



# HARRASEEKET\* CHANGING LIVES

*\*pronounced "hair-a-SEEK-it"*

Testimonials from students,  
community leaders, Pathways  
community members and  
experts on the impact of The  
Harraseeket Foundation's  
Pathways programs

March 2023

# The Impact of the Pathways Internship Fund:

Communities in Schools surveyed the first two group of our interns. The feedback exceeded our expectations. **On a scale of 1-5, they each gave the experience a 5.** The interns told us they learned communication, teamwork, responsibility, and other work skills, and they gained confidence.

Not only did the students have a positive experience, but the Goodwin House, who employed the first round of interns, saw the positive impact and then offered to pay the second round of interns themselves.

Learn more at:

[harraseeketfoundation.org/pathways-fund](http://harraseeketfoundation.org/pathways-fund)

When Asked What Skills They Gained, Students Reported:

*“I faced challenges since it was the first time that I did an internship. I had responsibility for everything I had to do every day”*

*“I was not a person who likes to talk to new people if they don’t come to me first, but the internship helped me to do that. ”*

*“Confidentiality, Communication, Time Management”*

*“Communicating better, having more confidence and becoming a better listener.”*

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Interns were offered opportunities to work in a variety of areas beyond helping the residents, including administrative, finance, and event planning. One student wrote:

*“[M]y favorite day was being able to be a part of the big meetings at Goodwin House ... I was able to sit down and listen in to how they will run the business next and what’s next with what they have planned. I really enjoyed being a part of that moment and being able to experience it all.*

# Interns also shared their thoughts on what they gained from the experience:

*"Professional experience and I felt good, that I was there to help and listen."*

*"I learned more about the career I would like to study in the future."*

*"A lot of confidence about my communication skills."*

*"I get to see how people work in the real world in an office setting."*

*"A lot of respect for those who work in the health care system. As well as different skills I can use outside of a professional workspace."*

*"It was a new experience, and I learned a lot about how working in an office environment."*

*"I met new people, learned to greet others, and learned about different cultures."*

*"It was a great experience, and it was exciting."*

*"Really good because I learned a lot."*

*"A very good experience."*

## Our favorite quote?

*"I would say thank you so much for the amazing opportunity they gave me. I enjoyed every second of every day I was there. I really did learn a lot of new things I didn't know before. The skills I have learned as well as the information will most definitely help me out later down the road in my future."*

# Testimonials for Harraseeket from Community Leaders

Collected for Grant Applications

## Martha Macdonald

(Fairfax County Public Schools Conflict Resolution & Mentoring Specialist, Office of Student Safety and Wellness)

*"The mission of the Fairfax County Public Schools MentorWorks program is to connect every student to a caring, responsible adult. The FCPS Workforce program, also called Work-Based Learning, is a coordinated education strategy providing students a continuum of career related experiences that extend classroom learning to support the development of career goals. Harraseeket's Pathways Internship Fund, which funds internships and offers mentoring for the interns, is a great fit with the MentorWorks and Workforce programs. These kinds of internships, and related mentoring, is just what many of our students need, and will help eliminate gaps in opportunity, access and achievement."*

## Cindy Kowal

(Director of Operations at Communities In Schools of NOVA (CIS), Learn more at: <https://cisofnova.org/ourimpact/>)

*"The Harraseeket Foundation is funding internship stipends for CIS NOVA students. These are students who could not otherwise take unpaid internships. The feedback from the interns has been consistently extremely positive, with our students saying they have learned from the experience, gained confidence, and discovered opportunities for themselves that they didn't know about before the internship. We would not have this program without Harraseeket, and plans are underway for our third cohort of interns this summer! The Pathways Internship Fund makes a difference in the lives of our students, and directly supports our mission of helping our students succeed."*

**Elizabeth Lodal**  
(Co-Director of EduTutorVa, Board member of CIS of Virginia, former principal of McLean High School and Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology and Harraseeket Donor)

*"As a Board member of Communities in Schools of Virginia, I have seen the benefits of the Harraseeket stipends for Communities in Schools students to take unpaid internships. These internships have opened the eyes of students who otherwise cannot afford to take unpaid internships and given them a sense of empowerment and confidence that is hard to replicate."*

**Peter Fitzgerald**  
(Chairman of Chain Bridge Bank and Harraseeket Donor)

*"Chain Bridge Bank, N.A. is honored to provide financial support to Harraseeket's Pathways Internship Fund, an outstanding initiative dedicated to uplifting at-risk, economically disadvantaged students in Northern Virginia. The Fund's commitment to mentorship and hands-on guidance fosters powerful connections with underserved communities and invests in the future success of these young individuals. The remarkable outcomes for students and employers alike showcase the enduring, transformative impact of this invaluable program."*

**Rich Krygeil**  
(Founding Director of Undaunted Futures, Inc.)  
Learn more at:  
[Undaunted Futures](#)

*"We expect Harraseeket's Pathways Internship Fund to be a powerful tool to strengthen the programming that Undaunted Futures provides to underserved Fairfax County Public School high school students. Offering these students the opportunity to gain internships will enrich their real-world experience, give them the confidence to see future versions of themselves, and meaningfully expand career opportunities for these students."*

**Rev. Katie Strednak Singer**  
(Associate Pastor, Immanuel Presbyterian Church)

*"So often in creating supportive community programs, by necessity we must focus on meeting basic human needs like direct food assistance or housing. Pathways Internship Fund meets those basic needs with an innovative, community-based model which equips local businesses with the opportunity to facilitate both immediate economic relief for local families and lasting, ripple-effect change for the McLean community at large. This program creates a beautiful meeting place for employers to partner with students in addressing the immediate financial needs of their families while opening up possibilities for future collaboration in limitless ways. Some programs teach people to fish, and other programs give people the proverbial fish— Pathways Internship Fund aims to do both at the same time!"*

Associate Pastor  
Megan Thomas  
(McLean Baptist Church,  
a Pathways community)

Sultan Chaudhry  
(President of  
McLean Islamic Center,  
a Pathways community)

Leslie Speidel  
(Certified Career Coach and owner of Career  
Exploration Company in McLean.  
Learn more at:  
<https://careerexplorationcompany.com>)

Amee Burgoyne  
(MCF Leadership Council and Pathways mentor)

*"Harraseeket's Pathways program empowers community mentoring in McLean — a particular passion of members of McLean Baptist Church. When we decided we needed help setting up a mentoring program, we asked other faith communities, and they recommended Harraseeket. The Pathways Internship Fund is something we are particularly excited about. It allows students who wouldn't have had the opportunity, due to their financial circumstances, to be able to gain the experiences of unpaid internships. We want to use our time and experience through mentoring to support these students and this life-giving program that will impact our larger community."*

*"The Harraseeket Foundation has been a wonderful partner to Mclean Islamic Center, in part because it offers us interfaith opportunities to serve the community. A number of members of our congregation have participated in Pathways programs, and we look forward to supporting its mentoring program. McLean Islamic Center has long supported programs for the underserved in McLean. The Pathways Internship Fund is an excellent example of the kind of program we support."*

*"The [Pathways Internship Fund] offers a way for at-risk, economically disadvantaged high school students to gain valuable experience through unpaid internships that they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. Internships present a meaningful way for students to gain real world experience, establish professional connections, and learn new skills."*

*"We all know that many local students are from families that are well-connected to our area businesses, politicians and non-profit organizations. Those connections, and the ability to even consider unpaid internships, mean that students from financially comfortable families have a definite advantage. Harraseeket helps disadvantaged students bridge the gaps in both of those areas: Pathways mentors use their connections and experience to help students find and secure internships and the stipends broaden students' options by making unpaid positions feasible. The result is that, just like their more privileged peers, Pathways students have the chance to learn through meaningful work and to start to refine their personal goals and preferences. The stipends do enable Pathways to put tools into their students' hands, tools like the experience of learning what it takes to get and keep a job, the awareness and confidence of what it takes to work responsibly in a professional environment, and the invaluable opportunity to meet and work under additional mentors and role models. I have known and admired the work of Pathways for several years. I have also worked with several Pathways leaders on a variety of projects and know them to be dedicated to the good of our community and committed to helping others in well-conceived, effective ways."*

**Paul Shiffman**

(Vice Chair of Chain Bridge Bank's Board of Directors, and, for many decades, an active participant in a wide variety of civic activities, including Little League)

**Tom Jacobi**

(Former member of the McLean Community Foundation Board of Directors and Senior VP, Chain Bridge Bank, N.A., Director, Chain Bridge Bancorp, Inc., and Harraseeket Donor)

**Rip Sullivan**

(Delegate, Virginia General Assembly)

**Janet Tysse**

(Past President of McLean Community Foundation and a community volunteer)

*"Harraseeket is proposing to create an important bridge between the business community and underserved students. The community needs programs like this."*

*"I've followed Harraseeket's work for years and am very happy to be a donor. I've lived in McLean my whole life, and strongly believe we need programs like the Pathways Internship Fund to strengthen the ties between the business community and McLean students. Giving students who can't afford to take unpaid internships with employers is a great way to do that."*

*"Harraseeket's work is perfectly aligned with the mission ... to support community-building programs... Facilitating unpaid internships for our economically disadvantaged highschoolers will expand their career horizons and strengthen the ties within our community."*

*"Harraseeket has so much local input on so many levels and it is such a worthwhile organization with proven results."*



# Experts on the Impact of Funding Unpaid Internships

*The following summarizes the impact  
of the PIF to date and reviews the  
studies / other literature about funding  
unpaid internships.*



# Unpaid Internships Disadvantage At-Risk and Low-Income Students

A 2010 study found that:

*“the lack of affordability of both internships and, more broadly, a college education, leaves low-income students at a significant disadvantage in a competitive labor market.”*

--Mayo, L. & Shethji, P. (2010). Reducing Internship Inequity. Diversity & Democracy, Fall 2010, Vol. 13, No. 3. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/publicationsresearch/periodicals/reducing-internship-inequity>.

According to a recent Hechinger Report:

*“Many underrepresented students must work throughout high school and don’t have the luxury to accept unpaid internships. High school is a critical period for students to start exploring what they enjoy, identifying their career goals and mapping out a plan for achieving them.”*

*“Compensating interns frees them up to fully engage in a valuable workplace learning experience while being able to meet their basic needs. Internship programs empower at risk students to visualize college and career pathways they previously thought were unattainable.”*

This is what the American Association of Colleges & Universities found:

*“Financial barriers . . . often prevent low-income students from accessing high-quality internships, many of which are unpaid. These students may need a summer income in order to pay for college, leaving the career-rich opportunities that unpaid internships provide off the table.”*

# Studies show that funding unpaid internships benefits students and employers...

From a 2019 study from the NACE Center for Career Development and Talent Acquisition, "*The Impact of Scholarships On Unpaid Internships*":

*"Years of employer surveys, research studies, and anecdotal stories from students paint a positive picture of internships as an important tool in helping students get started in a career. Research has labeled internships as a "high-impact practice" that has a positive effect on learning, retention, and graduation rates."*

*"It is also clear in the research that internship opportunities benefitted all students in preparing them for their future careers and provided beneficial experience and skills more broadly. Finley and McNair noted that there were specific groups that seemed to show the greatest impact when participating in high-impact practices, such as internships. Latinx and African-American students showed greater increases in "self-reported gains, grade point averages, and retention." [A study by Kinzie] also found that, with increased participation, Latinx students were graduating in fewer semesters than those not participating, but that both "Latino and African-American students participate in internships less frequently than white students."*

In a 2017 study, (Townsley, E., Lierman, L., Watermill, J., & Rousseau, D. (2017) *The Impact of Undergraduate Internships on Post-Graduate Outcomes for the Liberal Arts*, NACE Center for Career Development and Talent Acquisition. September, 2017) researchers concluded that:

*"the introduction of internship funding for every student increases access to internship opportunities."*

A Denver study (<https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/internships/the-impactof-scholarships-on-unpaid-internships/>) of a program offering stipends showed paying interns significantly increases internship participation rates:

*"The results were dramatic: The spring 2018 comparison group (unpaid interns from the three target majors) consisted of 22 students. When given the opportunity for a paid internship, the number of interns in the three target majors for spring 2019 jumped to 50—an increase of 127 percent. This provides strong evidence that offering pay in fields that traditionally do not have paid internships has the potential to increase the number of interns."*

Also, the stipends can have a meaningful impact on the lives of the students and their families. From the same study:

*"The money provided through the "earn and learn" program was overwhelmingly used to pay basic living expenses or pay for books and supplies. Students also indicated that they used the funds to pay for parking at their internship site or gas to get there. Only seven respondents indicated that any portion of the money was used for entertainment, illustrating how tight budgets are for many of our students."*

The study authors also identified non-financial outcomes. For example, many students reported that they were able to spend more time on classwork.

*"Another non-financial outcome for students was a greater sense of feeling valued. According to some of the participating employers, their perception was that the pay made the students work harder and take the experience more seriously."*

Another study (<https://www.findspark.com/why-employers-benefit-from-payinginterns/>) cites the benefit to employers of paid internships:

*"[C]ompanies with paid internships have a significantly higher chance of retaining their interns as future employees. A study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that almost 40% of employers reported a higher five-year 9 retention rate among employees they hired from their paid internship programs."*

# How Mentoring Can Change the Lives of Underserved Students

A recent CDC study showed a steep decline in teen mental health, but also noted that “[c]omprehensive strategies that improve connections with others at home, in the community, and at school might foster improved mental health.” Those to be mentored are “in need”: Of 189,000 students in Fairfax County Public Schools, 29% are eligible for free/reduced meals, 29% receive ESOL services, and 15% receive special education services. Too many of them don’t have any adult regularly in their lives.

According to Public/Private Venture Studies of Big Brothers/Big Sisters (2018), when compared to their peers, mentored youth are:

- 52% less likely to skip a day of school
- 37% less likely to skip a class
- 55% more likely to enroll in college or career training
- 130% more likely to hold leadership positions

Young people who were at risk for falling off track but had a mentor were, according to data from Mentoring.org (2018):

- 46% less likely to use drugs
- 27% less likely to start drinking alcohol
- 78% more likely to volunteer regularly
- 81% more likely to participate in sports or extracurricular activities



# Feedback from Participants in Pathways Programs:

*“Harraseeket Foundation has provided such meaningful programs at our church... Their Pathways program in particular has been such an invaluable resources for young adults in their discernment about vocation, meaningful work, and what it means to live a life of meaning.”*

## On the Imagining Your Future (Guide Teams) Program:

Please watch this 5-minute testimonial video:

<https://youtu.be/XRyhRdacO2Y>

*"A Fantastic Intergenerational Mutual Learning Experience: As a mentor with Immanuel Presbyterian Church's Pathways program, I found the experience of teaming up with a young adult to be "guides" to a high school student rewarding on many levels. Learning to listen deeply and draw out the student into "hearing himself speak" (as Parker Palmer says) was a challenging and beautiful process, while also teaming with someone about the age of my own son as my fellow guide. We three shared our individual challenges and guided each other, while still focusing on the student, and the mutual respect and trust that we had was very precious. The tools the Pathways team provided gave us the jumping off point that enabled us to build that trust fairly quickly and we met weekly for an entire school year."*

*"I've been asked questions that help me focus on what really matters to me, rather than what is the next logical step."*

*"This program has given a meaningful, protected space to explore questions... and really*

*think through what future we want to bring about for ourselves."*

*"A guide team is an atmosphere of complete trust... it's people that come with open hearts and a willingness to share and listen."*

*"I have served as a mentor/guide for youth and young adults with Harraseeket in addition to supporting the growth of the program. I have thought time and again how important it is for EVERY young person to have a supportive environment to have deep, no pressure self discovery conversations. It is often too late in our lives that we realize we don't have to run the same "race" as everyone else in life, but can be happier if we are intentional about the path we chose for ourselves. Harraseeket helps bring that conversation forward in the lives of young people and allow them to arrive at their own conclusions informed by open ended questions and discussions with mentors who are at different phases of that journey themselves."*

Learn more at [imaginingyourfuture.org](http://imaginingyourfuture.org).

## On One-on-One Mentoring Conversations:

*"I have had a great experience with Pathways. The connections I've made have helped me explore job opportunities, feel more confident in my abilities, and think about my career from a fresh perspective."*

*"My first conversation with my mentor was incredibly organic, supportive, and fun. I learned a valuable perspective from her, that career paths aren't always linear and are often enriched by your openness to opportunities. I intend to carry this with me on my career journey, and have greatly enjoyed our newly fostered relationship and correspondence."*

*"My mentor conversations have been really helpful. They've suggested some other career paths that I wouldn't have considered before. I'd been getting career tunnel vision— where I could only picture myself doing a few things— my mentors have helped me break out of that thinking. I've returned to job searching with a renewed energy."*

*"I was an early participant in the Pathways program at our church, Immanuel Presbyterian Church in McLean. I understood the need immediately--"at certain times in life it is essential to have a guiding hand from a caring adult". What was not clear until after my experience with mentoring was that I was also blessed in the process. We need to give of ourselves in meaningful ways to make life meaningful; and mentoring is a great way to bless and be blessed. Give it a try!"*

## On a High School Vocation Fair:

*“Speakers were amazing. The small groups worked great.”*

*“It was very insightful...I had a better lens on what I’d like to do.”*

*“You have a great program.”*

*“[K]eep up the great work! This is so helpful for our youth, and I wish I had it available to me when I was going through the process many moons ago. I think it’s very valuable to help them see that they have access to a wider network than they may realize at first. Religious and social communities (peer friendships, parents’ friends) can allow them to extend their network of knowledge and experience.”*

*“I really enjoyed the rotating panels. It was very helpful to hear from others’ experiences and hear their tips and insights.”*

*“Really great – just hearing people’s stories and hearing that people fail and move on.” “Excellent program. Invaluable. Good messages for young people.”*

*“I liked all of the panelists and what they had to say was helpful.”*

*“Everything was very organized and time was managed extremely well. The guest speakers at the panels were very experienced and were sharing their experiences generously and answering all questions thoroughly. [The panels] were all great and provided lots of information.”*

## On *Designing Your Life* Forums:

*“I really liked how open-ended the questions were and how the conversation was guided by participants’ comments.”*

*“It was a good discussion, and ... the questions that were asked were really good and made me think deeply about what I wanted to do in my future.”*

*“I really enjoyed it, I got a lot of good ideas and useful info from the session. I also got some good insight too.”*

## On the Pathways at Work Program:

*“I had worked during college for a film production company, and chatted with a Pathways mentor about my interest in the music business. He knew some people who worked in that industry, and that ultimately led to a fantastic summer internship at a music company in New York. You never know where an introduction might lead you!”*



# Learn More About The Harraseeket\* Foundation

*\*pronounced "hair-a-SEEK-it"*

[harraseeketfoundation.org](http://harraseeketfoundation.org)

[imagineyourfuture.org](http://imagineyourfuture.org)

[ipcpathways.org](http://ipcpathways.org)