



WAYFINDERS 2023 IMPACT REPORT

**HELPING
OPPORTUNITY
FIND EVERY CHILD**

WAYFINDERS

A Message from Our Executive Director

It has been an incredible year at Wayfinders filled with new community partnerships, increasing depth of services, and growing bonds between scholars and their mentors! I am excited about the growth we have achieved and the ways we are *helping opportunity find every child*. When I think about our successes, I am most inspired by what we hear from scholars, mentors, families, and partners:

PARENTS SAY:

"Dimah's confidence is shining since her time with her mentor."

"Every experience with Wayfinders is new and exciting! My daughter grows with each and every experience."

SCHOLARS SAY:

"My favorite part of my summer Wayfinders experience was finding new people to become friends with. I found some students I immediately clicked with. We spent most of our time together at camp and we still keep in contact even after."

MENTORS SAY:

"Mentoring Jakhia has been nothing short of an adventure itself! I can honestly say that I have gotten more out of my experience with Wayfinders than I ever imagined I would."

PARTNERS SAY:

"We have partnered with Wayfinders long enough to see scholars grow from first-year campers to leadership staff guiding multi-day backpacking trips throughout the entire summer. **Nothing has been more gratifying than working with Wayfinders scholars to embrace their innate drive and curiosity.**"

Thank you for being part of our vision that every child, regardless of zip code, has access to transformative life experiences. I cannot wait to continue this journey with our scholars, mentors, families – and you!

Best,



Mollie James, Executive Director



MISSION



WAYFINDERS' **MISSION** is to ignite students' potential by expanding their confidence, connections, and horizons. We achieve this through summer camp experiences, year-round enrichment programs, and mentor relationships for self-motivated, underserved students.



Our **VISION** is that every child, regardless of zip code, has access to transformative life experiences through camp, mentorship, and educational opportunities.



"My mentor is always here when I need her. She treats me like I'm a top priority"
~Wayfinders Scholar, Robert

2023 HIGHLIGHTS



Brace yourself for double the adventure because we've got **TWO NEW** additions to our CAMP FAMILY: Camp Kanuga and UNC Asheville!



Let's give a round of applause for our first ever Wayfinders Soccer Team, **THE BLUE HORNETS!** We've witnessed an incredible journey of growth and resilience from this team of bright minds.



We value the importance of mental health and well-being. That's why we've teamed up with **TWO** counseling practices, Sun Counseling and Wellness & Deeper Roots Therapy, to provide FREE therapy sessions.

BY THE NUMBERS

CAMP EXPERIENCE

95% of scholars can't wait for camp next year!

99% of scholars loved trying new things at camp, like canoeing and horseback riding!

98% of scholars built friendships at camp with people from different backgrounds, experiences, and places.



YEAR-ROUND ENRICHMENT

95% of parents loved the opportunities for personal growth that Wayfinders offered their child.

95% of scholars built on their school year learning with the experiences from Wayfinders.

95% of scholars feel confident and ready to take on the opportunities presented by Wayfinders!

MENTORING

96% of scholars know that their mentor has their back.

98% of mentors think YOU should mentor through Wayfinders!

90% of mentors report they saw the positive impact of their relationship with their mentee last year.



SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

ITZEL

Itzel's journey with Wayfinders is a testament to the transformative power of mentoring and the adventure of the great outdoors. We paired Itzel with her mentor, Holly, in the fourth grade.

Wayfinders matches each scholar with the unique camp where they will thrive, and Camp Celo was the perfect fit for Itzel. There, the sheer joy of the natural world became the backdrop against which her confidence and sense of self flourished. **"I've met my best friends through Camp Celo and have some of the best memories," Itzel said.**



Now 17, Itzel has spent six summers at Camp Celo. She has gone on multi-week hiking trips and served in leadership roles, honing her group management and communication skills. With each new challenge, Itzel found herself unlocking the depths of her resilience. In turn, her experiences shaped her long-term aspirations. She said, "Our bodies can be amazing! Through this, I know what I need to persevere in other aspects and to push myself to achieve my goals."

Itzel is only a junior in high school, but she's already working toward her future. Holly has encouraged her to pursue her dreams, offering support and guidance along the way. Itzel aspires to study psychology in college with the goal of pursuing her PhD and becoming a Pediatric or Forensic Psychiatrist. She said, **"The sky's the limit and there is nothing in the way of my education!"**

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

DARLIN and ASA

“Hi, I’m Asa Santa Cruz. Two years ago I was introduced through Wayfinders to Darlin, a shy 4th grader. As his mentor, I have seen him grow and blossom into a more confident and active student.

Through Wayfinders, scholars are introduced to opportunities that help them explore their interests and build a vibrant life. In addition to amazing summer camp experiences at Gwynn Valley, Darlin recently joined the Wayfinders soccer team, and I drive him to and from practice and games. During our car rides, he lets me know about whatever project he is working on or learning about that week. I love hearing about it!”



“Spending time in the car hearing about school projects has offered us another opportunity to connect. Recently, I have been assisting him with proofreading his schoolwork. It’s an honor to help him. Darlin is a first-generation Latinx student, just like me, and I remember struggling with my reading and spelling because I didn’t have someone at home to help me. My mom didn’t speak English, and my father was at work. Darlin has a similar scenario.

In my own life and career, mentors have helped me to grow. **Mentoring through Wayfinders has allowed me to build a connection with a student I might not have otherwise met and help shape our next generation.”**



Thank You

Last year, Wayfinders invested \$3,600 per scholar for our program. Each year, we increase the depth of our services to scholars to meet their changing needs. In 2024, it will cost us \$5,000 per scholar for a full-year of our unique programming. Camp expenses are at the foundation of our program and make up over 30% of our budget. Camp allows scholars to build on their school-year learning, take safe risks, and experience the awe and wonder of nature. When supplemented with mentoring and year-round enrichment, our scholars find their place in our world. We could not achieve our full program including camp, mentoring, and year-round enrichment without the support of our community. **Thank you for being part of the Wayfinders family and helping opportunity find every child!**



Top Foundation, Corporate, and Individual Sponsors

Ally Financial
Anonymous
Atrium Health
Elizabeth & Bob Bridges
Nancy & Heyward Carter
Nicholas Caspero & Tomiko Vasey Fdn.
Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Fdn. - Social Capital Fund
Charlotte Woman's Club
Charlotte Young Professionals Group
Christ Episcopal Church
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated
Cynthia & David Crane
Equitable Foundation
Google
The Grossman Family Foundation

Harris Upchurch Foundation
Jessica & Vince Hindman
Holly & Hal Levinson
The Leon Levine Foundation
Longleaf Fund
The Merancas Foundation, Inc.
Catherine & Keith Miller
Harold M. & Adeline S. Morrison Family Fdn.
OrthoCarolina Foundation
Christina H. Otto & Robert L. Katz
Stuart & Jay Pfeifer
Denise & Jim Ratchford
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
TELUS



WAYFINDERS
HELPING OPPORTUNITY FIND EVERY CHILD



wayfindersnc.org
facebook.com/wayfindersnc
instagram.com/wayfindersnc
PO Box 220311
Charlotte, NC 28222

SCAN TO DONATE

