



*Lead*ership CHARLOTTE®

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Leadership Charlotte Community,

It has been both an honor and a privilege to serve as Board President for Leadership Charlotte during the 2025–2026 program year. This year, our theme -“Connections”- has guided our work, our conversations, and the experiences of our participants in meaningful and lasting ways.

In a world that often feels increasingly complex and divided, the power of connection has never been more essential. Throughout this year, we have seen firsthand how intentional relationships—between classmates, across industries, and within our broader community—can elevate leadership, foster understanding, and inspire action. Leadership Charlotte continues to be a catalyst for these connections, creating space for leaders to engage thoughtfully with one another and with the issues shaping our region.

I am especially proud of the Class 47 cohort. This group of emerging and established leaders embraced the spirit of connection at every turn. They approached each session with curiosity, openness, and a willingness to challenge perspectives—both their own and those of others. Their commitment to building authentic relationships will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on Charlotte and beyond.



This year has also reinforced that connection is not just about networking - it is about responsibility. It is about using the relationships we build to strengthen our community, address critical challenges, and create opportunities for all. Leadership Charlotte remains uniquely positioned to convene leaders who are ready to listen, collaborate, and lead with purpose.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our board, staff, alumni network, and community partners. Your commitment to this organization and its mission continues to sustain and grow its impact year after year. I am deeply grateful for your support and stewardship.

As we look ahead, I am confident that the connections formed through Leadership Charlotte will continue to inspire leadership that is thoughtful, inclusive, and transformative. Thank you for allowing me to serve in this role and to witness the extraordinary power of this community in action.

With gratitude,

Melissa W. Boone

Board President, 2025–2026

Leadership Charlotte

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Leadership Charlotte Alumni and Friends,

Another year in the books and what a terrific year it was. We welcomed LC47 as our newest alumni, and so many of you showed up and supported our mission in all kinds of amazing ways. As we reflect on the successful year, we are especially grateful for our alumni whose generosity continues to invest in the future of Leadership Charlotte. Your support helps ensure that emerging and established leaders alike have the opportunity to engage, learn, and contribute to a stronger Charlotte.

I also want to thank our committed Board of Directors for the great work they continue to do to make this organization sustainable for the future. Additionally, the year would not have been the success it was without the fantastic talents of our team. Erica Stanczuk and Winta Brehane deserve a standing ovation for the work they did. I hope you will help me thank them - every time you see them!

What we know:

The connections forged through Leadership Charlotte do not end at graduation. They continue to grow through the relationships we nurture, the conversations we engage in, and the commitment we share to strengthening our community.

How we know it:

As Melissa reflected on the power of connection throughout this year, I am reminded of how you connected this year across classes. I am reminded of the unique role our alumni network plays in cross-pollinating Charlotte. Every day, in ways we never see, Leadership Charlotte alumni bring curiosity, collaboration, and purpose to their organizations, neighborhoods, and civic life, helping to shape a stronger and more connected Charlotte.

Thank you for the many ways you continue to lead, serve, and invest in our community. Together, we carry forward the mission of Leadership Charlotte and demonstrate that leadership is not simply a position, but a lifelong commitment to the common good.



All my best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth M.', written in a fluid, cursive style.

Executive Director

2025 - 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Bill Mitchell (LC35)

Leslie Zenk (LC39)



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Left to Right: Bill Mitchell, Kelly Little, Erin Culbert, Melissa Boone, Elizabeth McKee, Lakeisha Temple, Patricke Ward, Mia Comeriato, Ibrahim Nasmyth

LEADERSHIP CHARLOTTE: CLASS 47



Class 47 approached their Leadership Charlotte experience with curiosity, courage, and a deep commitment to understanding the forces shaping our community. Throughout the program, they explored complex topics including civic engagement and political climate, community identity and equity, economic inequality and mobility, education and workforce development, homelessness and housing instability, housing access and affordability, infrastructure and transportation.

What set this class apart was not just what they learned, but how they showed up for one another. They fostered a space grounded in authenticity and trust, where honest conversations led to meaningful shifts in perspective. Class 47 embraced the discomfort that comes with growth, listening deeply, challenging thoughtfully, and ensuring every voice had a place at the table.

This spirit came to life across their program days. On Arts & Culture Day, participants saw new sides of one another, deepening their appreciation for diverse perspectives. During Community Trusteeship Day, Mr. James inspired many to reflect on their role and take action with purpose. These moments, among many others, captured the openness and shared commitment that defined the class.

Beyond the sessions, their collaboration was evident in the way they came together for a successful auction, reflecting both teamwork and a commitment to collective impact. Along the way, they built genuine friendships and strong professional connections, united by a desire to contribute to the betterment of Charlotte.

LEADERSHIP CHARLOTTE: CLASS 47

Kadeen Balthazar
Experis

Quentin Becker
Moore & Van Allen PLLC

Shelly Biby
Crisis Assistance Ministry

Lakeith Bradford
New York Life & New York
Life Investments

Nicole Burgess
Aries Solutions

Drew Cook
Balfour Beatty

Shaun Corbett
Lucky Spot Barbershop and
Lucky Spot Leadership &
Barber Academy

Chablis Dandridge
Dandridge Consulting
Group

Thelancy Durant
University of North Carolina
at Charlotte

Kristen Ellis
PNC

Stephen Fischbach
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Police Department

Laura Foor
**Charlotte Regional Business
Alliance**

Joanette Freeman
Mecklenburg County

Will Funderburg
Jabian Consulting

Natalie Godwin
National 4-H Council

Bethany Greene
Federal Reserve Bank of
Richmond

Tarena Griffin
Duke Energy

Amy Hastings
Grant Thornton

Mary-Margaret Kantor
Smart Start of Mecklenburg
County

Ryan Lineberry
Luquire

Miranda Lowe
Aprio Advisory Group, LLC

Patrick Lucitt
**The University of North
Carolina at Charlotte**

Rinav Mehta
**Central Piedmont Community
College**

Ruthie Mihal
Charlotte Bilingual Preschool

Adriane Muhammad
Choice One Consulting

Amanda Nitto
Robinson Bradshaw

Tramayne Osbourne
Mecklenburg County

Rapeeporn Payattakool
Lowe's

Taneise Perry
Stratacomm

Jaime Rechkemmer
Aim4Impact, LLC

Monica Roach
McFarland Construction

David Rossi
DPR Construction

Zach Rutledge
**Charlotte Regional Visitors
Authority**

John Sherry
Truist

Shawn Spohn
Atrium Health

Keith Stanley
University City Partners

Ben Stickney
McFarland Construction

Alec Stover
McMillan Pazdan Smith

Chris Thaxton
City of Charlotte

Liz Thomas-Hollier
Mecklenburg County - LUESA
GIS Division

Aleka Thrash
City of Charlotte

Xuan Truong
Triquetra Counseling PLLC

Kim Turner
Guidehouse

Kelsey Van Dyke
Do Greater Charlotte

Josef Walls
Sugar Creek Charter School

Allan Williams
Swinerton

Candace Williams
Novant Health

Lisa Williams
McGuireWoods LLP

Kimberly Young
USAA



LEADERSHIP CHARLOTTE: COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Leadership Charlotte doesn't tell you how to be a leader, it shows you. I came into the program knowing quite a bit about how our city works, but I'd never really reflected on the people who make it work. Leadership Charlotte connects you with those people so you can hear firsthand how change has happened as it is happening in our city, and invites you into a cohort of peers who are dedicated to making a difference as well.

-Chris Thaxton
Leadership Charlotte Class 47

ENCOUNTER CHARLOTTE



ENCOUNTER Charlotte Fall '25

Our biannual sessions take place during the fall and spring, providing a unique opportunity to gain firsthand insights from a wide range of local leaders and explore the inner workings of Charlotte. Through ENCOUNTER Charlotte, participants build valuable connections, expand their knowledge of the community, and discover meaningful ways to contribute to its growth.

ENCOUNTER Charlotte is an entryway to understanding and engaging with our community and its leadership. This program is designed for newcomers and open to anyone interested in actively participating in the Charlotte community.



ENCOUNTER Charlotte Spring '26



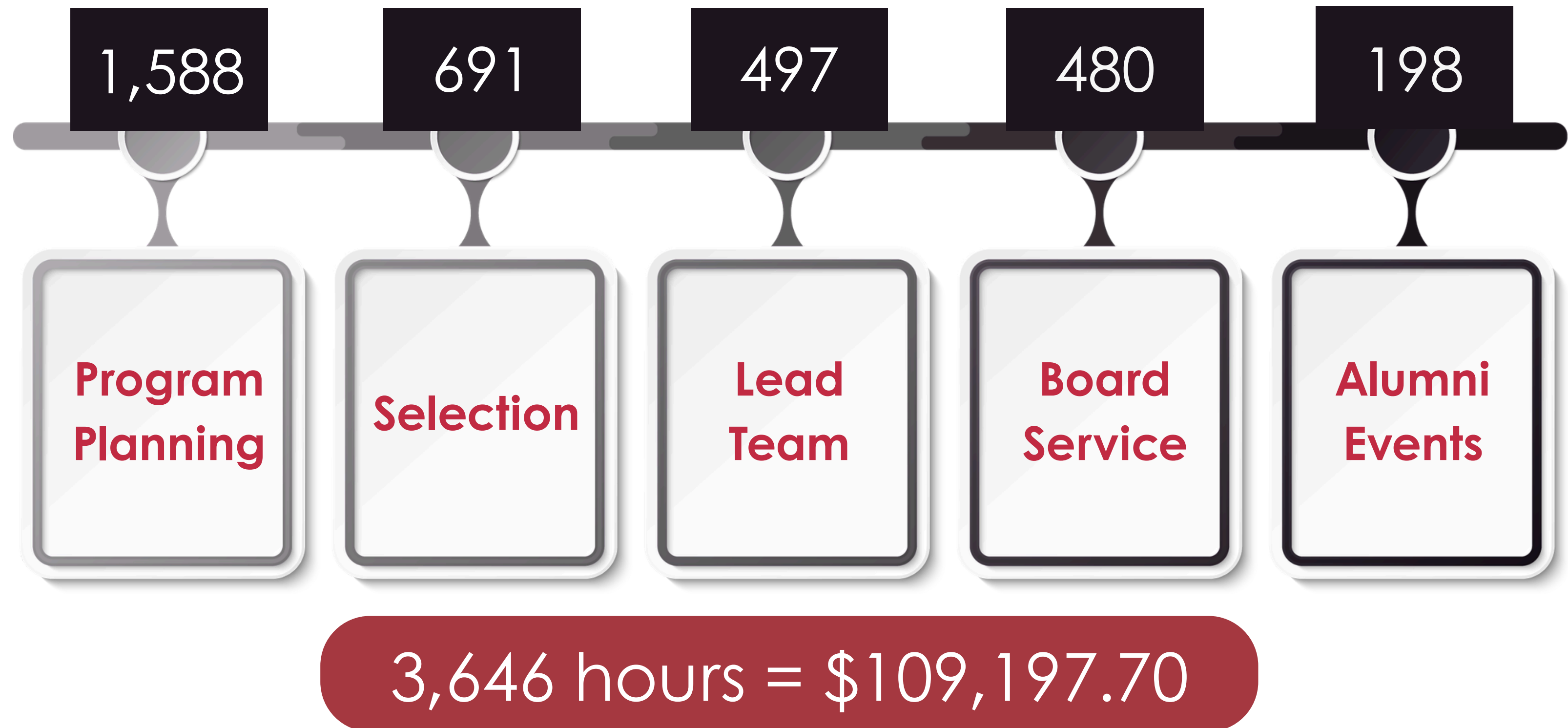
ENCOUNTER CHARLOTTE: ENERGIZED ENGAGEMENT

I have been in Charlotte for just over two years, and in these years, I've felt a bit like a guest and not immersed in the community. ENCOUNTER Charlotte helped me understand the landscape of the community, where we're headed and how I can get involved in a meaningful way. After participating in ENCOUNTER, I feel energized to dive into the community, and I can't wait to see what my future holds in Charlotte.

-Chardonnay Ismail
ENCOUNTER Charlotte, Spring '26

VOLUNTEER SERVICE TO LEADERSHIP CHARLOTTE

Volunteer service hours carry measurable financial value. Nationally, each hour is valued at around \$30, allowing nonprofits to reduce costs and redirect resources toward mission-driven work. Thank you to our volunteers—your time translates directly into dollars saved and greater community impact.



ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION



In October, Leadership Charlotte alumni gathered for a powerful community conversation on one of Charlotte's most pressing issues: Affordable Housing and Homelessness. Thank you to Divine Barrel Brewing for hosting us! A huge thanks to our panelists: **LaShonda McCorkle-Hart (LC46)**, **Nicholas Mathias (LC34)**, **Dionne Nelson (LC29)** and moderator: **Sabrina Clark (LC40)** for joining us. Special thanks to **Lennie Cox (LC23)** and **Lissette Torres (LC33)** for helping us connect personal purpose to collective impact.

GRATEFUL GATHERING



From assembling 800 SmileStrong kits for local students through **The Confidence Project**, to advancing sustainability with **Springclean**, to experiencing art therapy at **Mitchell's House**, our Grateful Gathering was all about giving back and connecting. We had an amazing turnout at the social too, where we heard from these amazing nonprofits and celebrated our accomplishments!

Thank you to the alumni who are the amazing people behind these nonprofits: **Hannah Jane Lloyd (LC46)**, **CT Anderson (LC36)**, and **Meg McElwain (LC29)**.

BETTER BOARDS: BIGGER IMPACT



In February, we gathered a group of current and aspiring board members for Better Boards: Bigger Impact presented by **Social Venture Partners Charlotte**. This workshop covered the essentials of effective board service, offering practical insights, real-world perspective, and tools participants can put into action right away.

A huge thank you to our outstanding facilitators: **Kristin Winkle Beck**, **Raj Merchant (LC44)**, **Denise Burkard**!

NONPROFIT SPEED DATING



Following Better Boards: Bigger Impact, our Nonprofit Speed Dating event at **Clancy & Theys Construction Company** brought together 20+ local nonprofit organizations for an evening rooted in exposure, exploration, and service to our city. The room was filled with meaningful conversations as leaders learned about the incredible work happening across Charlotte and explored ways to get involved—through board service, volunteering, advocacy, and hands-on support. We are grateful to all participating nonprofits, and our generous host Clancy & Theys for providing the space and food, with support from **Sara Downing (LC41)**

LEADERSHIP CHARLOTTE: IN REAL LIFE

LC IRL



This year we were thrilled to kick off a new informal alumni meet-up series: Leadership Charlotte IRL – In Real Life. These gatherings are designed to help LC alumni connect across classes and strengthen leadership ties throughout the city. Each event was hosted in a different Charlotte neighborhood to make it easy for alumni to engage close to home or work. The feedback was amazing, and we will continue LC IRL in 2026-2027!

Thank you to our hosts this year; **Melissa Boone (LC33), Bill Mitchell (LC35), Decker Ngongang (LC27), Leslie Zenk (LC39), Chris Smith (LC46), Maggie Commins (LC43), Danyae Thomas (LC46), Eleanor Shell (LC35), Kristy Herrmann (LC46), Elizabeth McKee (LC25), Lennie Cox (LC23), and Sonya Barnes (LC29).**

END OF YEAR SOCIAL



In May 2026, Leadership Charlotte alumni came together at the End of Year Social to celebrate a year of engagement, connection, and generosity. During our Day of Giving and throughout the year, our alumni community helped us surpass our fundraising goal of \$100,000! These funds will support the growth and development of Charlotte's future leaders.



Congratulations to Class 35 for earning the title of Best Class Ever for the *third* year in a row. Special thanks to **Brewer's at 4001 Yancey** for hosting, to **Adam Cline (LC44)** for sharing his exceptional musical talent with us again, and to all who attended and helped make the evening a memorable celebration of our year!



THANK YOU!

Our heartfelt thanks go to the people and organizations whose generous gifts of time and resources advanced Leadership Charlotte's mission this year. Your dedication continues to inspire and sustain our work.

Speakers

- Aaron Tauber
- Adrian Cox
- **Alexandra Arrington, LC40**
- Alice Marleaux
- Amanda Schneider
- Amilia Keomuongchanh
- Amy Aussieker
- Angela Navia
- Angie Bush
- Anthony Willis
- April Booker
- Arlissa Eason
- Ashelyn James
- **Ashley Jackson, LC48**
- **Bea Coté, LC40**
- Becky Santoro
- Benjamin Chambers
- Bernadette Allen
- Beth Brodie
- Beth Thompson
- Blake Martin
- Bob Folk
- Bonita Buford
- **Bonnie Tiernan, LC45**
- Boris 'Bluz' Rogers
- Brent Cagle
- **Brent Rinehart, LC46**
- Bruce Lillie
- Camisha McDaniel
- Dr. Candace Salmon-Hosey
- Carl Flemming
- **Carol Hardison, LC31**
- Carolyn Dowdy
- Carolyn Hazeldine
- Catherine Kummer
- Charlena Harvell-Carter
- Charles Page
- Cherie Smith
- Chrissy Kincheloe
- Christopher Bazzle
- Christy Clark
- Clarence Scott
- Clayton Sealey
- Dr. Cotrane Penn
- Courtney Armstrong
- Courtney Papalii
- **CT Anderson, LC36**
- Cynthia Klein
- Daniel Heaton
- **Danté Anderson, LC38**
- **David Head, LC29**
- Dejarious 'Jay' Bright
- Denise Burkard
- **Derrik Anderson, LC39**
- Diego Alba
- **Dionne Nelson, LC29**
- **Doug Bacon, LC32 (T)**
- Ebony Rao
- **Edwin Peacock, LC28**
- Dr. Elisabeth Pordes
- Elizabeth Carpenton
- Ely Portillo
- Emily Parker

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Speakers

- Emma Start
- Erin Stanforth
- **Estella Patterson, LC32**
- Fiona Baker
- Garth Regan
- Dr. Gia Paige
- **Glenda Allen, LC48**
- Governor Pat McCrory
- **Gretchen Carson, LC46**
- Gwendolyn Devins
- Hannah Bromberger
- **Hannah Jane Lloyd, LC46**
- Heather Bolick
- Hillary Crittendon
- Iris Hubbard
- Jackie Campbell
- Jada Person
- **James 'Smuggie' Mitchell Jr., LC14**
- Jamil Dyair Steele
- Janice Gray

- Javon 'Von' Jeter
- Jeff Robbins
- Jennifer Goodman
- Jennifer Pohlheber
- Jennifer Sudul Edwards
- Jennifer Williams
- **Jenny Jones, LC35**
- Jerrard Polk
- Jill Melyssa
- **Joey Baird, LC46**
- John Baker
- John Berkley
- John Higdon
- Jordan Bailey
- Jose Alvarez
- Joseph Lockler
- Julia Martin
- Kara Moskowitz
- Kate Burgess
- Kate Weaver

- Keiba Young
- Keila Marin
- Kelly Marks
- Keon Lewis
- Kieth Cockrell
- **Dr. Kimberly Scott, LC46**
- **Kristi Thomas, LC39**
- Kristin Babb
- Kristin Winkle Beck
- Larissa Mañón Mervin
- **LaShonda Hart, LC46**
- Lisa Nee
- Lori Thomas
- Madison Little
- Makayla Binter
- **Marcus Kimbrough, LC30**
- Dr. Mark Dugo
- Mark Jerrell
- **Marvin Kelley, LC46**
- Mary Jose Espinosa

THANK YOU!

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Speakers

- **Mary Margaret Kantor, LC47**
- Maryann Ruiz
- Matt Olin
- Matthew Mathis
- Dr. Matthew Sullivan
- **Meg McElwain, LC29**
- Dr. Michael Bitzer
- Michael Bryant
- Michelle Beyer
- Milagros (Mila) Ugueto de Sánchez
- **Monica Holmes, LC36**
- Monica Stevenson
- Morgan Faircloth
- Munro Richardson
- Nancy Brightwell
- Natalie Allen
- Nathan Phillips
- **Nic Mathias, LC34**
- **Nicole Campbell, LC46**
- Orrin Jackson
- Padgett Vaughn

- Dr. Pamela Grundy
- Paul Bill
- PJ McKenzie
- **Rahman Khan, LC25**
- **Raj Merchant, LC44**
- Dr. Raynard Washington
- **Richard Russell, LC43**
- Robert Touchstone
- Roger Johnson
- Russ Ferguson
- Ryan Neaves
- **Sabrina Clark, LC40**
- **Sara Trexler, LC38**
- Sarah Hazel
- SHAE Movement
- Shaheedah Ross
- Shahid Rana
- Shannon Binns
- Dr. Shanté Williams
- Sharon Jones

- Shawn Heath
- **Sidney Logan Echevarria, LC46**
- Stephanie Kelly
- **Stephen Iyevbele, LC41**
- Suzi Canali
- **Tara Terry, LC46**
- Tchernavia Montgomery
- Tim Miner
- Tina Postel
- Tom Gabbard
- Tom Hanchett
- Tracy Dodson
- Dr. Uma Suryadevara
- Walter Bowers
- Wendy Hickey
- William Lee
- William McNeely
- **Senator Woodson Bradley, LC45**
- Woody Washam
- **Dr. Yele Aluko, LC16**

➤ Denotes speakers who applied and were accepted to LC48!

THANK YOU!

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Organizations

- Bank of America
- Cbi Workplace Solutions
- **Charlotte Convention Center (CRVA)**
- Charlotte District Attorney's Office
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department
- City of Charlotte – Charlotte Area Transit System
- **City of Charlotte Government Center**
- Clancy & Theys Construction
- Divine Barrel Brewing
- **DPR Construction**
- Fire Station 30
- **Goodwil Opportunity Campus**
- Harvey B. Gantt Center
- Innovation Barn
- **Mecklenburg County**
- Mecklenburg County Sherri's Office
- Mitchell's House
- **Moore & Van Allen**
- MyersPark High School
- Publix
- Second Ward High School Gymnasium
- Social Venture Partners
- Springclean
- **Sugar Creek Charter School**
- The Confidence Project
- The Pearl



Giving to Leadership Charlotte is an **investment** in the future of our community.

Your generosity enables us to address immediate financial and scholarship needs, expand program opportunities, and bring fresh ideas to life. With annual donations from alumni and friends, we can enhance our curriculum, support the ongoing development of our graduates, and connect them with community service opportunities.

Your support not only empowers current participants but also creates a **lasting impact**, fostering a network of leaders dedicated to making Charlotte a better place for all. Together, we can continue to **inspire, connect, and transform lives.**

VISIONARY DONORS:

The highest tier for transformational, multi-year gifts, recognizing donors who have a long-term, strategic impact on Leadership Charlotte's mission.

Join us in shaping the future of Leadership Charlotte!

Scan the QR code below to make your impact today.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS:

The generosity & commitment of our donors empower us to make a meaningful impact in our community. Thank you for your ongoing support of Leadership Charlotte, which has helped fund vital programs and reach more individuals, creating lasting change.



EMPOWERING CHANGE:

2025-2026 CIRCLE OF DONORS

 DENOTES VISIONARY DONORS

Melissa Boone	Jeep Bryant	Donna Dunlap	David Head	Luis Lluberas	Jillian Peat Hamilton	Kenn Shrader
Jeff Bundy	Laura Budzichowski	Sidney Echevarria	Jason Herring	Stephen Lopez	Mark Peres	Andrea Skidmore
Dianne Chipps Bailey	Kerry Burch	Kathryn Edwards	Kristy Herrmann	Spencer Lueders	Pedro Perez	Christopher Smith
Derick Close	Sabrina Clark	Kamella Emmanuel	Jelani “J” Hill	Basil Lyberg	Shalanna Pirtle	Douglas Smith
Jacob House	Mia Comeriato	Douglas Evans	Rob Hillman	Kevin MacMurphy	Tom Pizzo	Ethan Smith
Steve Meier	Margaret Commins	Craig Fainstein	Scott Hinson	Tricia Magee	John Porter	David Snider
William Mitchell	Betsy Conway	Scott Fligel	Jennifer Holland	Nic Mathias	Kaitlin Price	Mark Stephens
Sheila Mullen	Timothy Cook	Janet Fortner	Michael Jackson	Ryder Mathias	Amanda Prothero	Amber Stuart
Ibrahim Nasmyth	Namaine Coombs	Liz Foster	Libby James	Jenny Matz	Vernetta Purcell-Morrow	Allison Taylor
Candice Smalls	Beatrice Coté	Jason Friday	Tom Joseph	David Maxwell	Sagar Rathie	Tara Terry
Lakeisha Temple	Lennie Cox	Mary Gallivan	Cheryl Joyner	Mack McDonald	Carol Rego	Christina Thigpen
David Wallin	Tod Creech	Kelly Gardner	Mary-Margaret Kantor	Marjorie McDowell	Courtney Rhodes	Sara Trexler
Patricke Ward	Will Crouse	Bill Geiger	Steve Keckeis	Elizabeth & William McKee	Brent Rinehart	John Scott Trotter
Jordan Abshire	Pat Crull	Kelly Glantz	Nikki Keith	Zachary McLaren	Renee Rizzuti	Debra Turner Bailey
Taylor Akindele	Erin Culbert	Adam Greene	Jarian Kerekes	Nancy McNelis	Rachel Roe	Jacqueline Tynan
Rhonda Anderson	Allen Davis	Yulonda Griffin	Stephanie Kiger	Ashley Medford	Jim Rogers	Neely Verano
Men Tchaas Ari	Ed Doughty	Farai Gwata	Jeff King	Benjamin Moody	Greg Schermbeck	Mary Vickers-Koch
Joey Baird	Sara Downing	Ryan Halbrook	Robert Koch	Luther Moore	Kimberly Scott	Carrie White
Judy Bamping	Martha Dozier	Elyse Hamilton-Childres	Aaron Laughlin	Maddie Myers	Kevin Scully	Thesha Woodley
Katie Benston	Liz Duda	Carol Hardison	Wendy Laxton	Raj Natarajan	Chris Shade	Shamira Wright
Alecia Bracy		Roberta Harper	Freda Lester	Decker Ngongang	Eleanor & Blake Shell	Carrie Wunner
Elena Arecco Bridgmon		Andre' Harvey	Jia Lin-Bothe	Kimberly Oliver	Gina Sheridan	Sivilay Xayasaene
					Paul Shipley	Julia Vulcan

***Thank you to LC47 for raising additional funds at their Closing Weekend auction!**

PARTNERSHIP CONNECTIONS

featuring KIETH COCKRELL



In the spring we spent a meaningful morning with our partners at DPR Construction. We brought together new and familiar faces from our Corporate and Community partners to connect, collaborate, and strengthen Charlotte's business community.

Our keynote speaker, Kieth Cockrell, shared his perspective on the importance of cross-sector relationship building and the positive impact it has on our communities. We want to thank **Andy Silagyi (LC45)** and **Riley Clements (LC46)** from **DPR Construction** for hosting and bringing this event together.

COMMUNITY & CORPORATE PARTNERS

