

# 2023

## ANNUAL REVIEW







**AMERICAN**  
*experience*  
FOUNDATION

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 leaders. AEF invests in young people in our community, supporting their college and career readiness.





# AEF

## WHAT WE DO

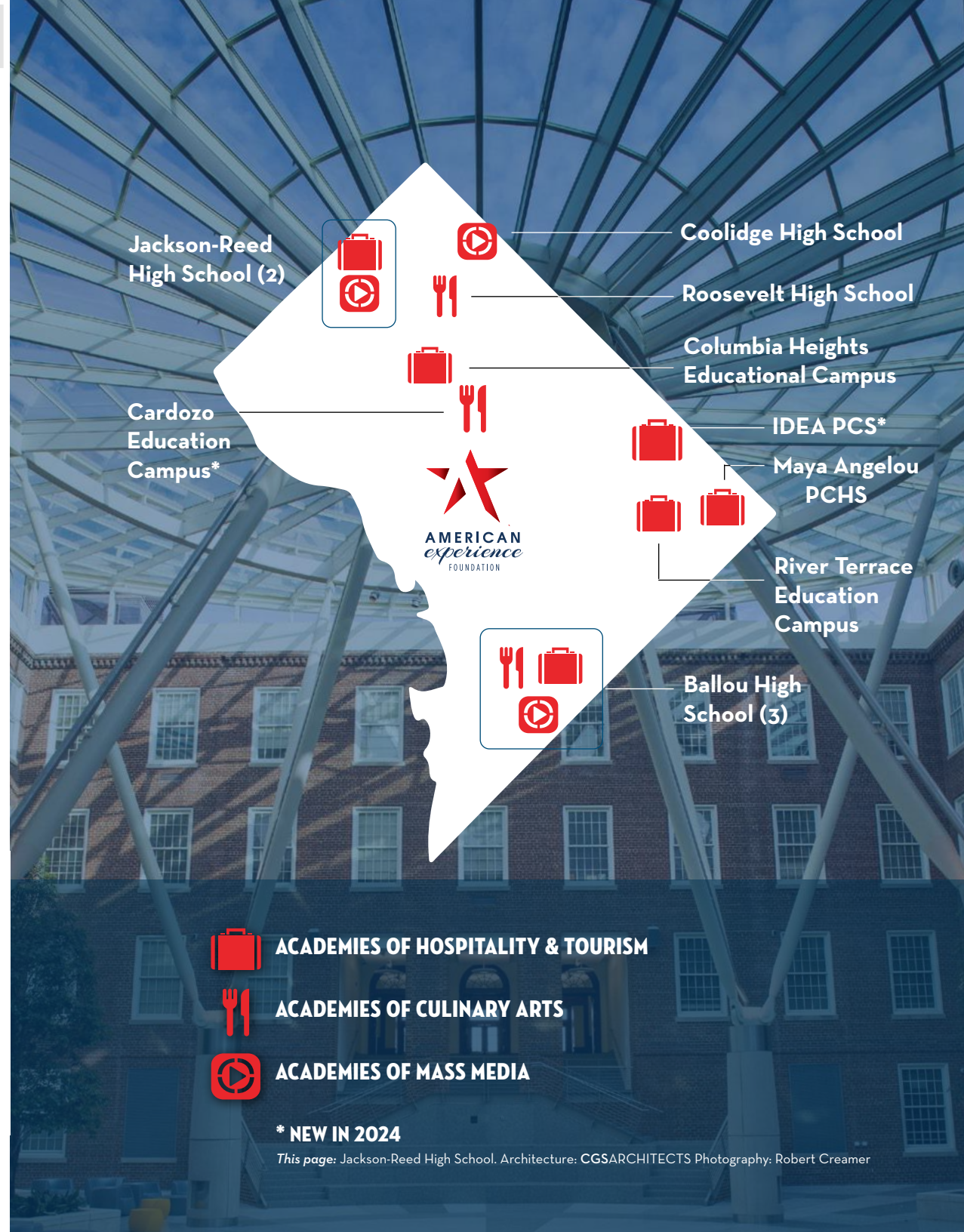
**1 INSPIRE** through free field trips to the treasures of our nation's capital for students from DC and across the country

**2 TRAIN** through internships and educational opportunities to connect students with industry professionals

**3 EDUCATE** through scholarships to qualified students and alumni from DC's high school Academies of Hospitality & Tourism, Culinary Arts and Mass Media

By leveraging our partner, Destination DC, and its nearly 1,000 member businesses, AEF is uniquely positioned to open doors for students, fill a need for career exposure and create pathways to success.

Cover: Kimberly Walker, Coolidge High School Class of 2023, films industry professionals at the AEF Recording Studio during the Destination DC Open House event in February. *Facing page:* Academy students enter Capital One Arena to learn from Monumental Sports professionals about careers in sports hospitality during AEF's Backyard Bound field trip.



Jackson-Reed High School (2)

Coolidge High School

Roosevelt High School

Columbia Heights Educational Campus

IDEA PCS\*

Maya Angelou PCHS

River Terrace Education Campus

Ballou High School (3)

Cardozo Education Campus\*

AMERICAN  
experience  
FOUNDATION



ACADEMIES OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM



ACADEMIES OF CULINARY ARTS



ACADEMIES OF MASS MEDIA

**\* NEW IN 2024**

*This page:* Jackson-Reed High School. Architecture: CGSARCHITECTS Photography: Robert Creamer

# AEF IS GROWING WITH YOUR HELP.

As a hospitality stakeholder in Washington, DC, you should feel proud of the important work that educators, city leaders and organizations like the American Experience Foundation are doing to help prepare young people to take on college and their careers with confidence.

## IN 2023, AEF

- ★ Created work-based learning experiences for 350 students with hospitality industry partners
- ★ Hosted 5 year-round and 11 summer high school interns
- ★ Involved students in Destination DC events including the Member Holiday Celebration and Member Open House
- ★ Led students behind the scenes both in Washington, DC and in New York City
- ★ Amplified alumni's leadership through the AEF Student Advisory Board

## AEF'S IMPACT WILL GROW EVEN MORE IN 2024 BY

- ★ Welcoming AEF's second full-time employee. Brittany Anderson brings a wealth of industry and education expertise, including eight years as College & Career Coordinator at Ballou High School
- ★ Welcoming a new Academy of Culinary Arts at Francis L. Cardozo Education Campus and Academy of Hospitality & Tourism at IDEA Public Charter School
- ★ Sharing the wonders of Washington, DC with students through the return of Backyard Bound and Rite of Passage field trips
- ★ Creating educator and industry professional development opportunities
- ★ Celebrating over \$130,000 in scholarships awarded since 2015

AEF has emerged as a national leader. It is an efficient organization with remarkable impact.

Students are the real stars of this story. Read more about their achievements here. Join us to support them by donating your time, expertise or resources.



**Michael Akin**  
*Chair, Board of Directors*  
American Experience Foundation  
*President,*  
LINK Strategic Partners



**Claire Carlin**  
*Executive Director*  
American Experience Foundation  
*Senior Vice President of Partnerships & Alliances*  
Destination DC

# IN 2023

AEF served over

# 575

students, including:



# 75

Students on  
FIELD TRIPS



# 35

Students involved in  
Destination DC  
EVENTS

# 16

INTERNS  
hosted by AEF



# 340

Students on  
EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMS



# \$18,500

Awarded in  
SCHOLARSHIPS

# SINCE 2015

AEF has served over

# 3,600

students, including:



# 630

Students on  
FIELD TRIPS



# 450

Students invited to  
special industry  
EVENTS

# 530

INTERNS placed with  
hospitality employers



# 144

INTERNS  
hosted by AEF



# 1,300

Students on  
EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMS



# \$130,000

Awarded in  
SCHOLARSHIPS



Through unforgettable **field trips**, AEF **INSPIRES** students to think big about their futures. Students meet executives and managers and have hands-on experiences.





# INSPIRE

“ River Terrace students are both economically disadvantaged and have special needs which often results in their being not afforded the opportunities of their nondisabled peers. That makes programs like AEF’s so special to them. It is so important to their personal and professional growth to get the opportunity to travel to another city, experience places they may have only seen on TV and to meet executives who are excited to work with them in the future. As an educator, it makes me proud to know that there are so many people in the industry invested in our students’ success.”



**Cynthia Privott**  
*Director, Academy of Hospitality and Tourism,  
River Terrace Education Campus*



**Left:** The **New York Marriott Marquis** welcomes AEF students for breakfast and behind the scenes tour in March. **Right:** Students from Columbia Heights Educational Campus pose for a photo 91 floors above Manhattan at **SUMMIT One Vanderbilt**. Jackson-Reed Academy Director Brandon Wims takes a photo of his students overlooking Times Square at the Marriott Marquis.



# BACKYARD BOUND

AEF was proud to bring back the Backyard Bound overnight field trip – our first one post-pandemic. Thirty students explored DC for two full days. Partners showed students both the consumer and professional sides of the hospitality industry.



EASTERN POINT COLLECTIVE



WASHINGTON



- ★ Georgetown Men's Basketball
- ★ Monumental Sports
- ★ Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center
- ★ Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



“It was exciting to be a part of exposing my younger classmates to different careers in the hospitality industry and expanding their understanding of what the future could hold. I also learned a lot about my own future opportunities.”



**Declan Bianchi**

Senior, Jackson-Reed Academy of Hospitality and Tourism & AEF Year-Round Intern 2023





## EXPLORING NYC

AEF explored the Big Apple with 55 students and staff who learned about hospitality industry careers and heard personal stories from professionals at partner businesses in Times Square and beyond.

- ★ New York Marriott Marquis
- ★ W New York – Times Square
- ★ Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
- ★ SUMMIT One Vanderbilt
- ★ Battle's Transportation
- ★ Pod Hotel Times Square
- ★ Landry's & Bill's Bar and Burger New York



*Facing page:* A student takes a photo of Mark Bradford's *Pickett's Charge* at the **Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden**. Students are treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of **The Duck & The Peach** from Executive Chef Kat Petonito before lunch at La Collina. Students from Coolidge High School dream of a new luxury car at the 2023 **Washington Auto Show**.

*This page:* **Javits Convention Center** CEO Alan Steel greets students in New York City before their tour. Executive Chef Niko Marinos explains how food and beverage offerings at Javits incorporates the Center's own honey made in rooftop hives. Students take a photo from Le Petit Chef on top of the **New York Marriott Marquis** looking next door to the **W New York**. Educators and students find themselves immersed in the artwork of Kenzo Digital at **SUMMIT One Vanderbilt**.





# TRAIN

“ I have been honored to volunteer as a weekly presentation judge for AEF’s Career Ready Interns since 2020. It’s a joy to get insight into what young people are thinking about, how they perceive the world and our industry and be able to play a small role in helping them hone their professional skills. I’m always surprised by the level of thoughtfulness and creativity that goes into their presentations. These are the kinds of qualifications that our industry needs and that will set these young people apart as they begin their career journey.”



**Diana Mayhew**  
*President,  
National Cherry Blossom Festival*

**Left:** Students learn about the aviation industry from airline partners at **National Airport** during the Careers at the Airport Expo. **Facing page:** Culinary students practice making an omelet at the **Conrad Washington, DC** during Destination DC’s Member Holiday Party.



AEF helps ensure that diverse voices become part of management and C-Suite teams in the hospitality, tourism and culinary industries. When AEF creates **work-based learning opportunities** for students with industry partners, students meet role models and build their professional skills and networks.





# CAREERS AT THE AIRPORT

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), led by Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion and Social Impact and AEF Board Member Tanisha Lewis, welcomed over 150 students to three events this spring including a day-long career fair, behind-the-scenes tours and networking with over 50 professionals across the organization.

“ Like all employers, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is looking to attract new talent from a variety of backgrounds and abilities, especially from our own backyard! As a parent of an Academy alumna, I know firsthand how important it is to translate the lessons of the classroom into real life experiences. We were proud to work with AEF to introduce students to the hundreds of careers in the aviation industry and help them see themselves represented in our colleagues. We know it is vital to make sure they feel welcome, wanted and included.

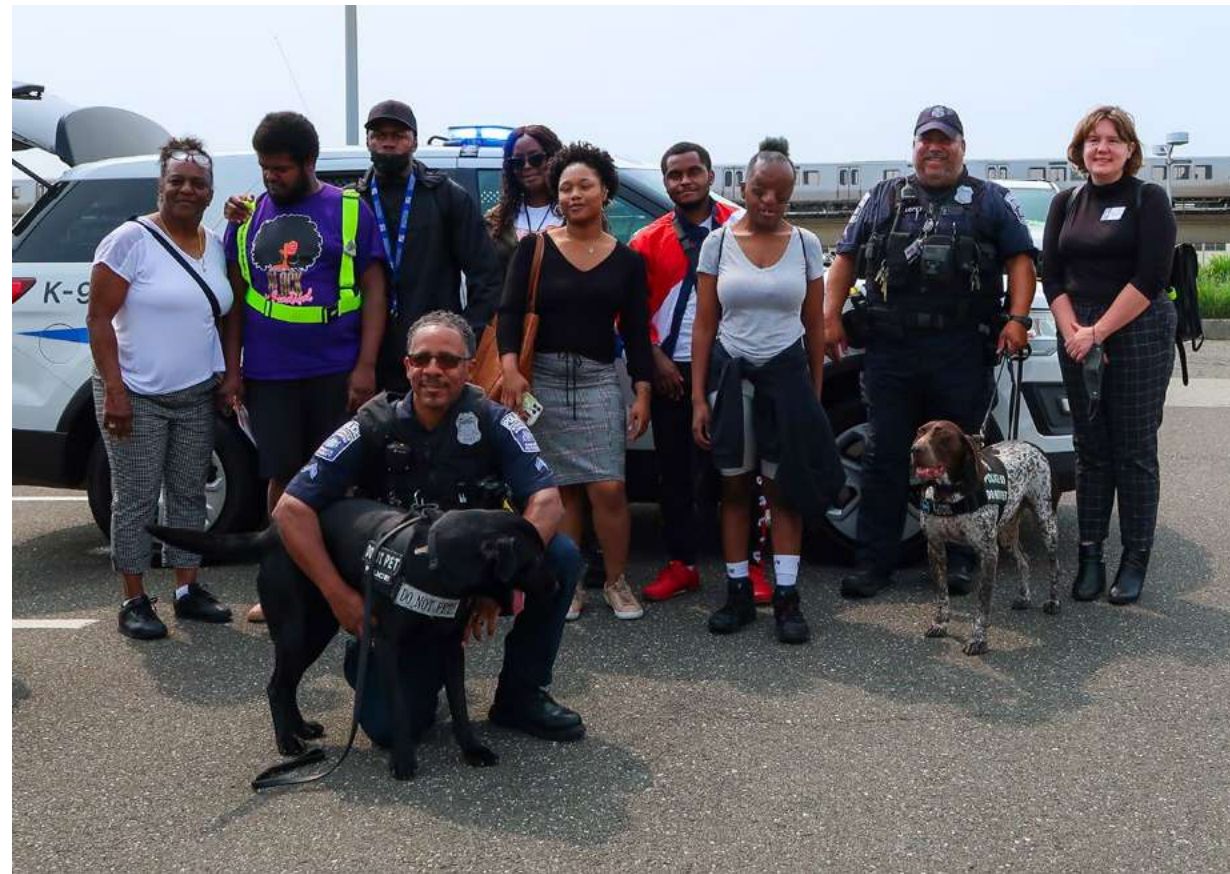


**Tanisha Lewis**  
VP for Diversity,  
Inclusion and  
Social Impact,  
MWAA



“ I thought the airline industry was pretty simple. But after my experience, I compare airports to a small city. There are so many different areas and roles, and everyone works together to make things run smoothly.”

**Daniel**  
Coolidge High School





# IN & OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

## Year-Round Learning

**FEBRUARY & MARCH** AEF volunteer professionals went to schools to help students create resumes and practice interview skills. They gave feedback on presentations and shared what career journeys really look like.

**APRIL** To celebrate Hyatt's Global Month of Service, students went behind-the-scenes at the **Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill** for a tour and shared lunch with hotel executives.

**JUNE** The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Middle School CTE Expo introduced students from Browne, MacFarland and Kramer Middle Schools to AEF. They imagined how to advertise Washington, DC and share their hometown with the world!

**AUGUST** AEF Student Advisory Board leaders and staff members shared their expertise through workshops in personal branding, etiquette in the workplace and maximizing your high school experience at Jackson-Reed's Summer Bridge freshman orientation.



## THANK YOU TO THESE PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS

- ★ **Aleatra Dimitrijevi** – Cake-wich Craft Bake Shop
- ★ **Alex Wilson** – [Retired] Jackson-Reed High School
- ★ **Alison Ricketts** – Destination DC
- ★ **Alissa Stone** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Austin Palmer** – Destination DC
- ★ **Brittany Edlow** – Destination DC
- ★ **Calvin Morgan** – Destination DC
- ★ **Cayla Lewis** – Destination DC
- ★ **Charlie Ross** – Destination DC
- ★ **Christen Miller** – Destination DC
- ★ **Claire Carlin** – Destination DC
- ★ **Darien Wright** – Hospitality and Private Equity Executive
- ★ **David Kasprzyk** – Embassy Suites by Hilton Washington, DC-Convention Center
- ★ **David-Shaun Daley** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Elliott L. Ferguson, II** – Destination DC
- ★ **Emily Vecchioni** – Destination DC
- ★ **Gail E. Smith-Howard** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Gerald Yuille** – Republic Bank
- ★ **Hanane Nafidi** – Carmine's DC
- ★ **James Moore** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Jenna Wiese** – Destination DC
- ★ **Jennifer Rodrigues** – Destination DC
- ★ **Jerry Joseph** – Destination DC
- ★ **Kelly Fitzpatrick** – Destination DC
- ★ **Kimberly Newman** – Event Contractors Lab
- ★ **Kirsten Olean** – Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
- ★ **Lane Hartley** – Omni Shoreham Hotel
- ★ **Laura Calhoun** – Destination DC
- ★ **Lauren B. Brown** – Award Winning Makeup Influencer & Beauty Content Creator
- ★ **Lee Callicutt** – Visit Montgomery, MD
- ★ **Marcia B Lee** – UPO
- ★ **Maria Skrobacz** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Musa Kamara** – Deen Ent LLC
- ★ **Nathalie Caillon Rytting SHRM-CP** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Nick Price** – Destination DC
- ★ **Randy Thompson** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Rauf Shakir** – USA Guided Tours
- ★ **Ray Cajudoy** – Amadeus
- ★ **Raymond Messina** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Rico Ashab** – Destination DC
- ★ **Ryan Covitt** – Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
- ★ **Susan O'Keefe** – Destination DC
- ★ **Taren Bradley** – Dufour Collaborative
- ★ **Taylor Hartley** – Capital Turnaround
- ★ **Terri Carter** – Destination DC
- ★ **Tiffany Elum** – Choose Chicago
- ★ **Valerie Sumner** – VRS Meetings & Events Inc
- ★ **Yair Fraifeld** – Destination DC
- ★ **Zoe Roberts** – Destination DC

# HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

## Events with Destination DC

Sixteen Academy students helped execute our partner **Destination DC**'s December Member Holiday Celebration. They prepared omelets to order, registered guests and emceed the program. Students worked alongside professionals at Destination DC and host **Conrad Washington, DC** to spread holiday cheer and raise over \$6,000 for AEF.



“Creating a positive workplace culture at Destination DC is a top priority for me. I know our team is our greatest asset and I’m always proud to host members and clients in our offices. Having high school interns as part of our mix is an important way our team can share their expertise, model professional conduct and learn from students, too. I make it a priority to connect with each intern and recognize their participation. I regularly encourage our interns to participate and practice public speaking by sharing their work in our team meetings.”



**Elliott L. Ferguson, II**  
*President & CEO,  
Destination DC*





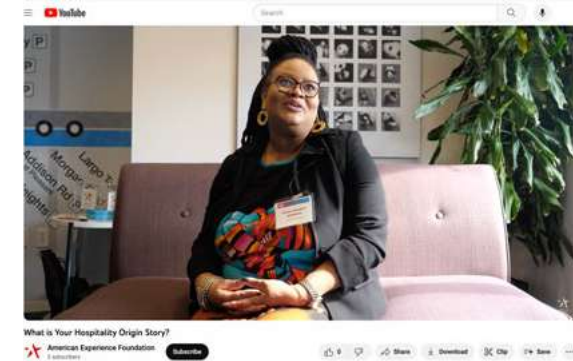


# OPEN HOUSE

## Events with Destination DC

Six students from Coolidge's Academy of Mass Media hosted an AEF Recording Studio at Destination DC's February Member Open House.

The young media specialists interviewed, filmed and edited professionals who shared how they started in the hospitality and tourism industry and provided career advice. You can see the results at AEF's YouTube channel.



**Facing page:** Academy students from Coolidge, Jackson-Reed and Roosevelt High Schools help with the execution of the Destination DC Member Holiday Party, including helping professionals navigate the event, leading the program and cooking behind the scenes in the kitchen.

**This page:** The team from Coolidge High School's Academy of Mass Media interview and film industry professionals during Destination DC's Open House event.

# ADVANCED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



**Declan Bianchi**

Jackson-Reed 2023  
Temple University 2027



**Jordan Goings**

Jackson-Reed 2023  
Old Dominion University 2027



**Mattison McDonald**

Coolidge 2023  
Washington & Jefferson  
College 2027



**Aya Shaw**

Jackson-Reed 2023  
Morehouse College 2027



**Kymberly Walker**

Coolidge HS 2023  
North Carolina Central  
University 2027

The Career and Technical Education Advanced Internship Program (AIP) is a mayoral initiative that places eligible high school seniors into paid and credit-bearing internship opportunities. These school-year-long internships are paid by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and connect students with professionals to help them build their skill sets and resumes.

AEF welcomed five AIP interns who developed new TikTok and Instagram pages for the Foundation. Interns shared their day-to-day experiences, discoveries of new places in DC and what it's like being a high schooler in 2023.

This year's AIP hospitality and tourism host employers included

- ★ Concord Hospitality
- ★ FishScale
- ★ Fava Pot
- ★ Health & Joy Services
- ★ Hotel George
- ★ Pebblebrook Hotel
- ★ Founding Farmers
- ★ Multicultural Intern Program



## INTERN SPOTLIGHT

“My internship gave me an opportunity to see many things that I could do in my career. Presenting to professionals every Thursday helped me become more comfortable with my public speaking, and connected me with interesting people. I became quite ambitious during my internships because the American Experience Foundation can connect you to anything in the hospitality field and give you the support to make it happen.”

**Mattison McDonald**

AEF AIP Intern 2023  
AEF Career Ready Intern, 2021 & 2023  
Coolidge High School, Class of 2023  
Washington & Jefferson College, Class of 2027





“In my internship, I had the chance to meet leaders I wouldn't otherwise have a chance to interact with. Presenting in front of my college classes is no problem after doing so in front of executives and marketing professionals. Getting their feedback made me confident I could overcome any challenge.”



### Jazmyne Pring

AEF Career Ready Intern, 2023  
Jackson-Reed High School, Class of 2023  
George Mason University, Class of 2027

## CAREER READY INTERNSHIPS

This summer, AEF and Destination DC welcomed eleven interns to the team. They met with hospitality executives, explored the city and considered how the Washington, DC hospitality industry can help make our city welcoming and safe for everyone who visits and lives here.

- ★ **Damari Smith**, Jackson-Reed 2025
- ★ **Destiny King**, Roosevelt 2023
- ★ **Dyamond Timmons**, Ballou 2024
- ★ **Elsy Salvador-Jimenez**, Jackson-Reed 2023
- ★ **Jazmyne Pring**, Jackson-Reed 2023
- ★ **Kaden Johnson**, Coolidge 2024
- ★ **Keiree James**, Coolidge 2023
- ★ **Mattison McDonald**, Coolidge 2023
- ★ **Milan Beverly**, Coolidge 2023
- ★ **Nakyia Wimbish**, Roosevelt 2024
- ★ **Thailan Robinson**, Coolidge 2023

“I learned that just because you live somewhere doesn't mean you know everything about what goes on there. I learned about the BIDs (Business Improvement Districts), and that I like exploring new places and taking walks around the city just to see new things.”

“I learned that it's normal to have multiple career changes and that most people wouldn't have their job without networking. The hospitality industry is just cool in general.”

“I learned there is way more to hotels than just the rooms everyone sees. There's an entire team of people behind the scenes that make sure everything works together.”

—AEF Career Ready Interns



### CAREER READY INTERNSHIPS (CONTINUED)

To celebrate this successful 6-week internship, AEF and the **Omni Shoreham Hotel** hosted a networking luncheon for Hospitality & Tourism, Culinary Arts, Mass Media and Information Technology Career Ready Interns and their host employers from across the city.

Interns were treated to lunch and an exclusive tour of the historic hotel. **Jon Armstrong Photography** provided professional headshots for all in attendance.

Weekly, interns practiced their public speaking and creativity skills by presenting to a room full of industry leaders on topics ranging from marketing to knowing your audience and proposing policy changes.

Thank you to all the professionals who volunteered their time and expertise during these weekly presentations and the **Texas A&M Bush School of Government & Public Service** for hosting the final presentation session at their downtown DC campus.



### THANKS TO OUR WEEKLY PRESENTATION JUDGES

- ★ Alex Wilson, [Retired] Jackson-Reed High School
- ★ Allison Johnson, Destination DC
- ★ Angela Kramer, Friends of Peirce Mill
- ★ Bianca DeStout, Caesars Entertainment
- ★ Brittany Anderson, Ballou High School
- ★ Brittany Edlow, Destination DC

- ★ Carlie Smith, Destination DC
- ★ Casey Paul, Destination DC
- ★ Charles Williams, Expedia Group
- ★ Charlie Ross, Destination DC
- ★ Christine Faiman, CMP, Marriott International
- ★ Claire Carlin, Destination DC
- ★ Courtney Scott, Destination DC
- ★ Diamond Hunter, Destination DC
- ★ Diana Mayhew, National Cherry Blossom Festival
- ★ Eunique Davis, Eaton Hotel
- ★ Grace Kelleher, Destination DC
- ★ Jennifer Rodrigues, Destination DC
- ★ Julian Hipkins, Roosevelt High School
- ★ Laura Calhoun, Destination DC
- ★ Laura Mandala, Martin's Tavern
- ★ Lauren Brown, Entrepreneur & Beauty Influencer
- ★ Lee Callicutt, Visit Montgomery, MD
- ★ Lindsey Wahowiak, American Public Health Association
- ★ Meili Liu, Concord Hospitality
- ★ Michael Akin, LINK Strategic Partners
- ★ Mona Thomas, FDIC
- ★ Natalie Walker, Eastern Point Collective
- ★ Rauf Shakir, USA Guided Tours
- ★ Rico Ashab, Destination DC
- ★ Shelby Luzzi, Destination DC
- ★ Tara Miller, Destination DC
- ★ Taylor Hartley, Capital Turnaround
- ★ Tony Scurry, 7 Pointe Planning, Inc
- ★ Valerie Sumner, VRS Events
- ★ Victoria Alfieri, Destination DC
- ★ Zakiya Edens, Coolidge High School
- ★ Zoe Roberts, Destination DC





## THANKS TO OUR WORK-BASED LEARNING PARTNERS

### AC Hotel by Marriott Washington DC Convention Center

- ★ Mark Namdar, General Manager
- ★ Jessica Suess, Director of Sales

### Anacostia Business Improvement District

- ★ Kristina Noell, Executive Director
- ★ Ashley Templeton, Marketing and Arts & Culture Program Manager

### Art Museum of the Americas

- ★ Adriana Ospina, Director

### ARTECHOUSE

- ★ Joshua Feldman, Director of Marketing & Sales

### Capital One Café Anacostia

- ★ Sandra Padilla, Associate

### Capital Pride Alliance

- ★ Ryan Bos, Executive Director
- ★ Marquia Parnell, Marketing & Media Chair
- ★ Mike Alexander, Development Director
- ★ Tiffany Lyn Royster, Celebration Chair

### Council of the District of Columbia

- ★ Brooke Pinto, Councilmember for Ward 2 (photo at bottom left)
- ★ Victoria Casarrubias, Communications Director
- ★ Zoe Ades, Communications Director

### Craig Kraft Studios

- ★ Max Taylor, Studio Assistant

### Darien Wright

### DC Public Library

- ★ Stacey Lucas, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator
- ★ Linnea Hegarty, Director of Events, Exhibits & Development
- ★ Barbara Cornell, Docent

### Destination DC

- ★ Bill Adams, Director of Sales
- ★ Brittany Edlow, Talent Acquisition Manager
- ★ Charlie Ross, Partnerships & Alliances Assistant
- ★ Danielle Davis, VP of Communications
- ★ Darren Gan, Global Tourism Development Manager
- ★ Shelby Luzzi, Senior Manager, Sustainability
- ★ Zoe Roberts, Membership Manager

### DowntownDC Business Improvement District

- ★ Cecily Mendie, Franklin Park Manager
- ★ Latasha Stiger, Events and Strategic Partnerships Associate
- ★ Melanie Nwosu, CMP, Director of Events and Partnerships

### Gallaudet University

- ★ Danny Himes, Administrative Support Specialist
- ★ Christopher Hoffmann, Director, Campus Design and Planning
- ★ Kiran Mapes, Associate Architectural Designer

### Holiday Inn Washington – Central/White House

- ★ David Kusnetz, Assistant Director of Sales

### International Spy Museum (photo at top left)

- ★ Michael Kruelle, VP of Operations
- ★ Afua Anokwa, Marketing and Communications Director

### Jon Armstrong Photography

- ★ Jon Armstrong, Owner

### Marriott International

- ★ Skye Curry, Manager for Global Quality

### Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District

- ★ Kenyattah Robinson, President & CEO

### Omni Shoreham Hotel (photo at middle left)

- ★ Mark Roche-Garland, General Manager
- ★ Lane Hartley, Director of Sales and Marketing
- ★ Adedoyin Siwoniku, Catering Sales Manager
- ★ Belinda Alcoser, Junior Associate
- ★ Evelyn Consolla, Summer Intern

### Selina Union Market

- ★ Maria Bastasch, Experience Manager

### Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum

- ★ B Doug (Brandon) Douglas, Activator

### Texas A&M Bush School of Government & Public Service

- ★ Jay Silveria, Executive Director
- ★ Robyn Small, Communications Director
- ★ Brenden Chaney, Program Manager of Events and Donor Relations

AEF invests in DC high school students through educational opportunities to cultivate the next generation of hospitality industry professionals. Since 2015, AEF has provided **58 scholarships** totaling more than \$130,000 in awards to deserving students and alumni who have demonstrated success, leadership and service at school, at work and in their communities.





# EDUCATE

## 2023 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



### DAVID ISELIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

**Jean-Pierre Roberts\***  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
(Jackson-Reed High School 2022)



### RAY BENNETT SCHOLARSHIP FOR LEADERSHIP

**Mattison McDonald**  
Washington & Jefferson College  
(Coolidge High School 2023)



### AKIRA WILSON SCHOLARSHIP FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Jennifer Rivera-Martinez**  
Marymount University  
(Jackson-Reed High School 2023)



### AEF SCHOLARSHIP

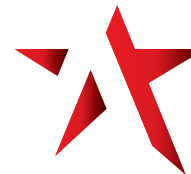
**Francisco Hernandez-Pineda**  
Catholic University  
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus 2023)



### AEF ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP

**Cenaria Fells-Watson\***  
Towson University  
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus 2021)

### AEF HONORARIUMS



**Abide Kao**  
Columbia Heights  
Educational Campus 2024



**Milan Beverly**  
Louisiana State University  
(Coolidge High School 2023)



**Orion Williams**  
Ohio University  
(Coolidge High School 2023)

\*Multiple year winner

Left: Alumni, scholarship winners, and educators gather at **Clyde's of Gallery Place** for the annual AEF Alumni Celebration in June.

# REMEMBERING

This year, we tragically lost two members of our community.

Talented student **AKIRA WILSON** attended Jackson-Reed High School, where she was a member of the Academy of Hospitality & Tourism, and dual-enrolled at Trinity University. Akira interned with Concord Hospitality at the Wharf and planned to attend Florida State University. She hoped to study mortuary science to one day open her own funeral home to help families honor their loved ones.

We continue her legacy through the Akira Wilson Memorial Scholarship Fund for future Academy students at Jackson-Reed.

To contribute, please visit [bit.ly/akirawilson](https://bit.ly/akirawilson).



# REMEMBERING

**JOE SHYMANSKI** was a beloved photographer and artist by trade. He was also a teacher, mentor and friend to many. The work of Joe and his business partner and former mentee, Alton McDougle, is familiar to Eastern Market and Downtown Holiday Market customers and now appears in homes and offices across Washington, DC and beyond.

The Joe Shymanski Scholarship Fund supports students studying photography and media in his adopted home of Washington, DC.

To contribute, please visit [bit.ly/joeshymanski](https://bit.ly/joeshymanski).





# CELEBRATING

**CENARIA FELLS-WATSON** is a three-time winner of the American Experience Foundation Scholarship.

A 2021 graduate of the Academy of Hospitality & Tourism at the Columbia Heights Educational Campus, Cenaria was also an AEF intern. She is now a nursing student at Towson University.

“My desire to go into nursing was sparked during my tenth-grade year. I realized there were disparities and major issues in the medical field involving people of color and women.

The skills I learned in the Academy of Hospitality & Tourism and my AEF internship – the power and importance of communication, how to effectively work as a team and, of course, customer service – are very important in my future nursing career. Making people feel welcome and cared for are the keys to both my and my patients’ success, especially in a hospital.”



# CELEBRATING

**BRITNEY RIVERA-MARTINEZ** is a three-time winner of the American Experience Foundation Scholarship.

A 2019 alumna of Wilson [Jackson-Reed] High School’s Academy of Hospitality & Tourism, Britney recently graduated from the renowned Nolan School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University with a degree in Hotel Administration & Management. In addition to a high school internship at the Aspen Institute and working in the Diversity & Inclusion Program at Cornell, Britney also founded the first organization for Central American Cornell students (Asociación de CentroAmericanos Unidos).

“As the first in my immediate family to complete college and the first woman in my family to pursue higher education, this milestone represents not only my personal achievements but also those of my loved ones. I’m deeply grateful for their sacrifices and support. I am immensely thankful for the greater support system that helped me reach this point, including the American Experience Foundation.”



## NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

**AEF at the Destinations International Conference** The American Experience Foundation, the Travel & Sports Legacy Foundation (Arlington, TX) and the Choose Chicago Foundation shared best practices on how destination marketing organizations can work more closely with local communities through affiliated foundations.

They showcased successful strategies for advocacy, workforce and youth development and how these strategies help to build sustainable workforce pipelines, community pride and economic health.

*From left to right:*

**Mary German, CMP, CDME**

Founder & Executive Director, Travel & Sports Legacy Foundation  
Chief Operating Officer, Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau

**Lisa Waldschmitt**

Associate Director, American Experience Foundation

**Roz Stuttley, CMP, CDE**

Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, Choose Chicago  
Executive Director, Choose Chicago Foundation

**AEF featured in Meetings Today** AEF and Destination DC were featured in *Meetings Today* as a national model of the ways destination marketing organizations and local nonprofit organizations can partner to make a difference.

“Many people in the meetings and hospitality industry describe their career journey as non-linear, some not knowing what those in the world of meetings and destination marketing did – or that they even existed at all. DDC and AEF are just one example of organizations doing the oftentimes tricky work of helping educate and expose the youth of today to jobs in hospitality tomorrow, creating a roadmap for other CVBs across the country.”





## ALUMNI PROGRAMS

In June, AEF and **Clyde's of Gallery Place** welcomed scholarship winners and DC Career Academy alumni to the annual Alumni Celebration! To start the party off, guests were treated to a professional mocktail class. The AEF Student Board of Directors hosted the program. **NAF** Manager of Alumni Engagement, Susan Climan, made the trip from New York to attend.



Members of AEF's Student Advisory Board work to connect with their peers in the classroom; this year, they brought pizza party hospitality to Academies at Jackson-Reed, Ballou and Coolidge High Schools and talked about their own experiences in the Academies as well as their transitions from high school to career.

AEF looks forward to expanding our programs and events for alumni in 2024!

“ This year, I've had the privilege of visiting three high school hospitality, tourism, and mass media classrooms to share top tips on networking and personal branding. Returning to the classroom where I first learned these principles was a full-circle moment!”



**Zoe Roberts**  
*AEF Student Advisory Board Chair & Membership Manager, Destination DC*

*At right, top:* AEF Student Advisory Board Members Zoe Roberts, Diamond Hunter and Lauren Brown speak at their alma mater, Jackson-Reed High School, about their college and career journeys. *Bottom:* AEF Board Member Skye Curry speaks with Diamond at the AEF Alumni Celebration at Clyde's.



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# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

This February, our partners at **Capitol Hill Volleyball Classic** hosted the 7th Annual Destination DC Member Volleyball Tournament to Benefit AEF. Teams from across the city came together for a night of friendly competition and raising funds for AEF's scholarships.

We thank Capitol Hill Volleyball and **Events DC** for their many years of partnership.





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\*Donated to the

Akira Wilson Memorial Fund

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Donations listed are from

Oct. 1, 2022 – Sept. 30, 2023.

***Pictured at left, top:*** DDC staff at Columbia Heights Educational Campus' Career Day: Tiffany Elum, Erica Riddle O'Neill, Erika Jones, Cayla Lewis and Jared Kolleh.

***Bottom:*** Destination DC Director of Convention Sales Bill Adams and Videographer Robert Urteaga chats with students from Coolidge High School's Academy of Mass Media during the Open House event.

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### **Diamond Hunter**

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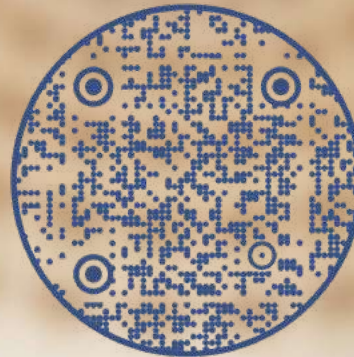
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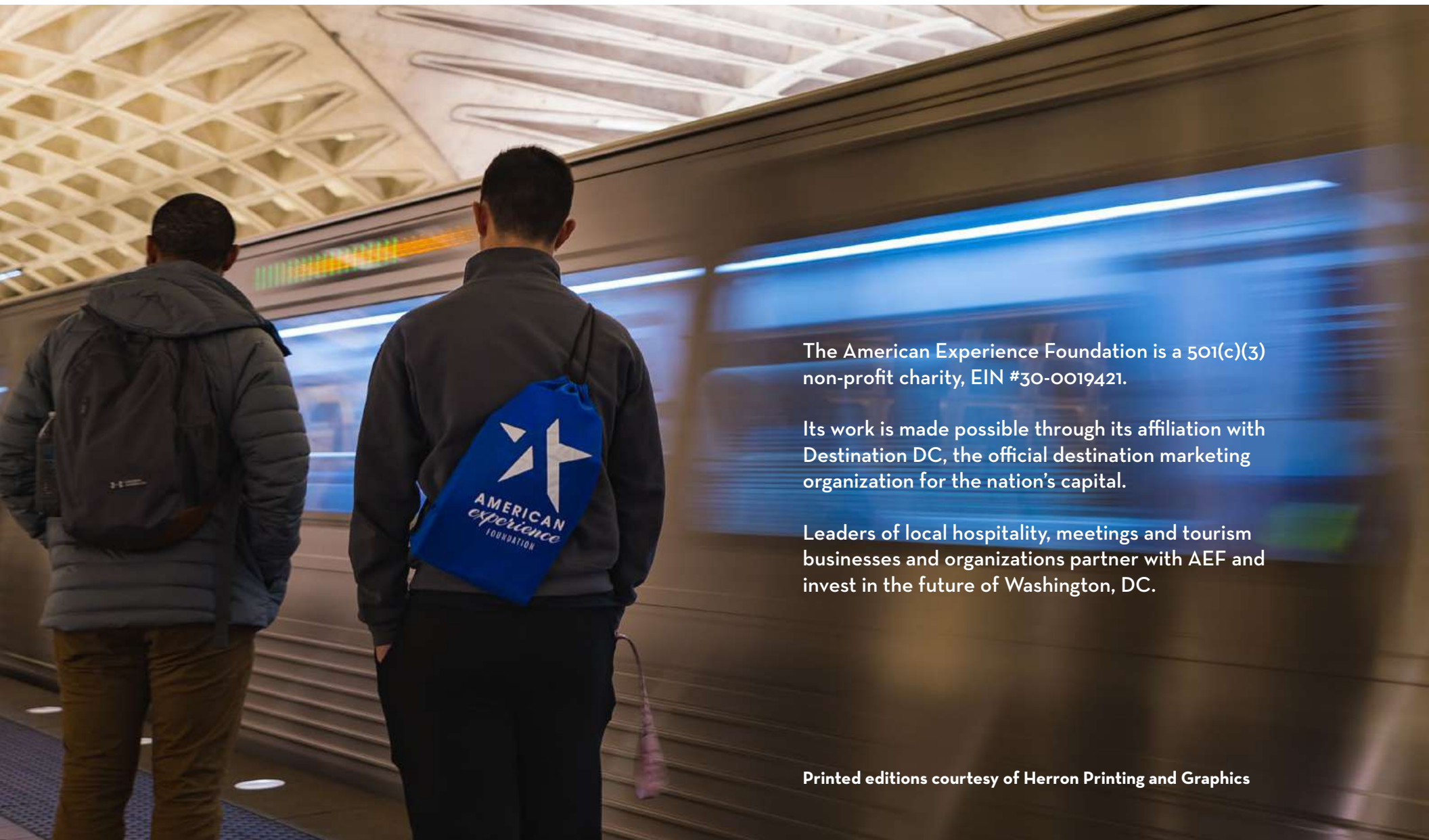
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Leaders of local hospitality, meetings and tourism businesses and organizations partner with AEF and invest in the future of Washington, DC.

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