



L I N K U N L I M I T E D S C H O L A R S

ANNUAL IMPACT AN **2022 2023** REPORT

**Building tomorrow's
Black leaders**

today



**LINK
Unlimited
Scholars**

Dear LINK *Community*

As we usher in a new year and reflect on 2023, we are happy to capture our achievements, challenges, and impact from the past year in this report. We remain grateful for the dedication and unwavering support of our LINK community. Thank you!

It was a busy year that centered around change and our commitment to delivering engaging and quality programming for all of our Scholars. We launched new systems, processes, and structures to improve operating efficiencies, maximize productivity, and ensure organizational goals were achievable. We recognized and celebrated our investment in Black Excellence via the accomplishments and success of our Scholars. Thanks to the hard and steadfast work of our team, we successfully served nearly 300 Scholars, awarded over \$360,000 in scholarships, sustained and secured new funding, hosted a successful golf outing, and increased our media presence... just to name a few.

We are proud of what we have cultivated together and look forward to another year of growth and achievement. As we near our 60th year of operation, we remain committed to growing the organization and the number of Scholars we serve each year. We have set some ambitious, but what we believe to be realistic, goals for ourselves over the next few years. We know our model works; therefore, our strategic priorities are to expand our impact and investments in Chicago, serve more students, and focus our recruitment in some of the most under-resourced neighborhoods across the city. Our ability to adapt, learn, and pivot in the face of adversity has been, and will continue to be, critical to achieving these goals.

We invite you to explore this year's report and read more about our shared success. Again, thank you for your belief in our mission and your investment in Black Excellence. Here's to another impactful year!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toinette".

DR. TOINETTE GUNN
President & CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Johnson".

KEN JOHNSON
Chairman of the Board

Investing in the future



DR. JANINE FRANKLIN
Vice President, Programs & Evaluation

FY23 was a productive year! Nearly 300 Scholars across our Jr. LINK and High School Fellowships participated in over 20 programming opportunities focused on academic enrichment, leadership development, volunteerism, college access, career exploration, and identity development. Some of those activities included:

Saturday Academy

A core LINK program where Scholars received academic support, leadership development, as well as built community amongst each other.

Scholar Retreats

A space for Scholars to explore identity development, socioemotional learning, and build community.

College Informational Sessions

Various colleges came to discuss the admissions process for their specific universities with LINK Scholars.

HBCU Night

An evening where Scholars were able to learn more about the admissions process and student experiences of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Career Panels

Professionals throughout the Chicagoland area from fields spanning law to social work came to discuss their careers and paths with Scholars.

Angel Tree

A service initiative to provide children whose parents are incarcerated with gifts from their parent for the holiday season.

MLK Day of Service

The LINK community created gift baskets for those transitioning from being homeless to having housing.

Annual Scholar Celebration

A space that celebrated our graduating seniors, their transition to collegiate Scholars, and their over 200 collective college acceptances.

Our high school Scholars ended the academic year with an average 3.21 GPA. As FY23 came to an end, we welcomed our newest cohort of 60 Scholars (Class of 2027) and five new Program Team members, increasing our capacity as we focus on our strategic growth priorities.

PROGRAM YEAR IN Review CLASS OF 2023



31
Scholars



3.2
Average
GPA



100%

College Acceptance
with 218 collective
college acceptances



\$16.1M
in Scholarships



66%
full tuition
funding



45%
full tuition+
room & board

AWARDS & RECOGNITION



3 Jordan Wings Scholars



1 Posse Scholar
(Pomona College)



1 Amazon Future
Engineer Scholarship



1 Questbridge Finalist

MENTORSnapshot



Our mentors comprise a pivotal aspect of LINK programming and play a key role in supporting our Scholars on their journey to, through, and beyond college.

Over **220** Mentors participated with their Scholar Mentees in **21+** hours of LINK programming

Our *Mission*

To connect Black students with resources and opportunities that strengthen the necessary skills to succeed as they advance to, through, and beyond college.

Our *Vision*

Through our programming, we aim to increase the economic mobility and stability of Black students and cultivate a diverse leadership pipeline in our city and nation.

Our *6-year* fellowship model

MIDDLE SCHOOL



Academic Enrichment



Leadership Development



High School Options



College Exposure

HIGH SCHOOL



Scholarship & Academic Enrichment



Leadership Development



Career Exposure



College Access

Keeping it in the *Family*

Often, we are asked how students and families learn about LINK and our programs. For much of our history, the response has been, and continues to be, word-of-mouth. Families enroll their children, then sing LINK's praises to nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

That actually captures **Corie Rowland's** LINK story. Corie's friend from church, and mother of a LINK Alumna, told her about LINK. After learning about the enrichment opportunities, leadership development, career exposure, and the promise of mentoring in the high school fellowship, Corie immediately knew she wanted her sons to participate. The boys, **Ethan (8th grade) & Evan (7th grade)**, weren't so sure and didn't know what to expect. Ethan thought **"it would be weird. But when I saw what it was, I thought it was pretty cool."**



ETHAN, CORIE & EVAN
Jr. LINK Family

Since joining Jr. LINK, both boys are already showing a deeper knowledge about career opportunities, which Corie attributes to their participation in the LINK Career Connection Collective panels on Law, Government and Public Administration. So far, hearing Ethan and Evan rave about what they learned from the career panels has been the highlight of her LINK experience. Ethan was most impressed by the Patent Lawyer. **"I didn't think you needed one of those. I thought you just applied for one and then bam, you got a patent. I didn't know it was a court thing. I didn't even know some of those jobs existed and that opened my horizon! I was exposed to different jobs and careers for my future and that was a big blessing,"** said Evan. **"I feel like I'm going to have a great future with LINK."**

Corie is excited about her sons' future involvement in LINK and has made it a priority. Corie says, **"learning prioritization is critical in this journey. God, family, school, Jr. LINK, then other extracurricular activities. People make time for what is important. To our family, Jr. LINK is a high priority, so we have created a rhythm that helps us balance everything."**



When asked what Corie would say to those who are considering investing in LINK, she had this to say, **"We could all benefit from having aid to help us have the best possible foot forward in life. We do not all start life at the same starting line, so to be able to give someone an extra push is a blessing. LINK gives students the best opportunity to be the best version of themselves and expand their horizon and exposure."**

Program *Highlight*

LINK Unlimited Scholars stands as a beacon, empowering Black students and opening pathways to higher education. However, providing the resources and opportunities needed to ensure our Scholars advance to, through, and beyond college requires collaborative efforts and community partnerships. As such, our partnership and collaboration with the esteemed Jordan Wings Foundation, renowned for its commitment to education, has illuminated the futures of numerous LINK Scholars, transcending financial barriers and unlocking their potential.

Since its inception in 2015, the Jordan Brand Wings Scholarship Program (Jordan Wings) has epitomized Michael Jordan's legacy by granting scholarships and resources to dedicated high school students. More than a monetary support system, this initiative stands tall, offering unwavering guidance throughout the students' college journey and beyond. Wings scholarship applicants are nominated by strategic partners like LINK and recipients join a massive community of Wings Scholars.

Through this impactful partnership, LINK has facilitated college admissions and completely eliminated the financial burdens for many Scholars. The Wings scholarship is a last dollar scholarship that bridges the funding gap between the total cost of college and financial aid to significantly reduce or eliminate the family contribution.

As the partnership continues to flourish, it remains a testament to the collective impact of organizations coming together to support ambitious Black minds, pouring into a generation poised for greatness. In the LINK Class of 2023, three Scholars were awarded this prestigious Jordan Wings scholarship. We celebrate their success and the impact this partnership has brought forth.



**NATALIA
GONZÁLEZ RENÉ**

Northwestern University

Getting the Jordan Wings Scholarship was an affirmation that I'm capable of achieving my goals and there are people who believe in me. The Jordan Wings Scholarship has also provided me with a safety net that, despite any fluctuations I might experience in financial aid in the coming years, they'll be there to cover the gap. I'm very grateful to be a Wings Scholar.



**AUTTUM
THOMAS**

Spelman College

The Jordan Wings Scholarship provided me with opportunities and financial support to be successful in college. Through the Wings mentoring program I was able to navigate my way through challenges as a freshman and resources to maintain good academic standing during my first semester.



**MARQUELLE
WATERFORD**

Morehouse College

The Jordan Wings scholarship means a lot to me because of the amazing opportunity that it gave me, along with the change of trajectory that has set me up for who I'm becoming day in and day out.

Collective Impact

The *power* of collaboration & partnerships



MARION KLATKA
CFO, Marist High School



DR. ANNE MARIE TIRPAK
President, De La Salle Institute

LINK Unlimited Scholars has played a critical role in transforming the lives of students through educational scholarships and academic support. Anne Marie Tirpak, President of De La Salle Institute, and Marion Klatka, Chief Financial Officer of Marist High School, provide insight into the profound impact of LINK's enduring partnership.

De La Salle Institute is one of LINK's longest-standing school partners - in fact, our founder, John Parmer, and the first ever LINK Scholar, are alumni of De La Salle. So, not surprising that De La Salle has the largest enrollment of LINK Scholars with 33 students currently attending. President Tirpak highlights that the partnership, which began with LINK's inception, extends beyond financial aid, providing crucial support for academic success. **"LINK supports the whole development of the child. It takes a community to help foster our community of students, but also grow a city...I love that we have these angels throughout the city that are supporting schools and kids."** Tirpak also shared that nearly 90% of De La Salle students receive financial assistance, so every little bit of support is helpful. Partnership with scholarship organizations like LINK, whose scholarships cover 15% of tuition, are appreciated and important to sustain.

Marion Klatka of Marist High School shared stories illustrating LINK's role in helping students overcome obstacles. Reflecting on the long-standing partnership with LINK, Klatka named current Class of 2025 Scholar, Princess Burress, as a standout success whose resilience and self-advocacy impressed him. Klatka shared, **"She knows the impact of trying to find her way to college and she's already exploring different ideas about college. It tells me that this partnership with LINK is important to her."**

He also appreciated the continued support for Scholars both academically and personally as many students rely on their schools and outside organizations when navigating a variety of situations.

Both leaders highlighted the ripple effect of donor support. Klatka emphasized how donor contributions positively impact students' lives, while Tirpak stressed the importance of financial resources for achieving educational goals, stating, **"the money is going to kids who are most in need...not only financially, but in their holistic development. The type of student that is served by LINK are the students who most need that support. So, I think it's a compound: the donor gets the benefit of knowing they're supporting a good cause and there's the ripple effect of it going to the student and maybe affecting their life in unimaginable ways."**

The lasting impact of LINK Unlimited Scholars in partnership with De La Salle Institute and Marist High School underscores the power of collaboration. As Tirpak and Klatka attest to LINK's unwavering support over the years, we are proud that our partnership is not only financial; it is a testament to the shared mission of fostering academic success and holistic development for Black students in Chicago.



Our Partners leverage their time, talents and resources to open the paths of success to our Scholars. Scan the QR code for the full list.

Mentor Highlight

Building strong *Mentoring* relationships

LINK Mentors are pivotal to our Scholars' success. They make a four-year commitment to support their Scholars on their journey to, through, and beyond college. What inspires one to make such a commitment? Often, Mentors derive that inspiration from previous life experiences, like Barb Pazan, who saw mentoring as another form of coaching. **"The company I work for, Mesirow Financial, is very big into giving back to the Chicagoland community, so when the opportunity came up, I thought I'd enjoy something like LINK. I used to coach volleyball for many years, and I miss it, so this is another way to coach a young person and have a positive and meaningful impact in their life."** Nadine Moultaali drew her inspiration from her own first-generation college student story where she experienced firsthand the power of mentorship from her mentor who advised her to "pay it forward." **"There are so many factors that play into a student getting to and through college and I love being a part of that process."**

Like any relationship, it takes time for Scholars and Mentors to connect and develop trust. Barb explained how she has built a strong relationship with her Scholar, Haley. **"I speak to Haley every week and spend as much time with her as possible. Communicating with your mentee is very important and that starts with listening. Remembering details being thoughtful and engaged in has helped us to connect with Haley. Finding something in common to share and talk about and or do together is helpful too."**

Nadine also had some great advice to share on this topic. **"In-person interactions are so key. The phone is great for maintenance, but those meet-ups are so huge for us. Plan an activity gives you something to do but also an opportunity to chat. Do something fun! Find out what they like to do, and do that! Take the time to build that comfort level, and then you can give them more freedom to choose activities or experiences that they want to explore. Follow-up on things I said I was going to do! It's so key to building trust. Ari (Jones) needs me to be consistent in my actions and follow-through."**

Mentoring offers benefits not only for the Scholars, but for the Mentors as well. **"I feel empowered to empower others. It's not just one thing I am sharing with her, it's my presence, my experiences, and my life. I love being able to help Ari get on this path of success, and I know she is going to pay it forward to a whole new generation,"** said Nadine.

Barb added, **"This experience has made me realize how much I missed working with youth. Helping them and seeing them grow into an amazing young person is special and not something to take for granted. You are welcomed and trusted by their parents to do your best for their child, so it's something I take very seriously and I'm grateful for the relationship we have with our mentee's family as well. They are invested in giving her the best opportunities to succeed in life. I truly care about her and want the very best for her. Seeing her graduate from high school, then college and whatever is after that... It would be special to be a part of that."**



NADINE MOULTAALI

Mentor to Scholar Ari J.



BARB PAZAN

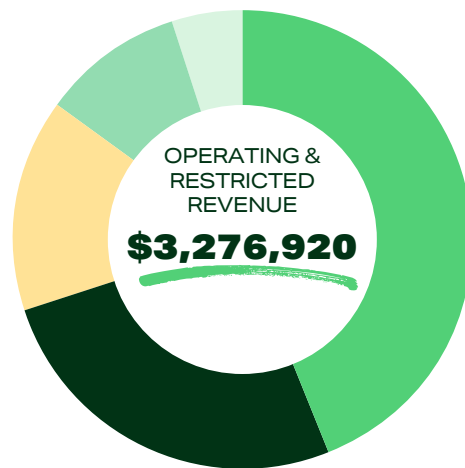
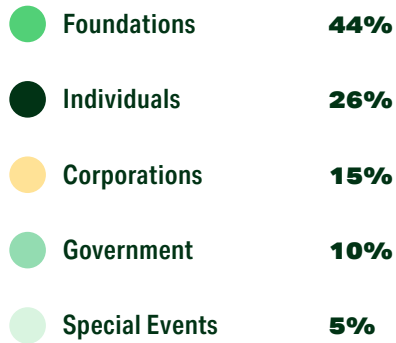
Mentor to Scholar Haley W.

Financial *Overview*

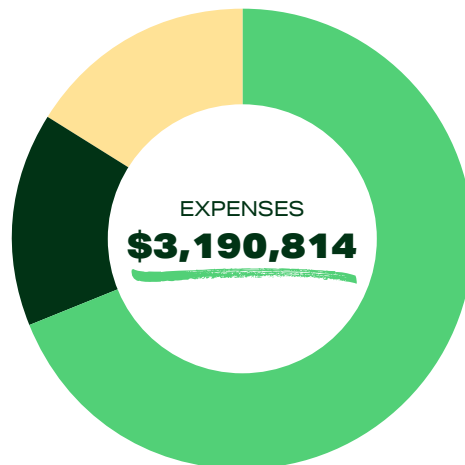
FY2023 REVENUE

Investment Summary

Generous partners invested in LINK Scholars with one-time and multi-year commitments to support our current and future operations . Here's a snapshot of the impact your gifts are making collectively for LINK Scholars:



FY2023 EXPENSES



Our Donors

LINK Unlimited Scholars is grateful for the number of donors that supported the success of our incredible Scholars. Special recognition to those contributors.

\$100,000+

GCM Grosvenor
Grand Victoria Foundation
Kirkland & Ellis, LLP
Leo and Yuki Graham Foundation
Linden Capital Partners
Mesirow
Paul M. Angell Family Foundation
Stephen and Allison Hackney

\$50,000-99,999

Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation
Kenneth Morrison
Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
MIGMIR
Rivers Casino Foundation
The John & Kathleen
Schreiber Foundation

\$10,000-\$49,999

Allen Ashley
Allstate Insurance Company
Anonymous Donor
Ardmore Roderick
Art J and Karen Massolo
Barbara Kucera
Clayco
Daniel and Mary Cox
Diane & Bruce
Halle Foundation
Enterprise Holdings Foundation
Fifth Third
Chicagoland Foundation
Finnegan Family Foundation
Full Circle Foundation
George and Abby Lombardi
Golder Family Foundation
Jack E. and Cheryl Neal
Jerry Kane
Johnson Blumberg
& Associates, LLC
Jordan Brand
Julie and Bryan Lamb
Kathy Schumacher
Kenilworth Union Church
Marcy and Greg Carlin
McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Ltd
Old National Bank
Patrick Nash Jr.
Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas
Seth Hemming
Stears Family Foundation
Steve Patton
Team Brown Foundation
Thomas and Carol Hynes
The Sampson Family
Charitable Fund
US Bank Foundation
Wilson Garling Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

Accenture
Aisha and Jonathan Lavinier
AlixPartners, LLP
Andrew and Alice Fischer
Charitable Trust
Andy Ebbott
Angela Miller-May
Antunovich Associates
Barack and Michelle Obama
Bob DeBolt
CME Group Foundation
Franklin and Crystal Reynolds
Gelber Group
Gerry & Bill Cowlin Foundation
Gilda and Timothy Spencer
Gregory and Erin Mathurin
Heidi Albert
Jack Wold
Jason and Heather DeJonker
Jason Brown
Jessica Ludwig
John J. Hartman
Jules Marling IV
Julie Welborn
Katie Kornel
Kenneth Jonhson
Lawrence Desideri
Mark McLaughlin
Mark McCann
Matthew Panzica and Patrick
Alvarez
Merit Capital
Michael J Gill
Michael Girsch
Michael and Margaret Revord
Opus Foundation
Out of The Box Foundation
Pacific Program Management
Patti Malloy
Paul Williams
Pivotal Growth Partners LLC
Raven-Seymone Johnson
Seymour A. Cohen
Family Foundation
Steven and Karen Napolitano
Terrence and Garrett Dee
The Vitruvian Fund
Vincent J Connelly
Wellington Management
William Blair

\$1,000-\$4,999

Ajay Mago
Alfredo and Ada Capitanini
Foundation
Alden Sulger
Andrew Reese-Clauson
Ardrell Mannings

Astin Hayes
Beam Suntory
Brent Baccus
Brian Hodapp
Bruce F Martin
Cabrera Capital
Carol Galuhn
Cecilia Hynes Griffin
Charities Aid
Foundation of America
Charles Gross
Chicago Sunday Evening Club
Chris Perry
Craig Dunham
Craig Richey
Daniel Perlman
David Neely
David DuRoss
Debby Caldwell
Edward T. Swan
Edward Bourelly
Edward Calnan
Erica Ligons
Ever Loved via Charityvest
Fran O'Malley
Gary Wainer
Gift of Hope Community
Foundation
Halee Stirrat
Harold and Suzanne Tobin
Hector Regalado
Heidi Hockberger
Janet Rauschenberger
Jarrett Gross
Jenne Myers
Jerome Girsch
Joel Gomberg
John J. Gearen
John Donley
John Castellano
Judith Hynes
Kamilah White
Kathryn Montgomery
Kenneth Jones
Kevin Hynes
Kila Weaver
Kimberly Hinton
Leslie Bond
Martrice Caldwell
Michael Fieweger
Michael Slade
Monarch Awards Foundation Inc.
Monica Paine
Nadine Moultaali
Natalie Brown
Nicole Olson
Rachel & Eli Strick
Rashidi Hodari
Raymond C. Parmer

Richard Howell Jr.
Robert Fliegelman
Robert Griggs
Robert Half International
Corporate Citizenship
Robert Westropp Jr.
Robert Zaideman
Ruth Bahe-Jachna
Ryan Arenson
Salesforce
Stephen Hudson
Stuart Frankel
Thomas Conway
Thomas Gates
Thomas Moran
Tia Chambers
Timothy Knapp
Toinette and Lorenzo Gunn
Tommie Meyers
Torrence and Jaime Moore
Twin Orchard Country Club
Weiss & Company LLP
Zachary Ciullo

\$500-\$999

Aleta S Williams
Boluwatife Johnson
Brian Strike
Brian Rice
Chester Peterson
Christopher Ashby
Ciara Janae Swan
Ciere Cornelius Boatright
Claretha Anthony
Cliff Norris
Dana Brewer Harris
Daniel L Ring
Darien West
Edward Fishman
Emily Helm
Erik Barefield
Franchella Jennett
Garry Cohen
Gavin Campbell
James M Kramer
James Mangan
Jeffrey Levine
Jeremy Daniel
Jocelyn Francoeur
John O'Neil
Jonathan Kohn
JP Morgan Chase Foundation
Kristina Pierce
Leslie Gardner Heller
Marshall Schmitt
Marta Cuciurean-Zapan
Miriam Peguero Medrano
Nancy Kalchbrenner
Nick Farwig

Paul Furlow
 Robert Harris
 Ryan Whitacre
 Shilpa Gokhale
 Tameka Johnson
 Terry Mostrom
 Ty Mayberry
 William H Kelley
 Workday
 Yolanda Knight

\$1-\$499
 AArete LLC
 Aaron Travis
 Aaron Espinoza
 Aaron Klein
 Aaron Seabaugh
 Abbott Laboratories
 Abiola Allen
 Adam Stern
 Alayna Crenshaw
 Alex Echols
 Alexandra Davis
 Alex Newsom
 Alex Timchak
 Alicia Brown
 Alison Finkel
 Allan Tomlinson
 Alonzo Manning
 Amanda Alexander
 American Family Insurance
 Dreams Foundation
 Andrade Gonzalez LLP
 Andrea Kirsh
 Andrew Fullett
 Andrew Ross
 Angela Washelesky
 Anicia A Miller
 Anthony and Nicole Ashe
 Anthony Cregler
 Anthony Gattuso
 Aria Mohaghegh
 Austin Saari
 Bank of America Matching Gifts
 Ben Jahnke
 Bethel Kifle
 Blackfriars "57"
 Bob Johnson
 Brandon Greene
 Brendan Carter
 Brendan Krouch
 Brendan Ryan
 Brian Crowley
 Brian Hall
 Brian Kobylinski
 Brian Lorber
 Brian Winterfield
 Brittney Kohn
 Cameron Cummins
 Cameron Elmore
 Candice Whitfield
 Carlarta Ratchford
 Carolyn I. Robertson
 Casey Cooley
 Casey McGushin
 Catherine Adduci
 Catherine La Fleur
 Chris King
 Christina Loza
 Christopher Batton
 Christopher Lynn
 Chuck Ohs
 CMC Materials
 Cole Walker
 Colin MacLean
 Colin Tomazin

Connie Thomas
 Conor Kolstad
 Courtney Thomas
 Cydnee Dotson
 Damien Trimuel
 Danah Bialoruski
 Daniela Abratt
 Daniel Guerin
 Daniel Fortman
 Darci Lewis
 Darren Brown
 Darryl Baker
 Dave Pearre
 David Richards
 Dean Egarter
 Delwin McCloud
 Dennis A White
 Denys Pilecky
 Devynn Tracy
 Diane Dugard
 Dominique Turner
 Donna Czukla
 Donna Isaac
 Doug Reichl
 Dwayne Paul
 Earl Matthews
 Ebonee Williams
 Elan Saynay
 Elena Dennis
 Elijah Bebora
 Elizabeth Barr
 Elliott Rodgers
 Elliott Segarra
 Erica Battle
 Erica Byrd
 Eric McClintock
 Erin Straza
 Evan Sharp
 Evan Doherty
 Frederick Gillis
 Gerald Gilliard
 Gilena Monroe
 Google
 Great Lakes Landscape Company
 Gregory L Williams
 Hallie Hemingway
 Harold Baldwin
 Hershel D Wallace
 Ileana Ramsay
 Jacquelin Baker
 Jacqueline McMorris
 Jadya Khalil Thomas
 Jalen Frazier
 James Coleman
 James Kelly
 Jamie Shields
 Janis Stradley
 Jasmine Berry
 Jason Green
 Jason Johnson
 Jay Weaver
 Jean H Auguste
 Jeanmarie Bisceglia
 Jeffery Beckham
 Jeff Johnson
 Jeff Jones
 Jeff Paramore
 Jeff Wrobel
 Jennifer Buie Hune
 Jennifer Foether
 Jennifer Lockbaum
 Jennifer Rosenblum
 Jenny Jones
 Jeremy Cohen
 Jerry McQuay
 Jessica MacLean

Jill Warning
 Joann Budzileni
 Joann Lewis
 John Baik
 John Gilligan
 John Liberty
 Jonathan Adair
 Jonathan Ross
 Jonathan Strauss
 Jones Lang LaSalle
 Joseph Deal
 Julia Nowicki
 Julie Beyers
 Justin Kozlowski
 Kandria Daniels
 Kate Faems Boor
 Kate Lazarus
 Kathleen Brennan
 Kathleen Osta
 Katie Johnson
 Keith W Eickenberg
 Kenneth Johnson
 Ken Stemke
 Kiersten Hill
 Kimberly Parente
 Kimiko Broome
 Kristin Corradini
 Kristyn Harrison
 Kyle Walker
 Lake Forest Community
 High School
 Landon N Johnson
 Laquenta Rudison
 LaShon Gurrola
 Lee Shubert
 Lena Gonzalez
 Lenny Asaro
 Linda Sackey
 Lindsay Carlin
 Lisa Jakob
 London Bryce Hampton
 Lucas Grant
 Lynn Gaffigan
 Madison Pearson
 Marc Brown
 Marc Marion
 Marcus Brady
 Marcus Davis
 Marcus Hunter
 Mariah Rena Carey
 Marie Maurice
 Marin Gow
 Mariya Amari Mason
 Markayle Tolliver
 Mark Fennell
 Mark Pincus
 Mark Rule
 Marquelle Waterford
 Matthew Johnson
 Maurice Wilson
 Michael Hauser
 Michael Wheeler
 Michelle Nickel
 Microsoft Matching Gifts Program
 Mike DeGraf
 Mike Eshun
 Mike Many
 Mike Sefton
 Mindy Credi
 Mishell Kneeland
 Morgan Holmes
 Natasha Norris
 Network for Good
 Olu Jolaoso
 Opal Jones
 Oteia Bruce

OTR Transportation LLC
 Pat Pipp
 Patrick Fisher
 Patrick Mulcahy
 Paul Hybel
 Pedro Menocal
 Ray Blackwell
 Raymond Holt
 Renee Schreiber-O'Shea
 Robert Winner
 Robin Wofford
 Ron Dubois
 Ronny Drabeck
 Rush Howell
 Ryan Finnamore
 Ryan Mannell
 Ryan Ptak
 Samaia Nunn
 Samantha Caldwell
 Samantha Lacey
 Sandy Morris
 Sarah Chodera
 Sarah Eman
 Seth Lewis
 Shawn Nelson
 Sheila Jackson
 Sheila Radford-Hill
 Shelly Fujikawa
 Sherina Smith
 Sheryl Bialoruski
 Shirley Gunn
 Sinead Alonzo
 S Saliya Subasinghe
 Stacey Austin
 Stacey Kim
 Stanley Snarskis
 Stephanie Anthony
 Steve Marks
 Steve Lockwood
 Susan Valentine
 Svetlana Lovejoy
 Tamara Collins
 Teanisha Eli
 Tennille Hoover
 Teresa Dan
 Terrilynn Short
 Tessa Court
 Thomas Cammack
 Tia Marie France
 Timo Rehbock
 Timothy & Sharon Terrell
 Tom McGurk
 Tomorris Jocelyn
 Torrance R Rogers
 Torrey Barrett
 Tracey Everett
 Travis Hague
 Tyler Herrell
 Veronica Allen
 Vickie Horn
 Victoria Bouchard
 Vilma Fermin
 Warren Ragland
 William Brower
 William Franklin
 Wylon Harper
 Yolaine Jean

A Legacy of Impact

30+ years of *support*

Like many others, the story of how Jack Neal learned about LINK Unlimited Scholars started with his employer. In the early 1990's, Jack was an Executive at Continental Bank. **"The bank was interested in having its Executives participate in organizations that helped the community. So, we were introduced to LINK and I became a sponsor and Mentor."**

Jack quickly came to admire the thought process behind the LINK model, which at the time was helping talented students attend a catholic high school and pairing them with Chicagoland professionals as Sponsors/Mentors. Over the years, Jack has mentored at least six students. While he hasn't served in the mentoring capacity in quite some time, he recalls that all of his Scholar/Mentees were dedicated, committed, and hard-working students who came from families with parents who understood the need for education. **"They found their way through LINK and I am proud of them for taking what was available to them and using it to their advantage."**

Jack not only focused his efforts on helping his Scholar/Mentees and providing personal financial support to LINK, but he introduced others to the organization and encouraged them to do the same. His impact on the organization was recognized in 2010 when LINK awarded him the 6th Annual Dream Keepers Award for 18 years of support. **"There aren't many organizations that really understand what it takes to help those with challenges in their lives deal with those challenges and succeed. LINK gets it and really understands what it takes. It's tried and true and second to none! "**

Now entering his 34th year as a LINK supporter, Jack is ramping up for more! He is committed to helping LINK continue to fulfill its mission, even when his estate has to do so on his behalf. **"I've been very lucky in life...and have made plans for my estate to provide support for the organization."** Furthermore, Jack is not passive in his continued support. As a retiree, Jack is charging others, specifically the next generation of individuals succeeding in their careers, to take up the torch and support LINK. He recognizes that this is not easy work and commends the LINK team for their commitment and skills they bring to make LINK a successful business. From the Scholars, to the staff, to the community of supporters, **"LINK has a legacy of talented people."**



JACK NEAL & FAMILY

Alumni Feature

Advancing through college



NOAH BUFORD
LINK Alum, Class of 2021

LINK's mission is to connect Black students with resources and opportunities that strengthen the skills to succeed as they advance to, through and beyond college. Specifically, LINK is invested in helping Scholars to build a foundation and support system to thrive in middle and high school that will catapult their academic success, guide college selection and pave the way to a college degree, cultivate career awareness, and nurture the voice, agency, and confidence to become the next generation of leaders.

Collegiate Scholar/Alum Noah Buford has experienced all of these. Now in her third year of college at The University of Southern California, Noah can make the direct link (pun intended) as to how LINK has and continues to shape life.

In high school, **"I wasn't always aware of timelines or maybe things I should be concerned about as far as picking a career or looking at schools or scholarships. LINK kept me focused on things that the average high schooler probably wouldn't be thinking about because they're doing school, extracurriculars and everything like that. LINK kept me on track to do the things that I wanted to for college, career, and everything else."**

"As I reflect on the LINK program, it actually had a big impact on what I've done so far because without LINK, I wouldn't have applied to and received the Jordan Wings scholarship, which is the reason I got the Nike internship. Also, I think LINK increased my professionalism... a big thing that has helped me to this day. It keeps me on track and helps me remember how to use things to my advantage." Noah learned to engage and stay connected to the people met through LINK. She credits LINK for first internship and summer work experience that wasn't in the fast food industry.

These experiences helped to build skills and a résumé to secure future internships. **"Being in LINK offered me a lot of opportunities that I've received in college. I think having all of these opportunities at hand and making sure that I applied for them definitely shaped what I'm doing now and allowed me to remember things like using my connections."**

Noah's greatest takeaway from LINK is advice she'd like to share with other LINK Scholars. **"Join LINK with an open mind. Understand that all of the events and opportunities that LINK supplies you are with your best interest in mind. Use all of the resources provided because it'll definitely pay off in the long run. You never really know how things will turn out for you, so make sure to put your best foot forward with everything because... it could turn out in your favor. I think that's the reason why I always make sure to do the best work I can and be nice to whoever I can."**

LINK'S IMPACT

LINK afforded me the opportunity to attend De La Salle Institute, where I was able to better prepare myself for college and the professional world. Having a mentor allowed me to have access to environments I normally would not have experienced, while also motivating me to strive for more in my life.

As I have continued to have success in my career, I realized that LINK also instilled in me the desire and importance to give back through volunteerism and mentorship.



JOHN MACKEY

Regional VP, Enterprise
LINK Alum,
Class of 2000

Our *Strategic* priorities

1. Expand Scholar Impact

- Grow our student population to 500+ Scholars by 2027

2. Broaden High School Horizons

- Reach CPS middle-school students through our two-year Jr. LINK fellowship

3. Deepening Investments in Chicago

- Focus recruitment & support in 10 South and West Side Neighborhoods

94%

RETENTION RATE

for Scholars from our 10 focused neighborhoods

69%

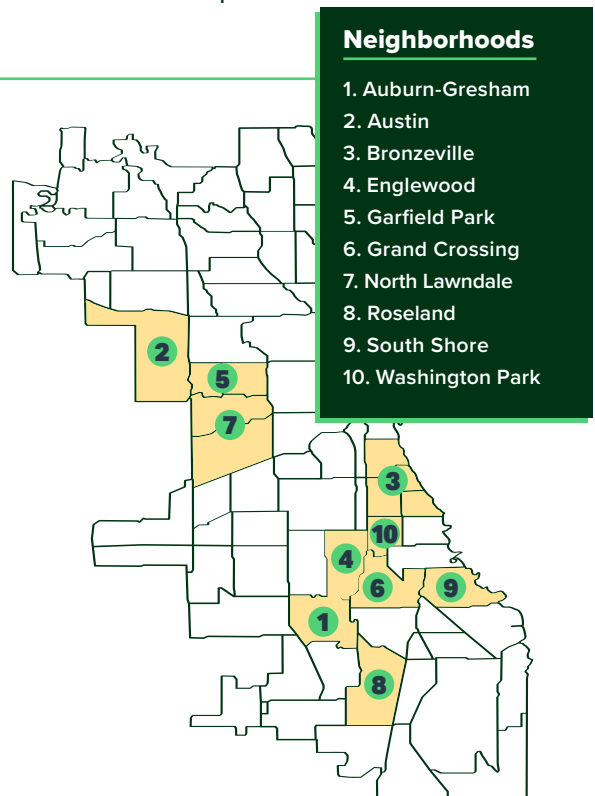
OF Jr. LINK SCHOLARS

were from our 10 focused neighborhoods.

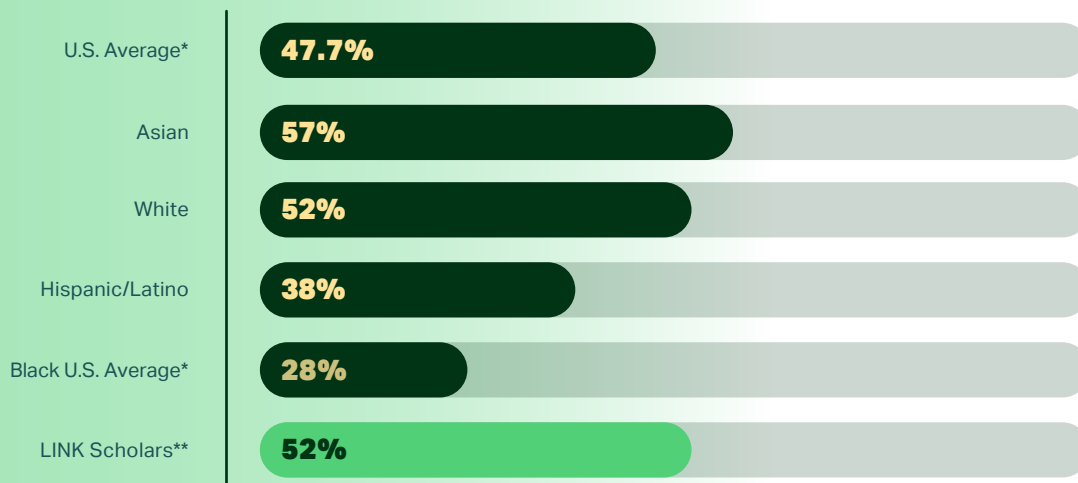
53%

OF LINK HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS

were from our 10 focused neighborhoods.



LINK Scholars are outpacing their peers!



*NCES Digest of Education Statistics 2022 Tables & Figures, Table 326.10

**LINK Scholars 4-Year College Graduation Rate, 2023

SAVE THE DATE

DRIVING FORE A
DIFFERENCE
• 29TH ANNUAL GOLF OUTING •

JULY 25, 2024

Ways to get *Involved*

Become a Mentor

LINK Mentors are a core component of our scholars' experience. By providing new experiences, access to professional networks, and relational support, our Mentors help broaden our Scholars' horizons and prepare them for the journey to, through, and beyond college. Become a LINK mentor today to be a part of our long legacy of mentorship. To learn more about becoming a mentor, email mentoring@linkunlimited.org.

Be a LINK Ambassador

Spread the word about LINK to your inner circle! In lieu of presents, donations to LINK not only help us, but allow you and your friends to make a difference. You can also host a gathering at your home or a bar, a Game or Trivia Night, or other fun opportunities with a giving to LINK as the theme. If you'd like to coordinate one of these opportunities, contact our Development Team at advancement@linkunlimited.org.

Join Our Board

Are you looking for an opportunity where you can make a difference? Are you interested in connecting Black students with resources and opportunities that strengthen the necessary skills to succeed as they advance to, through and, beyond college? If so, consider joining the LINK Board. If interested or would like more information, contact Dr. Toinette Gunn at tgunn@linkunlimited.org.

Make a Donation



For nearly 60 years, the incredible achievements of LINK Scholars have been made possible by their hard-work and the devotion and generosity of our dedicated community of supporters. A contribution of any amount helps us to provide life-changing opportunities to Black youth across Chicagoland. Invest in LINK Scholars with a DONATION today! Together we can change help increase the economic mobility and stability of Black students and cultivate a diverse leadership pipeline across our city and nation. <https://give.linkunlimited.org/donate>.

STAFF

Katharine Abele, Assistant to President & CEO
Meghann Barnes, Director, Educational Programs
Lydia Barnett, Data Manager
Dr. Janine Franklin, VP, Programs & Evaluation
Anthony Giron, Director, Recruitment & Engagement
Dr. Toinette Gunn, President & CEO
Effina Jackson, Coordinator, Outreach & Scholar Support
Rayven Johnson, Coordinator, Mentor Recruitment & Engagement
Camari Jones, Scholar Support Associate
Mia Kleine, Coordinator, Advancement & External Affairs
Kyle Lewis, Scholar Support Associate
LaShawnda Mitchell, Coordinator, Educational Programs
Marc Presley, Manager, Scholar Support
Nicolas Tamborrel, Associate, Finance & Operations
Camielle Taylor, Managing Director, Scholar Support

BOARD

Heidi Albert, Greenwood Project - Director of Employee Experience
Anthony Ashe, Modern Executive Solutions, Senior Partner – Head of Client Partnerships
Allen Ashley, DLA Piper LLP, Partner
Brent Baccus, Washington, Pittman & McKeever, LLC, CPA
Edward Bourelly, Alumni Association of the University of Michigan, Chief Marketing Officer
Marcy Carlin, Essex Investment Management, Senior VP & Research Analyst
Ciere Boatright, Acting Commissioner, City of Chicago Department of Planning & Development
Daniel Cox, Purpeller, Principal & Founder
Terrence Dee, Partner, Winston & Strawn LLP
Craig Dunham, Sabbatical
Nicholas Freeman, Innovare, Co-founder + Chief Growth Officer
Stephen Hackney, Retired, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Partner
Thomas Hynes, Mesirow Financial, Senior Managing Director
LeeAndra Khan, Epic Academy, Executive Director
Ken Johnson, Johnson, Blumberg & Associates, Owner & Managing Partner
Yolanda Knight, Steans Family Foundation, Managing Director
Aisha Lavinier, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Partner
Greg Mathurin, Robert Half, Sr HR Business Partner
Angela Miller-May, Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund, Chief Investment Officer
Torrence Moore, US Bank, Head of Access to Capital & DEI
Steven Napolitano, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Partner
Matthew Panzica, BDO USA, P.C., Market Managing Principal
Michael Revord, Aldine Capital Partner, Inc., Founder & Managing Partner
Franklin Reynolds, Amazon Web Services, Senior Account Manager Strategic ISV Segment
Craig Richey, Accenture, Senior Managing Director
Gilda Spencer, Retired Chief Litigation Counsel at Allstate & Current Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Law Professor

