

March 2024



THE LEAD Story



PLEASE SHARE!
**Next Generation 2024 Applications open now
through March 20**



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.

**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](#).

Celebration 2024

**Tuesday, April 23, 2024
5 - 8 pm**

WJCT Studios
100 Festival Avenue, Jacksonville, 32202



H. Wade Barnes, Jr. MD
(LJ 1995)
S.A.F.E. Medical Director
Women's Center of Jacksonville



Debbie Buckland
(LJ 2009)
Senior Vice President, Area
Manager, Client Advisory
Pinnacle Financial Partners



Eric Mann
(NLS 2012)
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).

Individual tickets are \$150.

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



LJ 2024 Leading With Equity Day



Sponsored by [JEA](#), LJ 2024 participated in Leading With Equity Day on February 15. Through various activities and discussions focused on personal perspectives and understanding equity, the

class expanded their awareness of individual behaviors and the impact they have on others. Facilitators encouraged open conversations to promote respect for differences and empathetic leadership. Thank you to the volunteers and speakers for the time and talents.

New Leadership Summit 2024

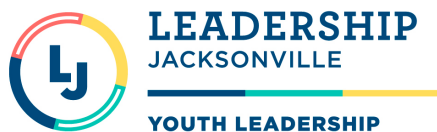


New Leadership Summit 2024 was held February 19 and 20 at The Lodge & Club Ponte Vedra. The summit brought together 21 new-to-town C-suite executives from across Northeast Florida. We would like to thank sponsors [bestbet Jacksonville](#) and [Jimerson Birr](#), and all the presenters, volunteers, and LJ Alumni members for sharing their expertise and time.

Front row (L to R): **Liz Schaefer, Dan Frey, Amy Davis, Tommie Reilly, Scott Bacon, Wendy Dordel, and Natalya Bannister Roby**

Second row (L to R): **Richard Macy, Jared Opalinski, Joel Swanson, Jeremy Goodman, and Jo-Ellen Unger**

Back row (L to R): **Christopher Lambert, Chris Johnson, Brian Wynne, Greg Wellington, Brad Filbert, Mark Stultz, Isaiah Oliver, Alistair Dove, and Patrick Henry**



YLJ 2024 Graduation and Closing Retreat



The Youth Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2024 enjoyed their Closing Retreat and Graduation on March 2 at the Jessie Ball duPont Center. Participants engaged in a Mental Health First Aid workshop, team building activities, reflected on the program year, and discussed their goals for the future. NextGen and YLJ Alumni joined the class at lunch sharing their college and career experiences. Thank you to Closing Retreat sponsor [Wells Fargo](#), and to all the speakers and volunteers for their time and talents.

Congratulations to the YLJ Class of 2024! Welcome to the Leadership Jacksonville Family!



Alumni Spotlight: John Avendano (NLS 2022)

John Avendano (NLS 2022), President and CEO of Florida State College at Jacksonville, participated in the two-day New Leadership Summit when he first moved here, and shared how much he appreciated the comprehensiveness of the agenda. "I enjoyed the history, the education portion (of course), but mostly the networking with people new to the Jacksonville area," he said.

John enjoys participating as a speaker for New Leadership Summit. "I think Leadership Jacksonville is THE BEST WAY to get acclimated to the area. You meet other leaders in Northeast Florida, you learn about the rich history of Jacksonville, and you make connections on a personal and professional level. I would endorse LJ to anyone I know.

"I've made connections through LJ that have continued to this day. **Andrea Barnwell Brownlee** (NLS 2022/LJ 2023) now serves on my Foundation Board, **Aaron Miri** (NLS 2022), was a trustee of the college for a short stint, and now a personal friend, and I am still in contact with **Steven Libman** (NLS 2022). I met former Mayor **John Delaney** (LJ 1986) as a speaker at my NLS, and I've gotten to know him better as a leader at Flagler College.

John Avendano is a member of the Downtown Rotary and the Jacksonville Civic Council, and is a board member at the JAX Chamber. "Most importantly, I truly enjoy living in Jacksonville for everything it has to offer," he shared.

Leadership Connect

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.

Sign up to attend an Upcoming Alumni Gathering:

[Happy Hour with Nemiah Rutledge \(LJ 2021\), March 7](#)
[Ramadan Dinner with Sel Buyuksarac \(LJ 2019\), March 19](#)
[Happy Hour with Vicky Basra \(LJ 2017\) and Mary Pat Corrigan \(LJ 2017\), April 8](#)
[Breakfast with Tina Wirth \(LJ 2016\), April 12](#)

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.



Upcoming LJ Events & Program Days

NextGen 2024 Applications

Open now through Wednesday, March 20

LJ 2024 Economy, Growth and Preservation Day 1

Thursday, March 7

LJ 2024 Economy, Growth and Preservation Day 2

Thursday, April 4

Celebration 2024

Tuesday, April 23

LJ 2024 LJ Arts and Culture Day

Thursday, May 2

LJ 2024 Closing Retreat

Friday-Saturday, May 17-18

NextGen 2024 Meet the Class Reception

Thursday, May 30

Class Socials

LJ 2021 is hosting a Breakfast Club on Wednesday, March 27 at 7:30 pm at Maple Street Biscuit Company in San Marco. RSVP to Madelen Salter at msalter@oesjax.com.



Haskell Alumni members enjoyed lunch at their employer's Quarterly Alumni Lunch on February 15.

L to R: **Mike Huskey** (LJ 2016), **Robert Jackson** (LJ 2022), **Denise Ramsey** (LJ 1999), **Montinez Williams** (NextGen 2023), **Jordan Stallings** (NextGen 2022), and **Maria Ruiz** (NextGen 2017)

Alumni Connections

At the Alumni Luncheon last fall, we gave attendees an alumni contact card to encourage further relationship building. **Thanh Hogan** (LJ 2019) and **David Emanuel** (NLS 2023) recently had lunch to get to know each other. As Thanh shared, "It was wonderful to connect with David. I am so glad I pulled his name at the Alumni Luncheon."

Have you connected with alumni through these contact cards? Feel free to share the details of your meetup with us!



Alumni Class Notes

Submit your news to manisha@leadershipjax.org



1989

Jacksonville University honored **Nathaniel Glover** (LJ 1989) by naming its Master in Public Policy Minority Fellowship in his name. The program is now the "MPP Nathaniel Glover Fellowship Program" and fellows will be known as "MPP Glover Fellows".

Nathaniel pictured here with **Rick Mullaney** (LJ 1998).

1993

Eric Green (LJ 1993) was [featured in the Florida Times Union](#) sharing what's next for JaxPort in his State of the Port address.

1999

Paul Schwend (LJ 1999) was named Chairperson of the Nassau County Economic Development Board.



2006

Congratulations to **Mary Fisher** (LJ 2006) on her retirement from Fisher Agency after 35 years.

2008

David Miller (LJ 2008) has joined the Jessie Ball duPont Fund as their seventh trustee.

2009

Amy Crane (LJ 2009) has been promoted to Vice President of Programs at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

2010

Cameron Frazier was recognized as a Black Minds Matter Ambassador for his leadership in education and in the community.

2015

Congratulations to **Bill Sorenson** (LJ 2015) on his promotion to CEO of Heritage Capital Group.

2018

Kathleen Shaw (LJ 2018) was named the inaugural Executive Vice President of the Terry Family Foundation, after serving 22 years at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

Alicia Somers (LJ 2018) has joined First Horizon Bank as the Florida Region Community Relations Director.

2019

Leigh Rosenbloom (LJ 2019) joined Marks Gray as a partner in the local government services division.

Congratulations to **Marcus Isom, Jr.** (NextGen 2019) and **Sabrina Marcos Smith** (NextGen 2019) on receiving the 36 under 36 Professionalism Award from the Young Lawyers Division of The Florida Bar.

2020

Leah Palestrant (LJ 2020) was appointed to the City of Jacksonville's Ethics Commission.



Eduardo Sarmiento (LJ 2020) was the keynote speaker at the Northeast Florida Scholastic Art Awards on February 17 at the Florida Theatre.

2021

Kaci Honeycutt Barnes (LJ 2021) is competing in the River City Dancing with the Stars on April 13 to raise funds for Jacksonville Children's Chorus.

Monica Hernandez (LJ 2021) was appointed to the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville board.



Carlton Robinson (LJ 2021) joined Leadership Florida's Cornerstone Class 41 representing Northeast Florida.

2023

Darrin Eakins (LJ 2023) was named a 40 under 40 honoree by Florida A&M University.

2024

Ashantae Green (LJ 2024) was featured in an exhibit at the Museum of Science & History (MOSH) highlighting "Trailblazing Black Women in STEM in Jacksonville" on February 27. The event was dedicated to highlighting the incredible achievements of black women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Leon Kally (LJ 2024) joined the Goodwill Industries of North Florida board as Vice Treasurer.

Congratulations to **Jennifer Short** (LJ 2024) on her promotion to Director at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Combined Classes and Events



LJ Alumni members gathered with the Pinnacle leadership team at their celebration kickoff event on February 21.

The Jacksonville Image Award recognized LJ Alumni members **Greg Burton** (LJ 2011), winner of the Innovator Award, and **Michele Godfrey-Watson** (LJ 2022), winner of the Pinnacle Award. The Image Awards were created to honor and celebrate achievements of individuals and organizations in the African American community and recognize their success.

Brian Bush (LJ 2020) and **Kimmie Winston** (LJ 1992) joined the WJCT Public Media Board of Trustees for the 2023-2024 fiscal year with a three-year term. The board also confirmed **Abel Harding** (LJ 2013) as Treasurer.

Karen Feagins (LJ 2016) and **Liz McCoy** (LJ 2024) shared their personal journeys during Untold Stories at The Florida Theatre on February 15.

Allishia Bauman (NextGen 2102), **Tanya Johnson-Coomes** (LJ 2015), and **Dana Karzan** (NLS 2022) were honored by Women We Admire in the list of [Top 50 Women Leaders of Jacksonville for 2024](#).

In addition to hosting the March 19 alumni-only [Leadership Connect Ramadan Dinner](#), **Sel Buyuksarac** (LJ 2019) and his wife Angie are hosting several gatherings that will be held during the month of Ramadan. To view and sign up for additional dates hosted at their home, [click here](#). To sign up for Ramadan community events, visit host webpages [WJCT](#), [MOSH](#), and [904WARD](#).

In Sympathy

Our condolences to the family and friends of **Charlotte Minter** (LJ 1979) upon her passing on December 20, 2023 in Columbus, GA. Charlotte was past president of Learn to Read and Youth Leadership Jacksonville (when it was separately incorporated). During her 30 years in Atlantic Beach, she was actively involved in organizing a campaign that prevented high rise condominiums in Atlantic Beach. Charlotte was also a founding member of the Martin County League of Women Voters, and following her retirement as President of FCCJ's North Campus, Charlotte moved to New Mexico where she was active in arts and cultural affairs. She later moved back east to be close to family.

Our thoughts are with **Doug Wilder** (LJ 2009) on the passing of his wife, Dot on February 28.

Stay connected!

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[Instagram](#)



[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)



[LJ Alumni Facebook Group](#)

[NextGen Alumni Facebook Group](#)

[YLJ 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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