



AMERICAN  
*experience*  
FOUNDATION

**2020  
ANNUAL  
REVIEW**





The American Experience Foundation (AEF) enriches the lives of students through inspirational travel experiences and educational opportunities to cultivate the next generation of hospitality industry professionals. AEF invests in young people in our community, supporting their college and career readiness.

## OUR ANNUAL PROGRAMS PROVIDE

- ★ **Free field trips** to the nation's capital for low-income students from DC and across the country
- ★ **Internships and educational opportunities** to connect students with hospitality industry professionals
- ★ **Scholarships** to qualified students and alumni from DC's four high school Academies of Hospitality & Tourism

## DC ACADEMIES OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



# 2020 BY THE NUMBERS



**384**

Total student engagements



**60**

Students on Washington, DC field trips



**72**

Summer Career Ready interns



**8**

Scholarships awarded



**230**

Students participating in educational programs



**SINCE 2015**  
**\$75,000**

Awarded in scholarships

“One of my favorite aspects of my job is working with students. We’ve been fortunate to be able to provide an introduction to the industry despite battling a global pandemic.”

**ELLIOTT L. FERGUSON, II**  
President & CEO,  
Destination DC





# OVERCOMING COVID-19

**As we close 2020 and travel experiences feel distant, we reflect on a year of turmoil and the pandemic's impacts on students, professionals and our country overall.**

The hospitality and tourism industry, one of the largest in Washington, DC, normally employs more than 76,000 people and contributes over \$850 million in tax revenue. COVID-19 has decimated the industry, not only closing restaurants, attractions and hotels, but forcing major events and conventions to cancel, putting thousands of people out of work and reducing tax revenues to a tiny fraction of what was anticipated. We are unsure when tourists and conventions will return to the city and what that full recovery will look like.

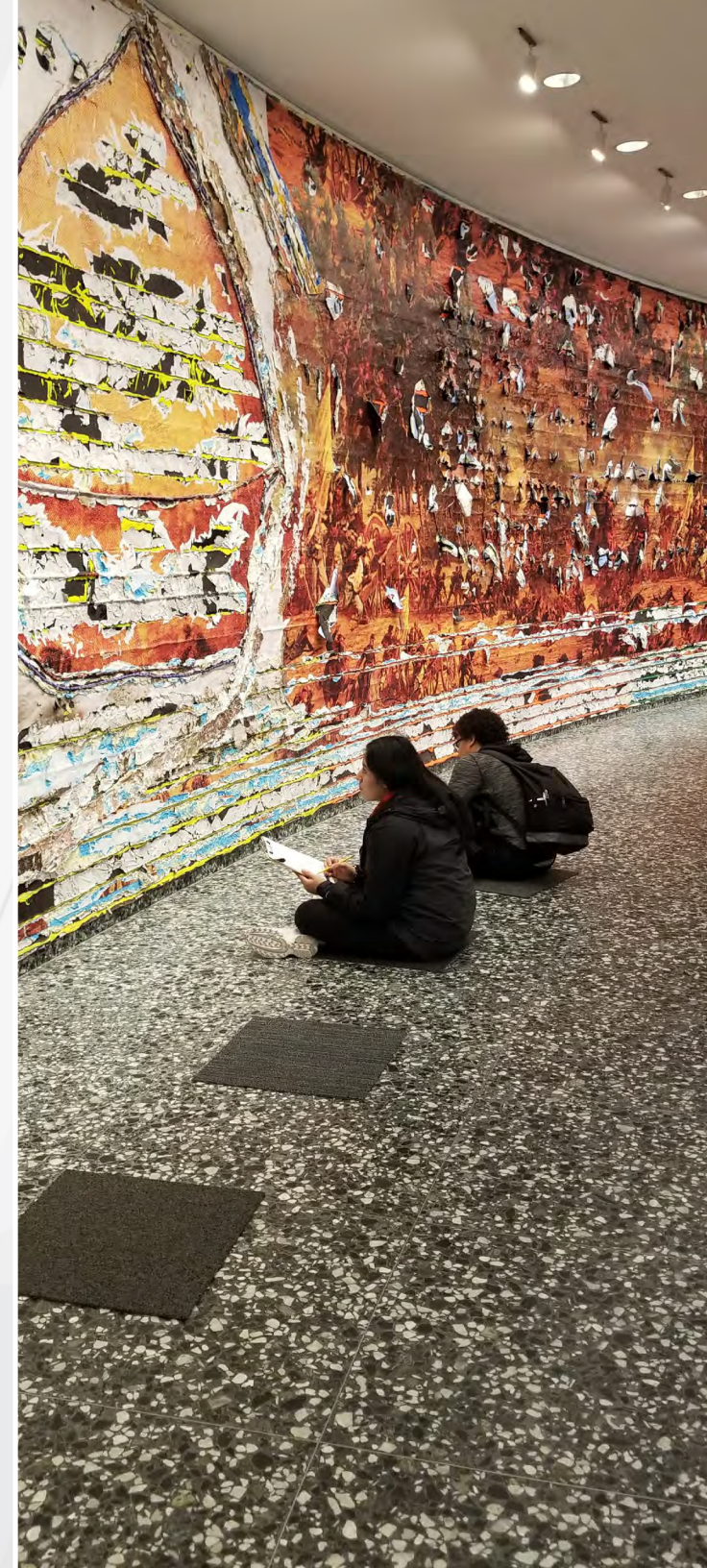
Simultaneously, we've heard the call to action of Black Lives Matter and know it is not exclusively about accountability for cities and police departments, but a demand for equitable opportunity in all facets of American life.

We are called to reimagine what our industry could look like as we rebuild after COVID-19.

## How can we:

- ★ Ensure equal opportunity and diverse leadership?
- ★ Make Washington, DC a welcoming and safe city for everyone to live in and travel to?
- ★ Honor and promote DC's rich Black history and culture to tourists from all over the world?

**It is imperative that we include young people in these conversations and empower them to be the future of our industry. Despite challenges they face, they remain curious, enthusiastic and ready to help rebuild our city and our industry. Thank you for being a part of this story.**





# DISCOVERING DC

Each year, hundreds of thousands of students travel to the nation's capital to deepen their knowledge of history and culture. AEF's field trips help deserving students across the country and here in Washington, DC.

## BACKYARD BOUND

In October 2019, AEF hosted 20 members of **Raising a Village's Driven 2 Succeed** program at DC's **H.D. Woodson High School** for a day of exploring. Students toured the monuments with **Old Town Trolley**, posed with presidents and celebrities at **Madame Tussauds**, had lunch at **Le Pain Quotidien**, attended a special performance of August Wilson's *Fences* at the historic **Ford's Theatre** and visited the **National Museum of African American History and Culture**.

"It's important to know the city you live in and understand the complexities of our community. Students had read and performed *Fences* at school, so getting to see that play performed at historic Ford's Theatre by professional actors was an especially meaningful part of the day."

**JALEESA HALL**  
Founder & CEO,  
Raising a Village





## ACADEMIES FIELD TRIP

**In January, AEF hosted 40 students from DC's Academies of Hospitality and Tourism on a Backyard Bound field trip.**

The group explored attractions, including the **Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden**, the **International Spy Museum** and the recently reopened **Washington Monument**. Students slept in style at the **Marriott Marquis Washington, DC** and received a behind-the-scenes tour of the hotel.

**Hyatt Place National Mall** hosted them for a professional networking luncheon where they learned all about dining etiquette from the **Etiquette Institute of Washington**.

“

There are so many people living in DC, but they don't ever take the time to explore around or meet people from other parts of the city. There are a lot of opportunities that people should go out and seek.”

**BREONA MENIEFIELD**

Class of 2020, NAF Academy of  
Hospitality and Tourism  
Maya Angelou Public Charter School



AmericanExperienceFoundation.org | 5





# WORKPLACE LEARNING

**AEF and Destination DC have unique access to dedicated professionals who create remarkable experiences.**

## NYC TRIP

AEF's annual Times Square Hotel Tour brought 30 students to the Big Apple in November 2019 for a behind-the-scenes tour of the **New York Marriott Marquis** and **W New York - Times Square**. Students were also treated to a VIP private night tour with **Big Bus NYC**, an escape room team-building experience at **Clue Chase** and dinner at **Virgil's Real BBQ**.

Special thanks to Marquis General Manager Dan Nadeau and W Hotel Director of Operations Thomas Sturniolo for their hospitality, and to the **Hotel Association of Washington, D.C.** for their generous financial support of this field trip.

## WASHINGTON AUTO SHOW

In January, the **Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association**, a long-standing AEF partner, welcomed 30 students to its annual Media Day to kick off the **2020 Washington Auto Show**. Students watched press conferences and interacted with representatives from the world's largest auto makers. Ryan Alexander of the **Calpro Group**, which handles show production, took students behind the scenes.

## ENCHANT CHRISTMAS

Last year, students heard from the **Enchant Christmas** producers about the time, effort and people needed to transform **Nationals Park** into a December winter wonderland. Decorators, electricians and sales teams informed students of their duties. The students then explored the light maze and ice rink.





# NATIONAL JOB SHADOW DAY

Many know Feb. 2 as the day groundhogs see their shadow, but it is also a day when local hospitality professionals get a shadow of a different kind. Across the city, AEF helped place 65 students at 35 hospitality and tourism businesses for Job Shadow Day experiences.

**Destination DC** welcomed six students. In addition to learning all about working at a destination marketing organization, students got a firsthand look at how they work with partner businesses through tours of the **Conrad Hotel** and **ARTECHOUSE**.

Michelin-starred chef Nick Stefanelli and his team at **Masseria** welcomed two students from Ballou High School's Academy of Culinary Arts to cook side-by-side with sous chef Ryan Smith.

**The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)** welcomed 25 students to **National Airport** for a behind-the-scenes look at the thousands of career opportunities at the airport. Special thanks to Tanisha Lewis and the entire MWAA and National Airport teams.





# INTERSHIPS

**The COVID-19 pandemic all but eliminated summer internship opportunities for students in DC's Academies of Hospitality and Tourism, Academies of Mass Media and Career Bridge Program.**

In the true spirit of hospitality, Destination DC and the American Experience Foundation worked with the Career Ready Internships program to offer 72 high school students a virtual summer internship.

While learning all about the hospitality and tourism industry, interns were asked to imagine how the industry can recover from the devastation of COVID-19 while working to make it more equitable.

These student interns were supported with nearly 50 guest speakers and 30 project judges for weekly presentations.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO INTERNSHIP PARTNERS



**Education Design Lab**



“

**You ran the best  
virtual hospitality  
internship program  
in the country!”**

**ALEX WILSON**

Director of Academy of  
Hospitality & Tourism,  
Wilson High School





# INTERNS INSPIRED

“

I enjoyed listening to [Destination DC Sports Sales Manager] **Chris Thompson** and [Washington Nationals Vice President of Corporate Strategy] **Emily Dunham** because sports is something that I am interested in doing as a career someday. I wasn't aware that it could be such a big thing in the hospitality industry.”

“

[Destination DC President & CEO **Elliott Ferguson** and Visit Baltimore President & CEO **Al Hutchinson**] inspired me because they were both very outspoken and welcoming. I could relate to their stories and the things they said really stuck with me. They are very inspiring with the obstacles that they had overcome and the respect they have earned from others. It's inspiring to see two Black men at the top.”

“

**Dr. Erinn Tucker** [Georgetown professor and co-founder of DMV Black Restaurant Week] and **Bakari Ibrahim** [Co-Founder of Caandor Labs] really showed us why it's important to work together and support Black-owned businesses across our city.”



# STUDENT INTERNS

Alaya  
Tyndle

Alexander  
Strauss\*

Amir  
Perkins\*\*

Andrew  
Irwin-  
Leventhal\*

Angelique  
Barnhardt\*

Anura  
Sharma\*\*

Arjanae  
Mitchell\*

Benjamin  
Wander\*

Brianna  
Moody\*\*

Cenaria  
Fells-Watson\*\*

Dakota  
Joi Inniss\*\*

Darren  
Buchanan\*

De'Anna  
Williams\*

Don'nayah  
Harris

Durell  
Ford

Eryka  
Kornegay\*\*

Herbert  
Banks

I'shawnna  
White\*

Jaden  
Randolph-  
Schoneck\*\*

Janae  
Lewis-Price\*\*

Jasmine  
Taylor

Jaye'quan  
Seegers\*\*

Jazzmen  
Morant\*\*

Jermanie  
Coleman\*

Johnathan  
Jennings\*

Kahlil  
Slater\*

Kashmere  
Lewis\*\*

Kayla  
Watson\*

Kelly  
Cantarero-  
Flores\*

Khalelah  
McCollum\*

Kyndal  
Barber\*\*

Layla  
Green\*\*

Le'Asyah  
Mays\*

Leena  
Rahman\*

Lesly  
Reyes\*\*

Luke  
Forcier\*\*

Macie  
Ellis\*\*

Makayla  
Wright\*\*

Marie  
May\*

Matthew  
Weissman\*

Mia  
Heyward\*\*

Monaia  
Swinson

Mya  
Kelly

Nakia  
Thomas\*\*

Nar'dya  
Sloan

Racquel  
Jones\*

Ryan  
Howard\*

Sabrina  
Bouaichi\*

Sapriyah  
Hancock

Sarah  
Etinoff

Sascha  
Cannon\*

Stephen  
James\*\*

Sydni  
Lewis\*\*

Taiyler  
Henderson-  
Thorpe\*

Taria  
Short\*\*

Tori  
Barnett

Vanessa  
Romero-  
Gutierrez\*\*

Yazmyne  
Dixon\*

Yeshetuwe  
Mulugeta\*\*

\*Completed all 6 weeks of the internship

\*\*Completed all 6 weeks plus 2-week extension

Interns were from the DC Public Schools Academies of Hospitality & Tourism, Mass Media and Culinary Arts, and from the Career Bridge program for recent graduates. Students came from eight DC public high schools: Anacostia, Ballou, Columbia Heights Educational Campus, Cardozo, Dunbar, Coolidge, Roosevelt and Wilson.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Host a behind-the-scenes look at your company either during a field trip or a summer internship.

# INTERNSHIP SPEAKERS & JUDGES



## INTERNSHIP SPEAKERS


**PRISCILLA ALVAREZ**  
International Sales  
Coordinator, Destination DC

**RICO ASHAB**  
Executive Assistant to the  
President & CEO,  
Destination DC

**NALELI ASKEW**  
Events Operations Manager,  
District Experience

**BRIGITTE  
BÉLANGER-WARNER**  
Canadian Media & Marketing  
Specialist, Virginia Tourism  
Corporation

**THERESA BERPULSI**  
Vice President of Tourism,  
Sports & Visitor Services,  
Destination DC

 **RAY BENNETT**  
Chief Global Officer  
of Global Operations,  
Marriott International

**MICHAEL BORRIS**  
National Account Manager,  
PSAV


**RON BRACCO**  
Vice President of Events,  
Hargrove

**CLAIRE CARLIN**  
Vice President of Partnerships  
& Alliances, Destination DC

**TYLER CARROL**  
International Marketing  
Manager, Virginia Tourism  
Corporation

**REGINALD CHARLOT**  
Managing Director of  
Tourism Development,  
NYC & Company & Chair,  
IGLTA Foundation

**TORRI CHRISTIAN**  
Associate Director of  
Marketing, Destination DC

 **JEROME DAVIS**  
Executive Vice  
President & Chief  
Revenue Officer, Metropolitan  
Washington Airports Authority

**DANIELLE DAVIS**  
Director of Communications,  
Destination DC

**EMILY DUNHAM**  
Vice President of Corporate  
Strategy, Washington Nationals


**ELLIOTT L. FERGUSON**  
President & CEO  
Destination DC

**ALEX GNAFAKIS**  
Creative Director,  
Destination DC

**AUSTIN GRAFF**  
Manager of Acquisition  
& Branding,  
*The Washington Post*

**CARA HEDGEPEETH**  
Senior Social Media  
Community Advisor, AARP

**DAWN HOLDEN**  
Former Vice President of  
Membership Engagement,  
Destinations International

 **AL HUTCHINSON**  
President & CEO,  
Visit Baltimore

**BAKARI IBRAHIM**  
Co-Founder, Caandor Labs

**LILLIAN IVERSEN**  
Vice President, National  
Cherry Blossom Festival

**BRITT JULIOUS**  
Columnist, *Chicago Tribune*  
& Freelance Writer

**ERIC KINCAID**  
National Account Director,  
Destination DC

 **DR. SELENI MATUS**  
Executive Director,  
George Washington  
University International  
Institute of Tourism Studies



**ROBIN MCCLAIN**

Senior Vice President of  
Marketing & Communications,  
Destination DC

**TARA MILLER**

International Account Sales  
Director, Destination DC

**THOMAS PENNY**

President,  
Donohoe Hospitality

**JEAN RILEY**

Senior Event Manager,  
American Institute of  
Aeronautics and Astronautics

**MELISSA RILEY**

Vice President of Sales &  
Services, Destination DC

**JENNIFER RODRIGUES**

National Account Sales  
Director, Destination DC

**GAURI SARIN**

Director of Events &  
Activations, Streetsense

**LETIZIA SIRTORI**

Director of Tourism Sales,  
Destination DC

**STACY EACHO SMITH**

General Manager,  
Hyatt Place National Mall &  
Chair, Destination DC Board  
of Directors

**CHRIS SOTO**

President, CTC Events and  
Productions

**MARC ST. HILAIRE**

Executive Recruiter,  
Issacson, Miller

**BRUNO SCHWARTZ**

Director of Membership,  
Destination DC

**CHRIS THOMPSON**

Sports Sales Manager,  
Destination DC

**DR. ERINN TUCKER**

Director of the Global  
Hospitality Leadership  
Program, Georgetown  
University & Co-Founder,  
DMV Black Restaurant Week

**PONNEH VARHO**

Managing Partner,  
Issacson, Miller  
Washington, DC

**EMILY VECCHIONI**

Member Events Manager,  
Destination DC

**DIANNA WALDROUP**

Director of Convention  
Services, Destination DC

## PROJECT JUDGES

**ANA MARTINEZ CHAMORRO**

Ana Isabel Photography

**ANDREA HOSTETLER**

National Cherry  
Blossom Festival

**CAROLINE CAMPBELL**

U.S. Travel Association

**CRISTINA GOSPODIN**

Sofitel Lafayette Square

**DIANA MAYHEW**

National Cherry Blossom  
Festival

**ELIZABETH JACQUES**

Liz Stewart Photography

**ERIN ALIAJ**

Booking Holdings

**FELICIA RUFFINO**

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**KATHRYN KEANE**

National Geographic Museum

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**LILLIAN IVERSON**

National Cherry Blossom  
Festival

**LORI CHALK**

District Experience

**MARI RODELA**

DC Brau Brewing

**MARTIN HAMBURGER**

Hamburger Gibson Creative

**NAN MARCHAND BEAUVOIS**

U.S. Travel Association

**NORA THOMAS**

U.S. Travel Association

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USA Guided Tours

**RENE MCCOY**

Hersha Hospitality West End  
Hotel Collection

**SARA MALLOY**

The Mayflower Hotel

**SOCRATES CALA**

CalPro Group

**STEFAN MIREVSKI**

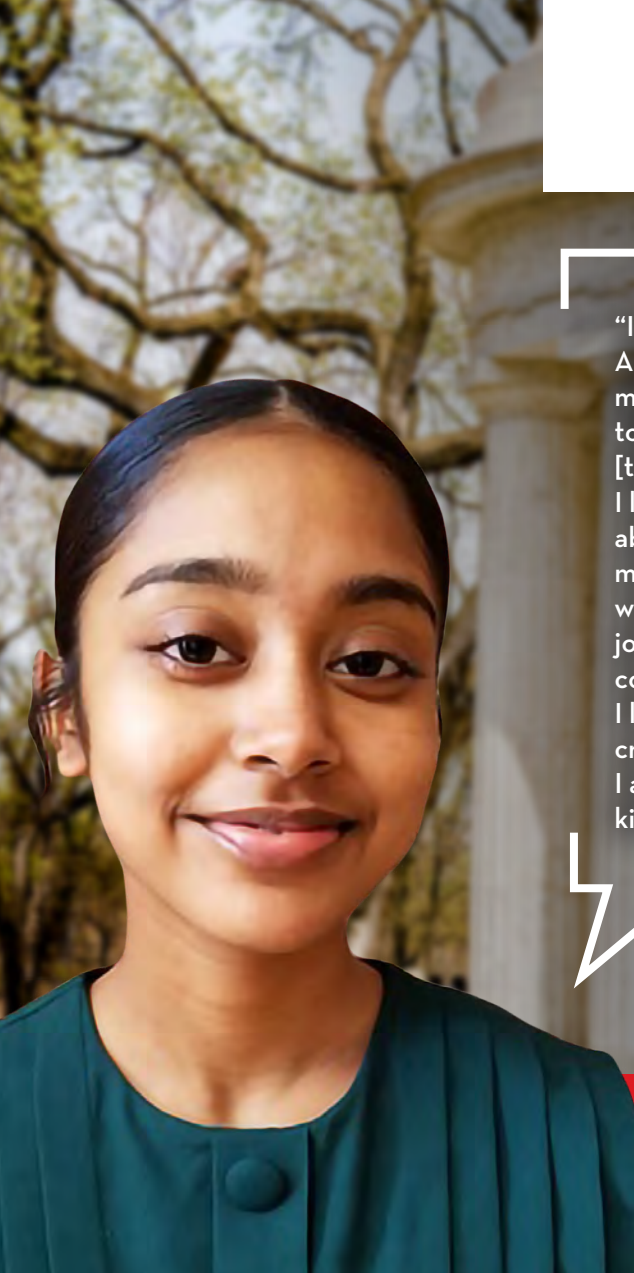
The Capital Hilton

# HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Share your expertise by serving as a judge,  
guest speaker or host employer.

# INTERN SPOTLIGHT

A portrait of Maria Sharmin, a young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a teal top. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

"I wanted to intern with AEF because I want to major in hospitality and tourism. I really enjoyed [the internship] because I learned so much about how a destination marketing organization works. My dream job is to be an event coordinator because I love to organize, be creative and multitask. I also love to work with kids and help people."

**MARIA  
SHARMIN**

A portrait of Zoe Roberts, a young woman with dark hair in braids, wearing a yellow top. She is smiling broadly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and trees.

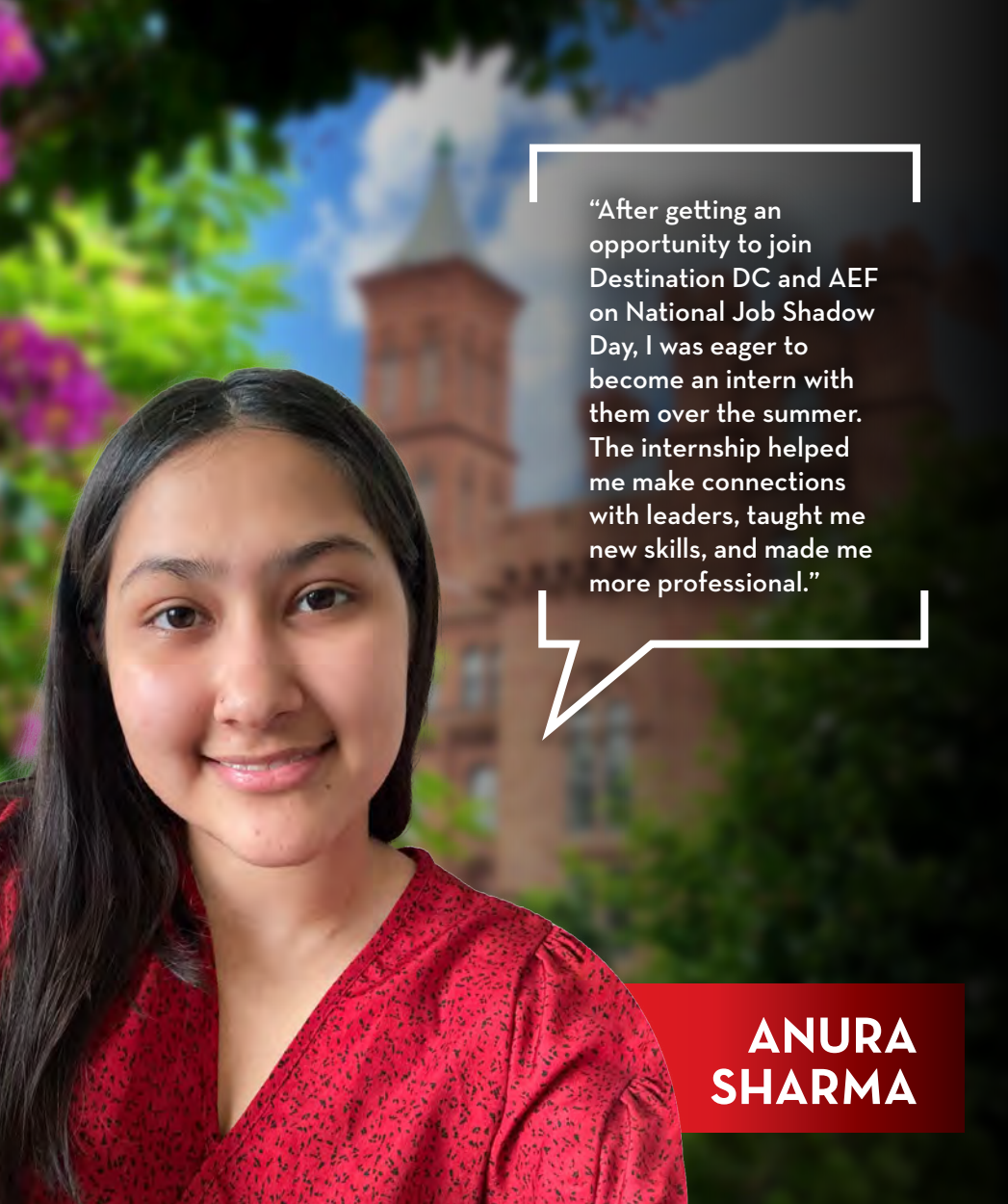
"Not only have I gained valuable insight into the function and recovery of the hospitality industry, but I have also had the opportunity to network with industry professionals I otherwise may not have had access to. The experience has strengthened my interest in pursuing this career field. I look forward to being a part of the change that will help recover and sustain our industry."

**ZOE  
ROBERTS**

**Maria Sharmin** interned with AEF all year, through a partnership with Urban Alliance. Maria graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in June 2020 and attends Temple University. Among her many internship accomplishments, Maria authored and designed our monthly newsletter.

**Zoe Roberts** is a three-time winner of the AEF Scholarship. Before COVID-19 disrupted the industry, she was a front office lead for the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in addition to taking on a full course load at George Mason University. During her summer internship with AEF, Zoe helped create and manage the Career Ready Internships program.





"After getting an opportunity to join Destination DC and AEF on National Job Shadow Day, I was eager to become an intern with them over the summer. The internship helped me make connections with leaders, taught me new skills, and made me more professional."

**ANURA  
SHARMA**

**Anura Sharma**, a 2022 student in the Academy at Columbia Heights Educational Campus brought curiosity and a global perspective to her Career Ready Internship. She turned her final internship project focused on a DC traveler safety kit into a full submission to the UNWTO Hospitality Challenge.



"One thing I loved about interning at DDC and AEF was how involved they were with teenagers like me. Seeing the previous students who interned with them continue to be supported by them even after the internship was over, showed me how important the youth are to the company as a whole. I was immediately welcomed, with no judgement I might add, and it helped me work on skills that will help me in the future. I am aware that students are the future and DDC helped mold me into my full potential and every student deserves that opportunity."

**MAKAYLA  
CRUZ**

**Makayla Cruz**, a 2020 graduate of the Academy at Columbia Heights Educational Campus was an AEF and Destination DC Career Ready Intern in 2019 and is a current freshman at North Carolina A&T State University. She testified at the Destination DC 2020 Performance Oversight Hearing for the DC City Council, on what the American Experience Foundation means to high school students like her.

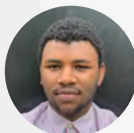
# SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

## GREGORY MCCARTHY LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP



**Makayla Cruz**  
North Carolina A&T State University  
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus)

## DAVID ISELIN AWARD FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE



**Adame Temesgen**  
University of Rochester  
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus)

## AEF SCHOLARSHIP



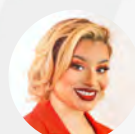
**Jermaine Evans**  
Fayetteville State University  
(Woodrow Wilson Senior High School)

## AEF ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP

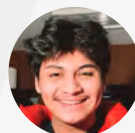


**Deranique Graydon**  
University of the District of Columbia  
(Frank Ballou Senior High School)

## AEF ALUMNI HONORARIUMS



**Lauren Brown**  
Howard University  
(Woodrow Wilson Senior High School)



**Jose Martinez**  
Marymount University  
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus)



**Amya McKoy**  
Bowie State University  
(Frank Ballou Senior High School)



**Zoe Roberts**  
George Mason University  
(Frank Ballou Senior High School)

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Your gift of \$2,500 will fund an AEF scholarship.  
Make your donation, in any amount, by visiting  
**[AmericanExperienceFoundation.org/Donate](https://AmericanExperienceFoundation.org/Donate)**



# IN THE MEDIA

## JANUARY ACADEMY FIELD TRIP

NBC4 - Jan. 28, 2020

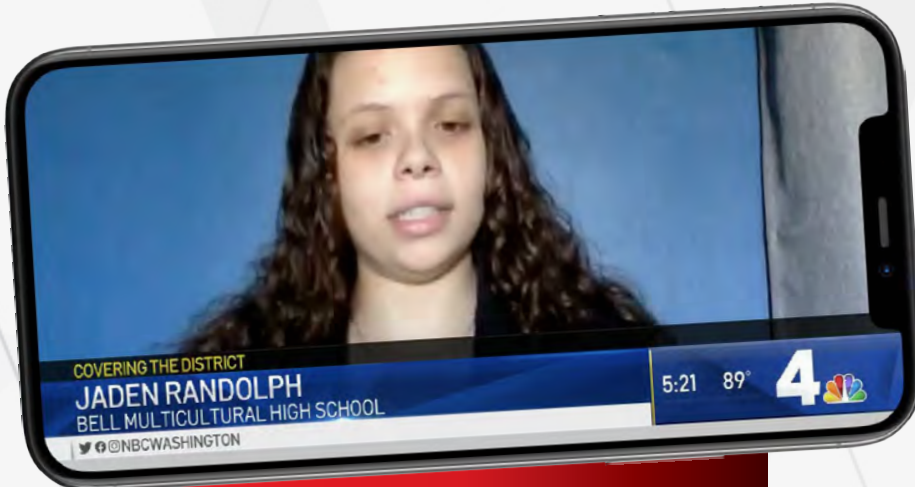
Molette Green



## NATIONAL JOB SHADOW DAY

WJLA - Feb. 12, 2020

Kellye Lynn



## CAREER READY INTERNSHIPS

NBC4 - July 28, 2020

Aimee Cho



## CAREER READY INTERNSHIPS

WJLA ABC7 - July 31, 2020

Alison Starling



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**STACY EACHO SMITH**  
General Manager  
Hyatt Place National Mall

**GAIL SMITH-HOWARD**  
General Manager  
Hyatt Regency Washington  
on Capitol Hill

## AEF STAFF

**CLAIRE CARLIN**  
Executive Director  
American Experience Foundation  
VP, Partnerships & Alliances  
Destination DC  
202-789-7048  
[claire@americanexperiencefoundation.org](mailto:claire@americanexperiencefoundation.org)

**LISA WALDSCHMITT**  
Foundation Manager  
American Experience Foundation  
202-789-7065  
[lisa@americanexperiencefoundation.org](mailto:lisa@americanexperiencefoundation.org)



# PARTNERS

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ARTECHOUSE  
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ARTECHOUSE  
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Conrad Hotel  
Enchant Christmas  
Ford's Theatre  
Herron Printing & Graphics  
Hyatt Place National Mall  
Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill  
International Spy Museum  
Le Pain Quotidien  
LEON  
Madame Tussauds  
Marriott Marquis  
Washington, DC

Marriott Marquis  
Times Square  
Metropolitan Washington  
Airports Authority  
National Airport  
Old Town Trolley  
PSAV  
Reston Limo  
Smithsonian Enterprises  
Step Afrika!  
The Etiquette Institute of  
Washington  
Virgil's Real Barbecue  
WANADA/Washington  
Auto Show  
W Hotel New York Times  
Square

## HOLIDAY PARTY

AC Hotel Washington, DC  
American Airlines  
ARTECHOUSE  
Destination DC  
Downtown Holiday Market  
Enchant Christmas  
Farmers & Distillers  
Howard Theater  
LEON  
Monumental Sports  
Paul Stuart  
Pisco y Nazca

RPM Italian  
Sightseeing Pass  
Signature Theatre  
Step Afrika!  
sweetgreen  
Taberna del Alabardero  
Tanger Outlets National  
Harbor  
The Canopy by Hilton  
Thompson Washington DC  
Tommy Hilfiger  
TopGolf  
United Airlines  
Urban Adventures  
Vamoose Bus

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Share your time, expertise or business with students. You have resources and access to help young people.

# DONORS

## INSPIRATIONAL

Ron Bracco & Pate Felts  
Claire Carlin  
Elliott Ferguson & Telesa Via

## LEADERS

Kola Aina  
Randy Herron  
Deborah Streater

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Lisa Hill	Dennis Koster	
Mathew Jahromi	Josie Schiavone	

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Brock Carroll	Merike Henneman	Bruno Schwartz

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Meg Caulk	Shelby Luzzi	Suzanne Shogren
Taylor Dabney	Kirsten Lyman	Bethann Siegel
Henry De Leon	Brandon Murray	Hope Smith
Macy Dolton	Carly Norosky	

# HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Your gift of \$100 directly supports work-based learning opportunities for a future hospitality and tourism leader. Make your donation by visiting [AmericanExperienceFoundation.org/Donate](https://AmericanExperienceFoundation.org/Donate)





American Experience Foundation  
901 7th Street, NW, 4th Floor  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-789-7065

The American Experience Foundation is the 501(c)(3) charity affiliated with Destination DC, the official destination marketing organization for the nation's capital. Through this affiliation with Destination DC and its 1,000+ member businesses, AEF is uniquely positioned to open doors for students, filling a need for career exposure and paths to success with inspirational travel opportunities and real-life educational experiences.

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