



2023

PALMER SCHOLARS ANNUAL REPORT

PALMER
scholars



A NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP

Celebrating 41 Years of Serving Pierce County

As I reflect on my five-years as Executive Director and nearly a decade with Palmer Scholars, beyond anything else I am filled with gratitude. Our journey from a small team in 2014 to an empowered organization supporting 225-250 students annually has been extraordinary. We've expanded our programs, grown our team to 14, and increased our budget to \$1.9M, all while fostering a culture that values community well-being.

I am stepping down as Executive Director at the end of 2023, but I am thrilled to pass the torch to Denise Nicole' Franklin as the incoming Interim Executive Director. Denise Nicole' brings passion, strategic insight, and a commitment to our mission, ensuring the continued success and growth of Palmer Scholars.

We invite you to meet with us in the coming months to discuss this exciting new chapter. Your support has been instrumental in our journey, and we look forward to continuing our impactful work under Denise Nicole's leadership. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our mission!

Wherever they start. Whatever their path. We are committed.

With much love and gratitude,



Jonathan Jackson, MBA
Outgoing Executive Director

2023: A YEAR FOR EVOLVING

Branding with Intentionality

This year we introduced our new Palmer Scholars logo. This logo was intentionally created to honor both of our founders: Merle Palmer and Reverend Al Davis.



We also introduced our Palmer Scholars program icons:



Legacy Program



Palmer Pathways Initiative



Fit4Me Program



Palmer Connections

Further, we updated our Palmer Scholars mission statement to reflect our deliberate, conscious, and purposeful approach to our work:

“Palmer Scholars exists to bridge the gap between potential and opportunity for young adults of color in Pierce County.”

2023: A YEAR FOR PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

New Scholarship Spotlight

Our community here at Palmer Scholars wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to Christina Rupp, our Scholarship Partner for the Don Rupp Craft Scholarship (Est. 2021). Christina Rupp is the Director of the Construction Center of Excellence and created this scholarship to honor the legacy of her father, a vested IAM member, Donald Rupp.



The scholarship supports Palmer Pathways program participants pursuing trades education. Congratulations to this year's recipients: Gabriel Padilla, Javonta Williams, Mariah Melena, and Ke'Andre Willis.

All Scholarship recipients receive the added benefits of Postsecondary Readiness Training, mentoring, and ongoing socioemotional support through postsecondary or apprenticeship program completion. Want to establish your own named scholarship with Palmer Scholars? Contact us at giving@palmerscholars.org.



2023: A YEAR FOR INVESTING IN BRIGHTER FUTURES

Legacy Program 2023 Progress Report

TOTAL IMPACT

167

SCHOLARS SERVED IN
2023

COLLEGE RETENTION

93%

COLLEGE FRESHMEN FROM
CLASS OF 2021 PERSISTED
TO THEIR SECOND YEAR

STUDENT LOANS

85%

OF SCHOLARS TOOK \$5,000
OR LESS IN STUDENT LOANS

SCHOLARSHIP
FUNDING

\$345,750.70

AWARDED

COLLEGE
GRADUATES

15

SCHOLARS GRADUATED
FROM COLLEGE

PROGRAM
GRADUATION RATE

87%

OF SCHOLARS HAVE
GRADUATED FROM ENTIRE
PROGRAM

“Palmer Scholars has given me the first step into my next chapter in life and I couldn’t be more grateful. College means a lot to me and Palmer helping me through the process and walking me through lessons has helped me so much and I will carry on these lessons throughout the rest of my life! I’ve made lifelong friends and mentors that I can’t have been more grateful for and on top of that valuable lessons to help me through tough times in life. I didn’t think I was going to be chosen for the scholarship but after I took the jump to apply little did I know it would change my life. I’m eternally grateful to everyone at Palmer Scholars and can’t thank y’all enough for all the love and support you all have given me throughout my time here. I can’t wait for college and life after that, with support from Palmers I know I can do it! Palmers is a family, it’s a place to learn, to feel, and to unite and I’ll never forget those teachings and feelings.”



— Nevaeh Dawkins-Watson
Current Legacy Scholar

2023: A YEAR FOR HONORING OUR ALUMNI

Legacy Program Alumni Spotlight: Shontia Whitehead



Shontia Whitehead was born in Michigan but grew up in a single-parent household in Tacoma, WA. She went to Lincoln High School and that is where she received her Palmer Scholar Education Award. Palmer Scholars helped prepare her for the transition from high school to college back in 2011. Jonathan Jackson and the rest of the team supported her throughout her college journey.

Shontia went to the University of Washington and received her BA in Early Childhood and Family Studies and minored in Diversity. She graduated from UW in 2015. Shontia has worked in the nonprofit sector since college. She is very passionate about giving back to her community. She has worked with youth through after school and summer programs. Shontia is also passionate about health and wellness.

In February 2020, Shontia co-founded a health and fitness Nonprofit Organization called Free Flo Fit. They currently offer weekly group fitness classes, events, and nutrition coaching. Their vision is to help underprivileged minority communities develop healthy lifestyles through their services.



2023: A YEAR FOR HONORING OUR ALUMNI

Legacy Program Alumni Spotlight: Shontia Whitehead

Over the years Jonathan stayed in contact with Shontia and reached out to her once Palmer Pathways got started. He encouraged her to apply for the Pathway Navigator and Health Coach position and she eventually was hired towards the end of 2021. She loved working for the organization that helped her succeed in life. She learned so much about the trades and she helped our scholars navigate successfully through the pre-apprenticeship to an apprenticeship of their choice. After performing well in her position, Sound Transit, which is a current partner of Palmer Pathways, reached out to Shontia about a position they had opened.

With a heavy heart she checked it out and applied. Since June 2023, Shontia started working for Sound Transit as a Project Labor Agreement Specialist. She still works for Palmer Pathways part-time as the Health Coach and is on the Palmer Pathways Advisory Board. She continues to help adults of color and women pursue a career in the trades. Shontia works full time and is an entrepreneur who now makes six figures. She says she doesn't know where she would be without Jonathan Jackson, the mentorship, educational and financial support she received from Palmer Scholars. She simply can't say thank you enough!



2023: A YEAR FOR CELEBRATING OUR SCHOLARS

20 Scholars Complete Program in 2023

A'juanna Shockley-Haywood

Airiana Tindall

Alondra Marquez

Amari Bell

Connar Mon

Hamed Diakite

Hannah Niffenegger

Irma Robles

Jade Hernandez-Hernandez

Joanna Torres

Jonathan Martin

Jordan Brown

Kierra Simmons

Malana Barbas

Mario Gonzalez-Martinez

Menyea Barbas

Naomi Allison

Ruby Guzman

Sean Allen

Tamali'i Luli

THANK YOU TO OUR CHAMPION FUNDERS!



The Carlisle Family Scholarship



Tacoma Sunrise Rotary

"As a student of color, Palmer Scholars was one of the best decisions I have ever made (both academically and financially). They have left such a new transformative outlook beyond my educational dreams.

With access to networking, leadership development, and empowering guidance, I will consistently be set up for success. Palmer Scholars is not just a scholarship program, it's much more than that. I will always be grateful for having the opportunity to call myself a Palmer Scholar."



Victoria Plom

Legacy Scholar
College Attendee

2023: A YEAR FOR BUILDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Palmer Pathways 2023 Progress Report

“If I could say one thing I've learned that I can carry with me for life from palmers is the lesson of perseverance and dedication simply because with all of the trials and tribulations they showed me a way to see the brighter side until it was a reality.”



Kamari Sharpley-Ragin
Palmer Pathways Alumni - Cohort 5

TOTAL IMPACT

50

SCHOLARS SERVED IN 2023

INCOME GROWTH

+54%

INCREASE IN PRE-PROGRAM
AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE TP POST-
PROGRAM AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE

JOB SECURITY

87%

OF SCHOLARS WERE PLACED
IN JOBS IN FIRST YEAR

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

\$25k+

AWARDED IN WORK ATTIRE,
STIPENDS, RENTAL ASSISTANCE, GAS
CARDS, AND CARE PACKAGES

COHORT RETENTION

90%

ENROLLED SCHOLARS COMPLETED
PHASE ONE OF PROGRAM

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

100%

OF SCHOLARS RECEIVED
A SUPPORTIVE SERVICE

2023: A YEAR FOR AMPLIFYING SCHOLARS' VOICES

Palmer Pathways Graduate Spotlight: Mariah Melena



Mariah Melena

Mariah's intended trades are electrician or work for Tacoma waters.

“Palmers helped me dig deeper into the construction world. When you first hear the word construction you usually think of manual labor. I thought it was something I would never be interested in. I don't like repetitive tasks. That seemed boring and something I couldn't do forever as a career. I was hesitant at first but decided to go through Palmer's program because it would give me an insight on construction. Best part was that it was free and I didn't need to bring anything to the table. So I didn't have excuses at that point. I told myself if I didn't like it I at least got a free education so it's a win win at the end. I quit my job at Fred Meyer and was ready to put my all into the class. I didn't know what to expect.

I enjoyed my experience here. I actually considered I could have a career out of construction. I never figured I had to use my brain so much for this field. I liked learning the process of building things. I never knew that you had to use rebar in cement for stability or that there was so much math involved. Something important to me that we learned together and received was our OSHA 30. Being safe and coming home at the end of the day is the most important thing.”

2023: A YEAR FOR AMPLIFYING SCHOLARS' VOICES

Palmer Pathways Graduate Spotlight: Mariah Melena

“Ken was an amazing instructor and was serious and laid back at the same time. When I asked for help he wasn't hesitant and showed me the correct way to do things. Brooke was kind and gentle and reminded me of myself. She wanted to help and made sure everyone had the resources they needed to get through the program. Shonita kicked my butt exercising but I don't regret it. She wants everyone to realize the importance of being healthy. Jessica, Alondra, Denise Nicole', Jody, Johnathan and everyone else working behind the scenes did an amazing job with the program. They are all like a big and supportive family that wants everyone to succeed in life.

I'm confident to say that my future goal is to become an electrician and learn how to create electricity using renewable energy to provide electricity to people who need it. Down the line I want to become an electrical engineer. I believe everyone deserves heat and cooling in their home and the ability to have light. Going on field trips and having hands-on projects helped me understand the importance of electricity. Everyday we consume electricity. From basic tasks such as cooking, laundry, and cleaning all the way from lighting up the streets when it's dark, controlling traffic and now transportation.”



34 Graduates Complete Program in 2023

Jakiah Sarimento	Gabriel Padilla
Elijah Williams	Mariah Melena
Jose Roman-Martinez	Clifton Mitchell
Isaiah Woolworth	Gloria Bacon
Keyon Pettaway	Isaiah Williams
Jose Luna	Jamison Carroll
Justin Martin	Jason Johnson
Shelton Kahakua	Javonta Williams
Andre Jones-Moore	Johnny Dudley
Kamari Sharpley-Ragin	Justin Shields
Kendall Shields	Keandre Willis
Amirah Moss	Mariah Holden
Aaron Cagle	Nee'e Morgan
Javion Crenna	Sameulu Utu
Omari Heidelberg	Zakiir Sells
Jovani Zepeda	Zach Wheeler
Sah-ji Johnson-Demerson	
Cameron Castaneda Hardesty	

2023: A YEAR FOR SHAPING YOUNG LEADERS



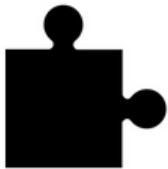
THANK YOU TO OUR CHAMPION FUNDERS!



2023: A YEAR FOR CRAFTING NEW PROGRAMS

Palmer Fit 4 me

Palmer Fit4Me was developed by the Palmer Pathways program to identify all aspects of planning career and education journeys. This program serves young adults of color between the ages of 16-24 who are disconnected from education or gainful employment and have an interest in learning how to take the next steps for their future. Topics include understanding your personal brand; sharpening your employability skills; money management; and more. This free program provides virtual youth development training modules, mentoring, certificates of completion, connections to industry professionals, and ongoing support services to fit4me scholars.



Training



Mentorship



Exploration



Guidance



Connections

2023: A YEAR FOR MOVING THE MISSION FORWARD

Palmer Scholars 2023 Report Card

TOTAL IMPACT



217

TOTAL SCHOLARS SERVED IN LEGACY
AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS IN 2023

TOTAL GRADUATION RATES FOR LEGACY AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS



93%

FROM FYE2022 TO FYE2023

TOTAL SCHOLAR SUPPORT



\$370,750.70

IN MONETARY VALUE

TOTAL GROWTH IN SCHOLARS SERVED



+17%

FROM FYE2022 TO FYE2023

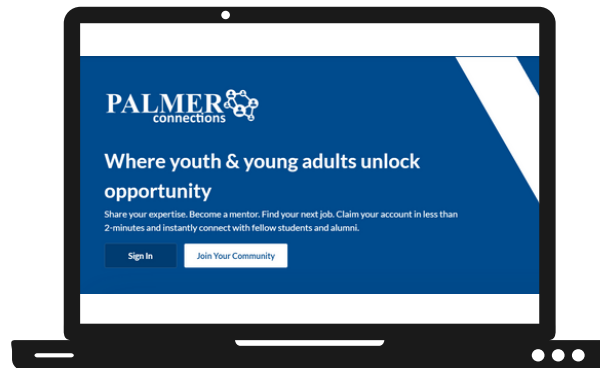
These are combined numbers from Legacy and Pathways programs.

2023: A YEAR FOR GROWING MENTORSHIP

Mentoring Program Changes through the Years

What started as Rev. Al Davis and Merle Palmer offering advice to the young people in their lives 40 years ago has turned into a county-wide movement to support young people as they transition into adulthood. Over the past 40 years, Palmer Scholars has hosted hundreds of mentors from the community who have walked with their Scholar mentees through the college application process, high school graduation, break ups, job interviews, and more. Now, with Palmer Connections, mentoring has never been easier. Mentors can access the online platform from the comfort of their homes and young people throughout Pierce County can access the wisdom and knowledge that their community has to offer.

The network that Palmer Connections provides not only Palmer Scholars but also young people across Pierce County aims to change the academic and professional trajectory of the next generation.



Join Palmer Connections Today!



Want to mentor youth and young adults in your community? Sign up today at connections.palmerscholars.org

2023: A YEAR FOR WELCOMING CHAPTER BEGINNINGS

Palmer Scholars Changes Leadership



As the torch of leadership passes from one dedicated hand to another, it's a poignant moment filled with both nostalgia and anticipation. The legacy of our outgoing Executive Director, Jonathan Jackson, has woven itself into the very fabric of our organization, leaving an indelible mark of inspiration and guidance.

Yet, as we bid farewell to a chapter defined by vision and perseverance, we stand on the precipice of a new era—a realm brimming with fresh ideas, renewed vigor, and uncharted possibilities. The incoming Executive Director, Denise Nicole' Franklin, steps into this role, not merely as a successor, but as a custodian of aspirations, entrusted with nurturing the seeds of growth and fortifying the values that anchor us.

In this transition lies the essence of continuity—a seamless thread that binds the past, present, and future. It's a testament to the resilience of our collective spirit, acknowledging the evolution imperative for progress while cherishing the heritage that molds our identity.



2023: A YEAR FOR WELCOMING CHAPTER BEGINNINGS

Palmer Scholars Changes Leadership



Community support is the backbone of the work we do here at Palmer Scholars, and the community's unwavering belief in this leadership transition stems from a profound conviction in the legacy Jonathan and Denise Nicole' have cultivated together. Recently, Jonathan and Denise Nicole' met with Mrs. Mary and Angel Davis, wife and daughter of founder Rev. Al Davis, who shared their congratulatory messages and expressed their gratitude for Jonathan's impactful tenure as the outgoing Executive Director.

With a heartfelt dedication to the greater mission and an acute understanding of the ever-evolving landscape, they view this passing of the torch as a natural progression, a testament to the strength and adaptability ingrained within our core values. Their unwavering support serves as a beacon, illuminating the path forward and instilling confidence that the incoming leadership will not just maintain but further enrich the work of their predecessors, ensuring that the organization continues to flourish and evolve in alignment with its founding principles.

2023: A YEAR FOR WELCOMING CHAPTER BEGINNINGS

Palmer Scholars Changes Leadership



Dear Palmer Scholars Community,

Stepping into the role of Interim Executive Director fills me with gratitude and purpose. Honoring Jonathan Jackson's legacy, I'm committed to building upon it and fostering growth.

Palmer Scholars is more than an organization; it's a community of dreams. Let's celebrate continuity in this transition, amplifying impact, empowering dreams, and scripting a narrative of achievement.

With shared purpose,

Denise Nicole' Franklin
Interim Executive Director, Palmer Scholars



2023: A YEAR OF ONGOING SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS LIKE YOU

Get Involved with Palmer Scholars

Can You Help Us Support our Scholars?



Become a mentor to one of our Scholars! Through our Palmer Connections platform, mentoring has never been easier. Join today at connections.palmerscholars.org.



Become a sponsor! When you sponsor our Stand Up & Cheer event, we can ensure that all money raised goes directly to our Scholars. We also promote your business before, during, and after the event.



Wherever you started, whatever your path, we want to hear from you! Join our Scholars during their Postsecondary Readiness Training to talk about your professional journey. If they can see it, they can be it!



Make a donation to support Palmer Scholars! We can't do this work without you. Donate today at palmerscholars.org/donate or scan the QR code with your smartphone.

The _____ Scholarship!

We think a scholarship in your name has
a nice ring to it...



Establish a named scholarship with Palmer Scholars and know that your investment is backed by a family of staff and Board members who are committed to seeing our Scholars through to graduation and career!

Interested in establishing a named scholarship? Email giving@palmerscholars.org

Thank You to Our 2023 Sponsors!

The Anne Hampton Foundation	Gary Milgard (Windows of Hope)	Sequoia Foundation
The Baker Foundation	The Gottfried & Mary Fuchs Foundation	Silver Family Foundation
The Bamford Foundation	John Voight: Voight Charitable Trust	Stewardship Foundation
Bates Family Foundation	KeyBank	Stockdale Family Foundation
Ben B. Cheney Foundation	Kiwanis Club of Tacoma Foundation	Sunrise Rotary Club of Tacoma
Black Futures Co-Op Fund	Liberty Mutual Foundation	Titus-Will Families Foundation
Building Industry Association of Washington	Magic Cabinet/Ken Birdwell Foundation	Umpqua Bank Charitable Fund
Chapter AY P E O Tacoma Washington	Mannix Canby Foundation	United Way of Pierce County
Degrees of Change	Marco J Heidner Foundation	U.S. Bank Foundation
Dimmer Family Foundation	Medina Foundation	Voigt Charitable Foundation
Discuren Charitable Foundation	MJ Murdock Charitable Trust	Washington Alliance for Better Schools
Ellingson Partnership	Neeb Family Foundation	Washington Women's Foundation
The Elliott Family Foundation	Rotary Club of Tacoma North	William Kilworth Foundation
Florence B. Kilworth Foundation	The Russell Family Foundation	Windows of Hope Foundation
Forest Foundation	Safeco Insurance Fund	Woodworth Family Foundation
Foundation for Tacoma Students	Seattle Foundation	Wells Fargo

2023: ANOTHER YEAR OF STANDING UP

Thank You to Our 2023 Stand Up & Cheer Sponsors



2023: A YEAR FOR CREATING NEW VISIONS

New name. New logo.
Same COMMITMENT to our scholars.



Save the Date!

May 16, 2024 | 4:00-5:30 PM

McGavick Conference Center - CPTC

Interested in Event Sponsorship?

Scan the QR code for more information,
or contact Alecia Cunningham:
acunningham@palmerscholars.org





Interested in joining our board?
Contact Denise Nicole' Franklin at
dfranklin@palmerscholars.org

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Jonathan Jackson, MBA

INCOMING INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Denise Nicole' Franklin

PALMER PATHWAYS PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

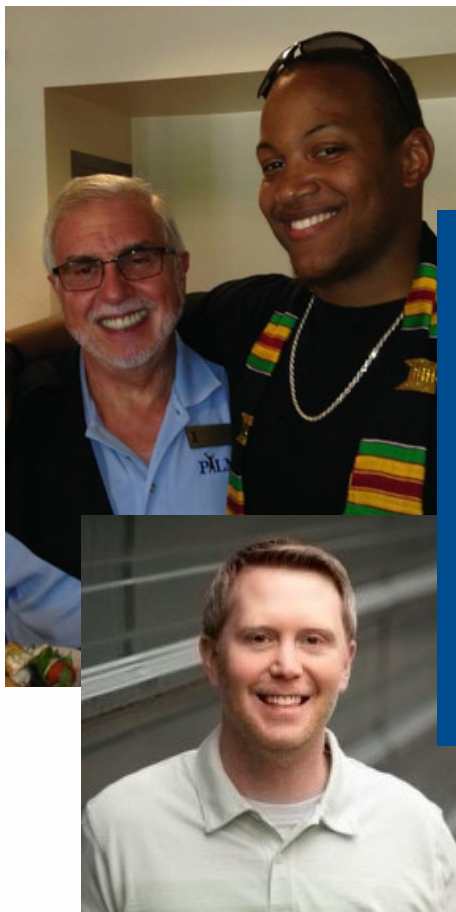
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Christina Rupp
Lowell Glodowski
Rachael Geyer
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**A Special Thank You to Our Outgoing Palmer
Scholars Board Members for their Commitment
and Support for our Scholars!**

Kimberly Carol Green, At Large
Alex Davis
Jeankie Aczon
John Bufford (Chair)

*Deceased



THANK YOU!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to outgoing board member Steve Schain, PhD., and treasurer Zach Parsons, CPA, for their unwavering dedication and invaluable contributions to our mission. Their steadfast support has been pivotal in propelling us toward success, guiding our endeavors with expertise and insight. Steve's visionary leadership and Zach's meticulous financial stewardship have been instrumental, shaping our path and fostering growth. Their commitment to our cause has left an everlasting mark on our journey, and we are immensely grateful for their enduring impact on our organization's achievements. We wish them the best of luck in their next chapter!

This Pathways program receives support and funding from a US Department of Labor Workforce Innovation and Opportunities (WIOA) Title I-B Youth PY23 grant. Read more about USDOL grant funding at esd.wa.gov/usdol.