

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on the past year, a powerful quote from our FY2024 board chair, George Metz, sticks with me: "Access creates access." This is what you, our donors, have made possible for Wayfinders scholars — creating access to new opportunities like overnight summer camps, year-round enrichment, and long-term mentorship that helps them thrive.

While 2024 brought success, we recognize the growing challenges scholars and families face, such as housing instability and the lingering effects of COVID-related learning loss. We are especially grateful for Lazetta Lutrillo, our new Family & Academic Success Coordinator, who has connected families to vital resources and expanded access to higher education and career pathways for scholars.

For 12 years, Wayfinders' mentorship program has provided a valuable exchange of social capital. As we learned from Dr. Raj Chetty's most recent study, access to social capital is the #1 driver of upward economic mobility.

But the truest embodiment of "access creating access" is found in our scholars themselves. Former scholars have returned to mountain camps as staff members, served in leadership roles in college, and volunteered as mentors for current Wayfinders scholars. Their journey exemplifies the transformative power of access, creating opportunities for others in turn.

I am excited to share our 2024 Impact Report, highlighting how your support created access to opportunity for 180 scholars and their families this year. Your investment is in the future of Charlotte's leaders, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and community to thrive in today's world and make a lasting impact for good.

THANK YOU for helping opportunity find every child.

In gratitude, Mollie James

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.



Our scholars are incredible assets to our community who simply lack access to the same life-enhancing opportunities as their peers from higher income backgrounds. Our tagline, *Helping Opportunity Find Every Child*, reflects our core belief that our scholars are not "problems" to be fixed. Instead, the problem is that opportunity cannot reach all children in Charlotte. Wayfinders bridges that opportunity gap so our scholars can reach their full potential and thrive.



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2024 HIGHLIGHTS



100%

OF OUR SCHOLARS
GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL



270

WEEKS OF CAMP EXPERIENCES



5,000

HOURS VOLUNTEERED BY OUR MENTORS



10,860

MILES DRIVEN BY OUR MENTORS & VOLUNTEERS

"Camp **gave me the courage** to go away for college."

- Sydonnie, Wayfinders Alum



2024 HIGHLIGHTS



Our new **Wayfinders Youth Leadership Council** is comprised of 10-12th grade scholars who are growing their leadership skills and sharing their voices to shape our programming!



We welcomed **Lazetta Lutrillo** to the Wayfinders team as our Family and Academic Success Coordinator! She connects families to valuable resources and skill-building opportunities, providing wrap-around support for our scholars every step of the way.



LOOKING AHEAD: Our summer just got even better! We're excited to add new camp partners – YMCA Camp Harrison, NC State University's Engineering Camp, and UNC Greensboro's Technovation For Good and CHANCE camps. Plus, a partnership with A Thousand Summers will send three scholars to Sanborn Western Camps in Colorado!

BY THE NUMBERS

CAMP EXPERIENCE

- **87%** of scholars can't wait for camp next year!
- 95% of scholars built friendships at camp with people from different backgrounds, experiences, and places.
- **89%** of Wayfinders parents reported an increased level of responsibility and maturity in their child after camp.

YEAR-ROUND ENRICHMENT

- **92%** of graduated scholars felt more confident after participating in Wayfinders activities.
- **97%** of scholars enjoyed the enrichment activities they participated in.
- 97% of parents said our enrichment activities were beneficial for their children.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- 91% of scholars are confident that they can succeed in the upcoming school year.
- 100% of scholars graduated middle school and entered 9th grade on time!
- 100% of scholars graduated high school on time!

MENTORING

- **88%** of scholars were connected to a new opportunity or resource through their mentor!
- **90%** of scholars felt supported by their mentor.
- **90%** of Wayfinders board members are mentors or parents of scholars.



"These programs have not only enriched their lives but have also shaped our family dynamic in profound ways."

- Wayfinders Parent

99





SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

KARLINA DOUBLEDAY GOMEZ

In her seven years as a Wayfinders scholar, Karlina has embraced every opportunity Wayfinders has to offer. When asked about advice for new scholars. Karlina shared, "I would tell them to go for it. Try new things and meet new people. Live each day to the fullest so you can get the most out of life." From her camp experiences trekking the mountains of Gwynn Valley, to developing leadership skills in the high-tech classrooms of Duke University, or from attending entrepreneurship and photography workshops with Do Greater Charlotte, to being a founding member of the Wayfinders Youth Leadership Council—she has truly done it all. Along the way, she has blossomed into an outstanding role model for her community. Whether she is performing on the violin or speaking in front of hundreds of scholars and families at events, Karlina continues to inspire those around her.



MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

ROSELYN "ROSSIE" AHUA

Reflecting on her seven years as a Wayfinders mentor, Rossie describes the experience as "nothing short of an adventure itself!" At Wayfinders, we view mentorship as a valuable exchange of social capital between the mentor and the scholar. Rossie shared that she initially sought out this volunteer opportunity as a way to "invest in someone outside of myself," but she admits, "I can honestly say that I have gotten more out of my experience with Wayfinders than I ever imagined I would." Her mentee, Jakhia, is someone she describes as "an individual whose light already shines so bright, it's impossible to ignore," and adds, "She keeps me young." Rossie has been an invaluable member of our Board of Directors since 2022.

From left to right: Jeryn Lindsay and her mentee, Sydonnie

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

JERYN LINDSAY

Since joining Wayfinders as a scholar in 2008, Jeryn has grown from an engaged participant to a fierce advocate for current scholars and families. Today, Jeryn volunteers as a mentor for Wayfinders scholar, Sydonnie, and she is the first former scholar to serve on our Board of Directors! Jeryn shared, "Wayfinders exposed me to transformative experiences that broadened my view of my own potential." Through serving on the Wayfinders board, she collaborates with staff and partners to support scholars as they navigate their own paths. Now in her second year on the board, Jeryn reflects, "Wayfinders has empowered me as an innovator, fueling my confidence to drive impact early in my professional career. It's an honor to give back." To this day, she remains close with her Wayfinders mentor, Danielle. Jeryn currently works at Vanguard as a Senior Associate in Client Service Administration.

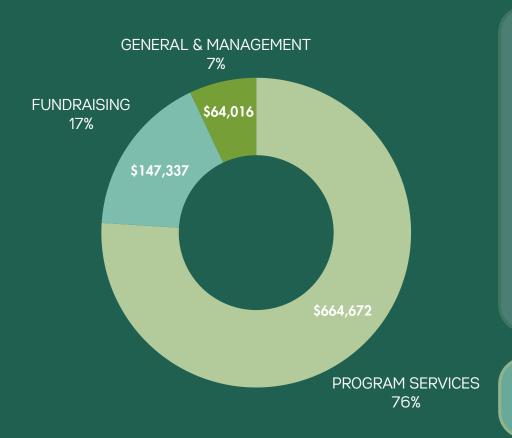
From left to right: Jackson Elliot and current scholar, Dallas

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

JACKSON ELLIOTT

Jackson attended Camp Celo for three summers as a Wayfinders scholar. Twelve years later, he still returns to Camp Celo each summer to work as a Summer Camp Counselor. Jackson shared with us that Wayfinders provided him with "unforgettable relationships and experiences," shaping his passion for the outdoors in unexpected ways. "I never would have thought in a million years I would come to love the outdoors as much as I do," Jackson reflected. The countless opportunities and no-pressure environment encouraged him to step outside his comfort zone and explore new activities, ultimately leading to a yearround job offer at Camp Celo as the Director of Outreach! Today, he serves as an example for younger scholars, showing just how transformative the Wayfinders experience can be. "There truly is something for everyone within this program students and parents," he shared. "Getting to be a part of Wayfinders is an amazing opportunity."

INVESTING IN OUR SCHOLARS



KEY

PROGRAM SERVICES:

Summer Camp, Enrichment Activities, Mentorship, Academic Support, and Family Support.

FUNDRAISING:

Necessary to fund our core programming and ensures organizational sustainability.

GENERAL & MANAGEMENT:

Important things like rent, insurance, and accounting which allow our programs to operate!

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$876,025

These numbers are from our FY24 audited financial statement.

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