

June 2024



Leadership Jacksonville 2024 Closing Retreat



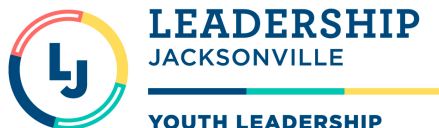
LJ 2024 came together for their Closing Retreat and Graduation at the Sea Palms Resort in St. Simons Island, GA on May 17 and 18. Reflecting on their program year, they engaged with community leaders, and discussed ways to apply their passion and purpose into the community. Thank you to the party planning committee, volunteers, and speakers for ensuring a successful completion of the program year. Congratulations to the "Legendary" LJ 2024 class!

Next Generation 2024 Meet the Class Reception





The NextGen 2024 participants met for the first time at the Meet the Class reception on May 30 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 7 and 8. We look forward to an incredible summer program with these passionate young professionals!



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

Congratulations to the 10 Youth Leadership Jacksonville 2022 Alumni members who each received a college scholarship at the 28th annual Meninak Leadership Scholarship Awards Luncheon on May 20. Thank you to the [Meninak Club of Jacksonville](#) for providing \$30,000 in scholarships this year and continuing to recognize the emerging leadership among Jacksonville's youth. Since 1997, the Meninak Club has awarded 160 college scholarships totaling \$720,000 to YLJ high school seniors to help further their educational dreams!



From L to R, YLJ 2022 Scholarship Recipients:

Taylor Thigpen (St. Johns Country Day/University of Notre Dame), **Gift Omo-Erigbe** (Bishop John Snyder High School/University of South Florida), **Kennedy Murphy** (Stanton College Preparatory School/Florida State University), **Rachel Moore** (Fletcher High School/Florida State University), **Mason Baptist** (Bishop John Snyder High School/University of Florida), **Jack Blasbalg** (Ponte Vedra High School/Florida State

University), **Mya Darby** (Westside High School/Florida A&M University), **Landry Kelley** (Christ's Church Academy/University of Florida), and **Madison Mescall** (Middleburg High School/University of North Florida). Not pictured: **Leila Jane Davis** (Samuel Wolfson High School/Clemson University).

Several LJ Alumni and Board members were in attendance to support.



A Special Spotlight on Three YLJ Alumni Meninak Scholarship Recipients



Gift Omo-Erigbe (YLJ 2022) initially heard about YLJ through her older sister, **Christabel Omo-Erigbe** (YLJ 2019). "The YLJ program greatly exceeded my expectations! We had amazing guest speakers who shared their experiences as leaders in Jacksonville," shared Gift.

"What I enjoyed most about the program is how it allowed you to see past yourself and into the bigger picture of the community around you. Putting yourself into another's shoes is never an easy task - it was an eye-opener for me.

"YLJ has positively influenced my professional goals by teaching me the importance of being curious about people and the world around me. It has taught me to be more open to discomfort, which has led me to be an advocate for myself and others," said Gift.

Gift plans on studying Biochemistry at the University of South Florida and her future career aspirations are focused in the medical field, as a Physician or a Pharmacist.

Madison Mescall (YLJ 2022) shared how her expectations for the YLJ program were surpassed. "It was a great experience whether we were listening to speakers or engaging in activities," said Madison.

"I enjoyed the program day where we traveled to Brooks' Rehabilitation the most. While at Brook's we got to experience what it is like to be in other's shoes and learned about different types of therapy. This program is what inspired me for the career path I want to go into.



"As an Alumni member, the program has influenced my goals as I have since become very interested in the history of Jacksonville and surrounding towns. Before YLJ, I wanted a different occupation, and now, I strive to have a job where I can work with people and give back to the community. Once in college, I plan to be a part of different organizations and help where I can," shared Madison.

Madison plans to study Kinesiology at the University of North Florida and would like to be a Physical Therapist.



Taylor Thigpen (YLJ 2022) learned about the Youth Leadership Jacksonville program from his school dean and was immediately intrigued. "I was looking forward to meeting new friends and young leaders across the Jacksonville area and expanding my knowledge of our local community and the challenges it faces. This program was astounding and instrumental in my development for making a change in the Jacksonville area and furthering my nonprofit work in the local community," said Taylor.

"Being a YLJ alumnus, I met leaders who made life long connections. From owning my own houseplant business, I was able to connect with business leaders from our program days to help serve the population of Jacksonville. I also furthered my skill of grant writing from learning about the financial needs of our community, and recently I won a \$20,000 grant for a local nonprofit.

"I have become a more active citizen in our community volunteering over 1,000 hours to the Jacksonville community and currently serving as the State 4-H president helping promote the youth voice," shared Taylor.

Taylor is majoring in Global Affairs and Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Notre Dame and preparing for a career in Foreign Service.

LEADERSHIP CONNECT

With breakfast, lunch or happy hour options, our alumni are fostering connections across Northeast Florida each month.

Sign up to attend an Upcoming Alumni Gathering:

Happy Hour with Jason Perry (LJ 2014), June 6
Happy Hour with Tim Johnson (NLS 2017/ LJ 2019), June 13
Breakfast with Nicole Bryan (LJ Programs Director), June 18
Virtual Coffee Hour with John Peyton (LJ 1991), June 25

Would you like to host a Leadership Connect gathering?
Please email Manisha Joshi at manisha@leadershipjax.org.



THE POWER OF CONNECTIVITY



Tori Foster (LJ 2024) shared:

One of my takeaways from the closing retreat of Leadership Jacksonville was about finding and operating in your purpose with the time we are given. I consider myself blessed that my professional career aligns with my personal and spiritual purpose.

A few weeks ago Chaplain LT Parker called **JAXUSA** with a small request. He wanted to do something special for the crew of the USS Ramage. These sailors were deployed for several months and were notified of a homeport change from Norfolk to Mayport. They were given just a few short weeks to uproot their lives and make the journey to Florida.

From that conversation, a 'Tour of Jacksonville' was created during their Resiliency Fair with the goal of connecting the crew to their new community to help ease the transition.

Special appreciation to LJ Alumni members for being a part of this heartfelt welcome tour: **Leonard Chatman, Jr.** (LJ 2023), **Devin Coleman** (LJ 2024), **Daniel Davis** (LJ 2015), **Kemal Gasper** (LJ 2019), **Whitney Meyer** (LJ 2022), and **Aundra Wallace** (NLS 2014).

Thank you to all of the speakers for sharing your time, testimony, and expertise to welcome these sailors to DUUUVAL!

2024 UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAM DAYS

NextGen 2024 Opening Retreat
Friday and Saturday, June 7 and June 8

LJ Annual Meeting
Monday, June 17

NextGen 2024 Creating a Caring Community Program Day
Tuesday, June 18

LJ Past Presidents' Breakfast
Tuesday, June 18

NextGen 2024 Exploring Our Community Program Day
Saturday, June 29

NextGen 2024 Exposing Our Community's Culture Program Day
Wednesday, July 10

NextGen 2024 Building Bridges to the Future Program Day
Monday, July 22

LJ 2025 Opening Dinner
Tuesday, July 30

LJ CLASS SOCIALS



Courtesy of LJ Board Member **Kemal Gasper** (LJ 2019), **LJ 2022** and **LJ 2023** Alumni members were invited to enjoy the VyStar suite at the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp vs. the Durham Bulls baseball game on May 31.



LJ 2018 enjoyed happy hour at King Maker Brewing on May 14 to recognize their Celebration 2024 fundraising contributions towards the Youth Leadership Jacksonville program.

The following classes are planning an LJ-sponsored class social in recognition of their

Celebration 2024 fundraising efforts benefiting the Youth Leadership Jacksonville (YLJ) program:

LJ 2012: Happy Hour: TBD

LJ 2019: Happy Hour TBD

LJ 2021: Happy Hour: TBD

Earning the annual "Best Class" distinction at the Fall Alumni Luncheon:

LJ 2022 Happy Hour: Thursday, June 6 from 6 - 7:30 pm at [Prati Italia](#)



ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

Submit your news to manisha@leadershipjax.org

1991

John Peyton (LJ 1991) was featured in an article on The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida [website](#) about his mayoral service, his commitment to early childhood literacy and to giving. John served as Jacksonville's Mayor from 2003-2011.

2010

Daniel Bean (LJ 2010) was recognized by the Jacksonville Bar Association as the 2024 Jacksonville Daily Record Lawyer of the Year on May 1. The award honors outstanding service to the community over and above the practice of law. Daniel was also reappointed to the Jacksonville Port Authority Board by Governor Ron DeSantis.

2011

Ebony Johnson (NextGen 2011) joined Boyd & Jenerette PA as an Associate Attorney.

2013

Patrick Kilbane (LJ 2013) was appointed to the Jacksonville Port Authority Board by Governor Ron DeSantis.

2017

Patrick Krechowski (LJ 2017) was elected to serve as Chair of the Jacksonville Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) Board.

2019

Jametoria Burton (LJ 2019) joined the Florida State College at Jacksonville Honors Program as the Interim Director. In September of 2024, Jametoria will celebrate 18 years with FSCJ.

Kevin Carrico (LJ 2019) was selected as Jacksonville City Council Vice President and is serving his first full term representing District 4. The installation will be on June 20 at City Hall.

Sharol Noblejas (LJ 2019) was appointed as the [Philippine Honorary Consul](#) in Florida. The oath-taking ceremony was administered by Ambassador Jose Manuel G. Romualdez at the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C. Her consular post will be in Jacksonville with an area of jurisdiction covering the State of Florida.



Pascal Rathle (NextGen 2019) joined Qenta, Inc. as an Ecosystem Manager.

2020

Dawn Alexander (LJ 2020) was renamed to Morgan Stanley's Pacesetter's Club, a group of the firm's most successful Financial Advisors.

Kimano Edwards (LJ 2020) graduated from the FBI Jacksonville Citizens Academy, a program that fosters a greater understanding of the role that federal law enforcement takes in the community through discussion and education.



2021

Nico Flowers (YLJ 2021) representing the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida, was named the State of Florida's 2024 Youth of the Year. In September 2024, he will compete to be named Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Youth of the Year in Atlanta. Read more in [this](#) Florida Times Union article.

2022

Lawsikia Hodges (LJ 2022) joined Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP as Counsel and as a member of the firm's real estate group. She also will lead the governmental affairs practice in the Jacksonville office.

2023

Sarah Mannion (LJ 2023) has filed to run for the Duval County Public School Board District 7.



George Boston (NextGen 2023/YLJ 2018) was elected President of the University of North Florida Administrative and Professional Association representing more than 700 staff members.

Autumn Lee (NextGen 2023) joined Southeastern Grocers as an Internal Communications & Events Specialist II.

Millicent Leeds (NextGen 2023) joined the Biden Campaign as the Statewide Youth and Young Americans Director for the State of Florida.

2024

Justin Sievert (LJ 2024) was inducted into Union College's Department of Athletics **Hall of Fame Class of 2024** representing track & field and football.

Congratulations to **Brian Verkamp** (LJ 2024) on being named one of the Jacksonville Business Journal Tech Leaders of the Year. The **Technology Leader of the Year Awards** will take place on June 20 at WJCT Studios.

COMBINED CLASSES & HONORARY

The DIA board voted 8-0 on May 15 to extend **Lori Boyer's** (Honorary) contract by one year with an option for a one-year extension.



Maxine McBride (LJ 2011) will be one of the co-chairs for the 2024-2025 Florida Forum Speaker Series for Wolfson Children's Hospital.

Pictured here with fellow co-chair Randy DeFoor.

Kemal Gasper (LJ 2019) and **Kevin Hyde** (LJ 2005) joined the World Affairs Council of Jacksonville Board of Directors.

Congratulations to **Austin Belet** (NextGen 2023) mentored by Lad Daniels and **Kevin Hyde** (LJ 2005); **Hugh Chapman** (NextGen 2023) mentored by **Jeffrey Bernardo** (LJ 2016); **Joel Masters** (NextGen 2023) mentored by David Strickland; and **Stacia Richard** (NextGen 2023) mentored by Kiki Karpen for their participation in the 2023-2024 cohort for **Council EDGE**. Mentors and mentees enjoyed a closing breakfast on May 23, and reflected on their program experience, the impact of the relationships forged, and how their participation shaped them personally and professionally over the last nine months.



Congratulations to the following Alumni members on being named "Health care executives to know in the U.S." in Becker's Healthcare Hospital Review's Spring 2024 list: **Timothy Groover** (LJ 2015) was named one of 180 chief medical officers to know and one of 231 Black health care leaders to know; **Aaron Miri** (NLS 2022) was named one of 46

health system chief digital officers to know; and **Nicole Thomas** (LJ 2013) was named as one of the 196-plus women hospital presidents and CEOs to know.



Several **alumni members** were spotted at the Greenscape Root Ball on May 4 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

From L-R: **Jimmy Orth** (Honorary), **Wayne Wood** (LJ 1977), **James Richardson** (LJ 1994), **Bruce Musser** (LJ 2002), **Sandra Hull-Richardson** (LJ 1993), **Manisha Joshi** (LJ Communications), and **Ashantae Green** (LJ 2024).

LJ Alumni members **Chris Brown** (LJ 2023), **Tammy Butler** (LJ 2007), and **Laura Phillips Edgcombe** (LJ 2024) were among the panelists at United Way of Northeast Florida's Women United Up Close and Personal event on May 16 at Old St. Andrews Event Venue.

LJ members **Dane Bennett** (LJ 2024), **Brian Bush** (LJ 2020), **Lauren Eakins** (LJ 2025), **Rachael Tutwiler Fortune** (LJ 2022), **Darian Jackson** (LJ 2024), **Sarah Mannion** (LJ 2023), **Brittany Norris** (LJ 2022), and **Nemiah Rutledge** (LJ 2021) were accepted into the JAX Chamber Hightower Emerging Leaders Fellowship Class VIII and attended the program kickoff event on March 25 at the VyStar Credit Union Tower.



Kendra McCrary (LJ 2004) received the Tillie K. Fowler Community Service Award from the Junior League of Jacksonville during their 100th-year anniversary celebration. The organization's past presidents which included several Alumni members gathered for the Passing of the Gavel. **Kimberly Barrett** (LJ 2024) will serve as the Junior League of Jacksonville President for 2024-2025.

From L-R: **Deborah Moore** (LJ 2003), **Beth Langley** (LJ 2000), **Janet Reagor** (LJ 2005), **Kendra McCrary** (LJ 2004), **Meg Folds** (LJ 1999), **Courtney Wilson** (LJ 1979), **Meg Sacks** (LJ 2012), **Julie Handley** (LJ 1992), **Megan Del Pizzo** (LJ 2016), and **Andrea Rizzi** (LJ 2009).

LJ Alumni members **Vickie Cavey** (LJ 2007), **Greer Gillis** (LJ 2022), and **Kim Wheeler** (LJ 2008) were featured in a [Florida Times Union article](#) discussing the advancements of women in engineering in Jacksonville.

Congratulations to the following members on their inclusion to the [40 under 40 list](#) in the Jacksonville Business Journal: **Brian Bush** (LJ 2020), **Tyler Oldenburg** (LJ 2022), **Adriel Rocha** (LJ 2019), **Caroline Russell** (LJ 2025), **Sabrina Marcos Smith** (NextGen 2019), **Kendall Sisisky Valliere** (LJ 2024/NextGen 2015), and **Andrea Williams** (LJ 2019),

Several **alumni members** attended FinFest 2024 on May 11 at Timiquana Country Club supporting the Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center, and honoring the legacy of Sarah Rocco* (LJ 2024).



NOTES OF SYMPATHY

Our condolences to **Jimmy Midyette** (LJ 2018) upon the passing of his father Jimmy "Bo" on May 17.

*Deceased

STAY IN TOUCH!

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