through August 3, 2024.**

For more information and the application, visit the [NextGen program page](#) or contact Programs Director, **Meg Folds** (LJ 1999) at [meg@leadershipjax.org](mailto:meg@leadershipjax.org).



## Reconnect 2024

More than 50 YLJ and NextGen Alumni gathered on January 4th for our annual alumni Reconnect event. After refreshments and mingling, retired Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens CEO **Tony Vecchio** (NLS 2010) delighted the group with an interactive presentation on storytelling. It was heartwarming to watch old friends reconnect and new friendships take shape.

Sponsored by **Availity**, LJ 2024 learned about the complex dynamics of healthcare in Northeast Florida and beyond on Health Day on January 18. Participants engaged in discussions that focused on healthcare's impact on the quality of life and overall population. Thank you to all of the speakers and volunteers, and to **Ascension St Vincent's** for their technology and space.

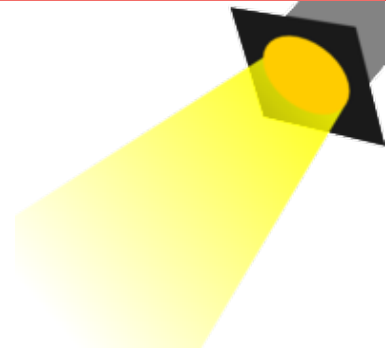


## YLJ 2024 Program Days





Sponsored by **Brooks Rehabilitation**, YLJ 2024 participants engaged in "Are We Our Brother's/Sister's Keeper Day" on January 11 which delved into the causes of poverty and its impact in the community, introduced them to human services issues in society, and helped them examine one's own personal responsibility and compassion for others. This was followed by "Dollars and Sense Day " on February 1 where YLJ participants explored the role that business plays in the community while learning importance of etiquette and professionalism.



## Alumni Spotlight: Brandie Stallings (YLJ 2001)

**Brandie Stallings** (YLJ 2001) shares how the Youth Leadership Jacksonville program provided her a unique experience. "We were always given time to reflect and the space to delve into deep discussions about current events. I loved every opportunity that was provided for honest, safe and transparent discussions about what we could potentially do as student leaders to improve our city."

Brandie enjoyed gaining genuine friendships with several of her YLJ class members. "Many of us stayed connected throughout high school and college. I also like the opportunity to re-engage through Leadership Connect meetings and focus group sessions. And when I am volunteering with organizations in the city, I typically meet members of Leadership Jacksonville serving on various committees.

Lastly, Brandie was recently recognized by Duval County Public Schools as Assistant Principal of the Year. She serves the students at her alma mater, William M. Raines High School.

# The Power of Connectivity

LJ Alumni **Debbie Buckland** (LJ 2009), **Scott Keith** (LJ 2003), and **Bryan Taylor** (LJ 2021) are leading the efforts to bring Pinnacle Financial Partners to Jacksonville. The three have a long history together as previous colleagues on Scott's leadership team at another financial institution. Scott will serve as Pinnacle's regional president for North Florida, with Debbie and Bryan by his side as area managers. Scott Keith is a board member and treasurer for the North Florida Land Trust and a past chair and trustee of Gator Bowl Sports and JAXUSA Partnership. Debbie Buckland is currently the chair of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, a board member of Baptist Beaches, trustee of WJCT Public Media and past chair of the JAX Chamber. Bryan Taylor serves on the boards for the Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center, Leadership Jacksonville, and The Players Council. "The chance to once again work with highly respected professionals like Scott and Debbie is exciting by itself," Taylor said. "Coupled with Pinnacle's intense focus on the client and associate experience, it's a dream scenario."



**Debbie Buckland** (LJ 2009) will be honored alongside **Wade Barnes** (LJ 1995) and **Eric Mann** (NLS 2012) at Celebration 2024 on April 23 at WJCT Studios. For more details, [click here](#).

## Leadership Connect Celebrates One Year!

Since Leadership Connect was relaunched in February 2023, 35 Alumni members have hosted a breakfast, lunch or happy hour and engaged with 100 alumni attendees across Northeast Florida.

### Upcoming Alumni Gatherings:

[Lunch with Lynn Sherman \(LJ 2011\), February 20 - FULL](#)  
[Lunch with Gracie Simendinger \(LJ CEO\), February 29](#)  
[Happy Hour with Nemiah Rutledge \(LJ 2021\), March 7](#)  
[Ramadan Dinner with Sel Buyuksarac \(LJ 2019\), March 19](#)


Please note: LJ 2024 class members are eligible to attend upon graduation in May.

Would you like to host a Leadership Connect gathering?  
Please email Manisha Joshi at [manisha@leadershipjax.org](mailto:manisha@leadershipjax.org).



## Have you seen the 2023-2024 Annual Alumni Yearbook? [Click here to view the flipbook.](#)

**Letter from the Chief Executive Officer**



Dear Leadership Jacksonville Alumni, Supporters and Friends,  
 It's been an incredible first year as your CEO. Nothing brings me more joy than these personal moments:

- Creating a "family" of passionate, diverse leaders who are more fired up than ever to serve.
- Educating our youth and facilitating thoughtful dialogue about the community they wish to see and how to make it a reality.
- Hearing young professionals share that Jacksonville was not a place they envisioned staying long term, but now they can't wait to make this community their home.
- Equipping new-to-town executives with information and discussing ways to make an impact in the Northeast Florida area.


As you know, we have a stellar reputation for strong programs. This past year, more than 160 participants graduated from one of Leadership Jacksonville's four programs.

Having had the chance to get to know each of these class members, I can confidently say that Jacksonville and our surrounding communities are in good hands for years to come.

Although we have a small, but mighty staff of five, the work amplifies in gratitude to our dedicated alumni, partners, and volunteers. Leadership Jacksonville is truly a community effort to connect, educate and inspire future generations on the importance of civic engagement, ethical leadership, and community trustworthiness.

This work would not be possible without you.


We look forward to an exciting year ahead and to engaging you in the process. As a city, we have much to be proud of, a lot to do and a great deal to look forward to.

Sincerely,  


**Our Mission**  
 Leadership Jacksonville educates, connects and inspires diverse leaders to build and strengthen their communities.

**Our Values:**

- Shared commitment to ethical leadership
- Knowledge and understanding of complex community issues
- Diverse leaders sharing their perspectives
- Differences in opinion respected and valued
- Cultivating strong relationships among participants
- Creation of a shared community vision
- Action taken for the greater good



From left to right: Neel Fuchs, Nicole Brown, Grace Simendinger, Natalie Rock, and Jennifer Smith.

**Board of Directors 2023 - 2024**

<b>PRESIDENT</b> Linda Lindemeyer (LJ 2018)	<b>SECRETARY/TREASURER</b> Will Smith (NLS 2006, LJ 2011)
<b>PRESIDENT-ELECT</b> Cynthia Griffin (LJ 2011)	<b>IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT</b> Michael Howland (LJ 2012)

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Jep Barbour (LJ 1997)	Maxine McBride (LJ 2017)
Vicky Beira (LJ 2017)	Hinny Rollack (LJ 2020)
Ashleigh Brooks (NextGen 2018)	Tracy Polton (LJ 2017)
Irvin "PeCro" Cohen (LJ 2014)	Sheila Pressley (LJ 2019)
Lynne Elliott (LJ 2014)	Ravi Ramea (LJ 2019)
Kamal Geeser (LJ 2019)	Madeira Satter (LJ 2017)
Sunny Gettinger (LJ 2012)	Lynn Sherman (LJ 2011)
Tharah Hogan (LJ 2019)	Bryan Taylor (LJ 2021)
Mike Husley (LJ 2016)	Cleve Warren (LJ 1985)
Sarah Marston (LJ 2023)	

**Past Presidents**

1978	The Honorable Frederick H. Schultz*
1979	Albert Ernst
1980	W.O. Bickfield*
1981	Robert Schellenberg*
1982	Frank Surace*
1983	Douglas Hines
1984	Courtesy Wilson
1985	John G. McGiffin III*
1986	W.A. McGill*
1987	Julie Buckingham
1988	James Kinman
1989	J.F. Bryan IV
1990	Kenneth Edermann*
1991	William Brinson*
1992	Espa Patrinely*
1993	A. Gaitan White
1994	Allen Yates
1995	Don Pasgett
1996	Carlton Jones
1997	Carol Spaulding
1998	Joanne Sawyer*
1999	H. Wade Barnes, Jr.
2000	Peggy Bryan
2001	Barbara Darby
2002	David Baberman*
2003	Barbara J. Drake
2004	Maxine Scales-Taylor
2005	Michael J. Shalley
2006	Linda Lenkin Smith*
2007	John Batters*
2008	Sandra Ramsey
2009	Bon C. Bidhop III
2010	Stephen Carby
2011	Nancy Krigo
2012	Jerry Hallett
2013	Justin Terry
2014	Stachen Goldman
2015	Deborah Moore
2016	Charles Hedrick
2017	Karen Mayfield
2018	Mabeen Rathore
2019	Clark Robertson
2020	Ross Backus/Charles Hedrick
2021	Bruce Fahad
2022	Kathy Miller
2023	Michael Howland

\*Deceased

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## Upcoming LJ Events & Program Days

**NextGen 2024 Applications Open**

Thursday, February 8 - Wednesday, March 20

LJ 2024 Leading with Equity Day

Thursday, February 15

YLJ Closing Retreat

Saturday, March 2

LJ 2024 Economy, Growth and Preservation Day

Thursday, March 7

LJ 2024 Economy, Growth and Preservation Day 2

Thursday, April 4

**Celebration 2024**



## Alumni Class Notes

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

### 2000

Congratulations to **Darnell Smith** (LJ 2000) on receiving the Honorary Alumni Award from the University of North Florida Alumni Association.

### 2005

**Jackie Rowland** (YLJ 2005) was named the 2023 Associate of the Year at the 2024 Installation of Officers and Board Members of the Northeast Florida Builders Association.

### 2007

**Carrie Davis** (LJ 2007) served as the host at the Strengthening Nonprofit Symposium at Beaver Street Enterprise Center on January 20.

**Trachella Johnson Foy** (LJ 2007) obtained the Family Medicine Certification from the American Board of Family Medicine.



Congratulations to **Jan Hirabayashi** (LJ 2007) on the sale of her company, BroadBased Communications. Jan owned the company for 28 years and will continue to be part of the team.

### 2008

**Mike Freed** (LJ 2008) was accepted into the **Litigation Counsel of America (LCA) Fellowship** program. The LCA is a peer-selected honorary society of only 3,500 trial lawyers, vigorously vetted for skills, expertise, and service.

### 2009

**Doug Wilder** (LJ 2009) celebrated 30 years with Wilder Success in December.

### 2010

**Snowden McFall** (LJ 2010) was selected as Top Public Speaking Coach of the Year by the International Association of Top Professionals (AOTP) for her outstanding leadership, dedication, and commitment to the industry.

### 2012

**Terry Davlantes** (LJ 2012) **announced her retirement** from JAX Cooking School, which she has enjoyed owning since 2018.

**Aundra Wallace** (NLS 2014) was **featured in the Jacksonville Daily Record** on his pivotal role in the region's economic development.

### 2015

**Josh Martino** (LJ 2015) will oversee Bono's restaurants upon the retirement of the owner, Joe Adeeb III. Josh has been with the restaurant group for 17 years.

### 2017

**Tia Leathers** (LJ 2017) was appointed to the Library Board of Trustees to represent Council At-Large Group 5 by Mayor Donna Deegan.

### 2019

**Mark Dawkins** (LJ 2019) is serving as Past President on the American Accounting Association Board.

**Jennifer Brown** (NLS 2019) is leaving her role as Executive Director at KIPP Jacksonville Public Schools at the end of the school year to relocate closer to family in Charlotte, North Carolina. she has served this community for nine years.

**Austin Franklin, Jr.** (NextGen 2019) shared insightful suggestions on how to achieve goals this year on [News 4 Jax](#).

**Marcus Isom, Jr.** (NextGen 2019) was [featured in the Jacksonville Daily Record](#) discussing the importance of Black History Month.

### 2020

**Kimano Edwards** (LJ 2020) was appointed as Secretary to Jacksonville Public Library Board's Executive Committee and will serve for the fiscal year 2024.

### 2022

**Sang Cho** (LJ 2022) joined PS27 Foundation's 2024 Board of Directors.



**Kevin Craig** (LJ 2022) was part of the first-ever cohort of The News Service of Florida's inaugural [40 Under 40: Rising Stars List](#) celebrating the professional achievements of accomplished individuals.

### 2023

**Daniel Burkhardt** (LJ 2022) joined NAI Hallmark as a new Partner. Daniel has been with the company since 2012, and will take a larger role with the growth of the brokerage division as well as provide strategic guidance and further strengthen NAI Hallmark's position in the region.



**Darrin Eakins** (LJ 2023) was appointed to the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville Board by Mayor Donna Deegan.

**Bill Hoff** (LJ 2023) was appointed to the City of Jacksonville's Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission.

**Megan Hayward** (LJ 2023) was appointed to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority Board and also joined PS27 Foundation's 2024 Board of Directors.

**Ulysses Owens Jr.'s** (LJ 2023) new album "A New Beat" was added to the "10 Albums to Know in



2024" list by Jazz Iz Magazine.

**Melinda Powers** (LJ 2023) was appointed to the Downtown Investment Authority Board by Mayor Donna Deegan and will serve a four-year term.

**Nathan Renstrom** (LJ 2023) was named the new Board President of The Sanctuary on 8th Street.

Congratulations to **Zac West** (LJ 2023) on his promotion to Chief Operating Officer at KIPP Jacksonville Public Schools.

**Rebecca Williams** (LJ 2023) was [featured on News 4 Jax](#) discussing how her nonprofit Fruit of Barren Trees (FOBT) is developing some of Jacksonville's most challenged neighborhoods by making progress one property at a time.

Congratulations to **Kayla Franklin** (NextGen 2023) on her promotion to Marketing Analytics Associate at Miller Electric.

### LJ Team

**Nicole Bryan** (LJ Programs Director) is currently the Association of Leadership Programs' (ALP) Champion for the Flagship Program Affinity Group and the Volunteer of the Quarter.

Congratulations to **Gracie Simendinger** (LJ CEO) on her appointment to the JAX Chamber Board of Directors.

## Honorary

Congratulations to **Dawn Lockhart** (Honorary) on her new role as the Chief Executive Officer for the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida.

## Combined Classes and Events

LIFT JAX announced **Michelle Braun** (LJ 2017) as the new Board Chair and welcomed new board members **Courtney Harris** (LJ 2022) and **Christopher McKee** (LJ 2024).

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida welcomed their new 2024 Board, which includes Chair **Michael Dubow** (LJ 1999) and Trustee **John Peyton** (LJ 1991).

Congratulations to the following LJ Alumni members on their 2024 Florida ORIBE Awards: **Brian Verkamp** (LJ 2024) received the Education ORBIE for public schools and higher education organizations and **Aaron Miri** (NLS 2022) received the Large Enterprise ORBIE for organizations over \$2 billion annual revenue.

Jacksonville University board of trustees announced on January 18 that the school will launch the Cost Honors College by Fall 2025. The naming of the Cost Honors College recognizes President **Tim Cost** (NLS 2013) and First Lady **Stephanie Cost** (LJ 2015) for their cumulative philanthropic support to JU totaling \$10 million.

LJ Alumni members **Oliver Barakat** (LJ 2000), **Lori Boyer** (Honorary), and **Laura Edgecombe** (LJ 2024) spoke at the Urban Land Institute Emerging Trends in Real Estate panel event discussing major projects defining downtown Jacksonville.

The North Florida Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) announced their 2024 Board of Directors including Ethics Chair **Maria Coppola** (LJ 2011), Communications Chair **Autumn Lee** (NextGen 2023), and Board Member **Sue Nussbaum** (LJ 2010).

LJ Alumni members being honored as the 2024 Jacksonville Business Journal's Women of Influence include **Allishia Bauman** (NextGen 2012), **Laura Edgecombe** (LJ 2024), **Linda Lindenmoyer** (2018), and **Cindy Watson** (LJ 2014).

LJ Alumni members **Darren Brownlee** (LJ 2023), **Diana Donovan** (LJ 2021), **Karla Ebio** (LJ 2020), **Megan Hayward** (LJ 2023), **Megan Moon** (LJ 2019), and **Veronica Session-Fennell** (NextGen 2021) joined the Leadership Florida 2023-2024 Connect Class.

LJ Alumni members **Dane Grey** (LJ 2014), **David Miller** (LJ 2008), **Nina Waters** (LJ 1991), and **Ellen Wiss** (LJ 2021) were appointed to the VyStar Foundation Board of Directors, the philanthropic arm of VyStar Credit Union. These community leaders will join the organization in its mission to *Do Good* in the areas served by VyStar Credit Union.

Several **LJ** and **NextGen** Alumni members were spotted at the 138th Annual JAX Chamber Annual Meeting on January 25.



Alumni members **Adam Chaskin** (LJ 2021) and **Eric Mann** (NLS 2012) have partnered together to take an active role in educating and inspiring our neighbors to build a more inclusive Northeast Florida. Coming up on February 25th is a 5K Run/Walk; for details click here: [\*\*Racing Against Hate\*\*](#).

In celebration of Black History Month, 904WARD invites LJ Alumni members to Black History: How Art Has Reflected A Culture on Tuesday, February 27 at The Jessie Ball duPont Center. There will be a panel discussion, followed by Race Cards discussions. Race Cards events create opportunities for community conversation around issues of race and racism that are meaningful and

constructive. [Register here.](#)

**Sel Buyuksarac** (LJ 2019) and his wife Angie have hosted Friendship & Gratitude Ramadan Dinners in their home for more than 15 years. In addition to hosting the March 19 alumni-only [Leadership Connect Ramadan Dinner](#), several other gatherings will be held during the month of Ramadan. To view and sign up for additional dates, [click here.](#)

## In Sympathy

Our condolences to **Janice Donaldson** (LJ 1993) and her family upon the passing of her mother Evelyn Williamson on January 11.

Our thoughts are with the family and friends of **Roseann Duran** (LJ 1998) upon her passing on January 14. Roseann came to Jacksonville to begin a career with Barnett Bank after her graduation from Penn State University in 1973. She held a variety of roles at Barnett including Director of Community Relations, where she was responsible for Barnett's community involvement and charitable giving. In her roles with Barnett, she was instrumental in founding Take Stock in Children. Following her retirement from Barnett in 1997, Roseann joined Website Pros which later became Web.com. At Web.com she served first as Chief Marketing Officer and later in a unique role as Chief People Officer, retiring in 2019. She was active in the community giving her time and treasure to Wolfson Children's Hospital, supporting the growth and development of the genetics program now named in her honor as the Duran Genetics Center. Roseann served on the Wolfson Children's Hospital Board and chaired their Development Council. She also served on Baptist Health's Social Responsibility and Community Health Board Committee, the Camp Boggy Creek Board, and Jacksonville University's Board of Trustees. Roseann is remembered by her family and friends for her professional achievements and her enduring legacy of kindness and generosity.

Our condolences to the family and friends of **Jim Rinaman** (LJ Honorary) upon his passing on January 26. Jim's survivors include LJ Alumni members, wife **Gloria Rinaman** (LJ 1994), daughter-in-law **Lisa Rinaman** (LJ 2017), and son-in-law **Oliver Barakat** (LJ 2000). Jim's community service included the military, civic activities, and the legal and nonprofit communities. He served in the armored calvary before attending law school at the University of Florida and continued his military service in the Florida Army National Guard, retiring as a Brigadier General in 1992. During his military service, Jim received the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal and the Florida Cross. After graduating law school, Jim moved to Jacksonville to work for the Marks Gray P.A. law firm for more than 55 years, retiring as the firm's longest standing attorney. He served as president of the Jacksonville Bar Association, the Florida Defense Lawyers Association, the Association of Defense Trial Lawyers and the Florida Bar. He was a founding member and chair of Lawyers for Civil Justice and the Florida Volunteer Lawyers Resource Center. During the 1960's, Jim served as counsel for the Duval County Legislative Delegation and the President of the Florida Senate. He served on the Local Government Study Commission of Duval County and as a member of the charter drafting committee for the Jacksonville Consolidated Government. In 1967, he was chief legal counsel for the delegation for the passage of the charter. Jim served as general counsel for the Consolidated City of Jacksonville and was a member of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority. He was a founding member and president of Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. (JCCI) and Leadership Jacksonville. He served as chairman of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, president of the Northeast Florida chapter of the March of Dimes, the Northeast Florida chapter of the American Red Cross and the Meninak Club of Jacksonville. Jim's lifetime of servant leadership had an incredible impact on Northeast Florida, and he will be greatly missed throughout the community. Jim's legacy was also [featured in the Jacksonville Daily Record.](#)

## Stay connected!

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[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LJ Alumni Facebook Group](#)

[NextGen Alumni Facebook Group](#)



## Make a Donation to Leadership Jacksonville

**Many companies sponsor matching gift programs that match the charitable contributions made by their employees. This is a great way to enhance the impact of your giving. [Donate today.](#)**

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