

LAZARUS LEADERSHIP FELLOWS 2021

**CELEBRATING
LEADERSHIP & SERVICE**



**LAZARUS LEADERSHIP FELLOWS
BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE HIGH SCHOOL**

**GRADUATION
OCTOBER 4, 2021 – 7-8:30 p.m.
THE MANSION AT STRATHMORE**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021

The Graduation Program

Welcome and Explanation of the Lazarus Leadership Fellows Program

Bruce Adams, *Program Founder*

Presentations by Fellows

Remarks

Shelton Mooney, *Principal of B-CC High School*

Stephanie Clark, *Founder, Leaders Institute*



2021 Lazarus Fellows



Obse Abebe

Nahomen Berhe

Julia Butler

Jack Clauss

Grant Freeman

Gabe Gebrekristose

Liana Hwang

Fiona Letsinger

Ting Ting Li

Sophie Messinger

Lola Nordlinger

Zéphyr Smith

Aaron Tiao

Alison Trackman

Hannah Troubh



LIBERATE YOUR MIND

OBSE ABEBE and her team founded Liberate Your Mind (LYM) to empower incarcerated youth with therapeutic and educational outlets. LYM provides resources ranging from books and art supplies to writing workshops and more. LYM strives to uplift marginalized voices and combat the School-To-Prison pipeline.

OBSE: Through my experiences at LYM, I realized how close-minded I was when seeking solutions outside of my proximate community. As a youth activist, I often strategized with youth-led organizations. However, I learned that adults can be allies who not only help your cause but teach you more along the way.

GROWING STEMINISTS

FIONA LETSINGER AND TING TING LI started Growing STEMinists, a website platform that offers various tutorials, opportunities, and workshops, aiming to pique the interest of young girls and inspire them to continue with STEM in their future studies and careers in order to close the gender gap in these fields.

FIONA: I have learned that leadership is more than coming up with a plan. Leadership is about taking initiative, and it is easier to do when you are truly passionate about something. I learned that my passion for STEM and gender equality exceeds beyond the classroom.

TING TING: I learned the importance of adaptability and communication. Being able to adjust and stay connected was crucial especially when we needed to change our final product due to various obstacles we faced. This taught me there are always other routes that still lead to the final destination; I just had to explore them.

STUDENTS PROMOTING AUTHORSHIP AND READING FOR KIDS (SPARK)

JULIA BUTLER, in partnership with Rock Creek Forest ES, created SPARK, a virtual program offering creative writing workshops in English and Spanish. The program helped kids reignite the spark of creativity and improve their literacy skills after a challenging year of learning during the pandemic.

JULIA: I learned that leadership requires a balance of preparation and spontaneity. While I prepared lesson plans in advance, I also let the conversations flow in new and unexpected directions to help the kids direct their own learning. A leader must take charge, but should also listen and be open to new ideas.

BETHESDA LEGACY PROJECT

SOPHIE MESSINGER, LOLA NORDLINGER, AND JACK CLAUSS worked to bridge the generational gap between seniors and students and help improve the mental health of two “at-risk” age groups during the pandemic. Through weekly visits to Brighton Gardens, students sang, played games, created art, and formed friendships with older citizens.

SOPHIE: This summer, I learned the value of small gestures. People don’t need extravagance. Sometimes all it takes to make someone’s day is for someone to ask you to dance, to sing camp songs with you, or tie a flower to your wheelchair. The smiles on their faces taught me that.

LOLA: I learned the value of companionship, the act of just spending time together and sitting and chatting meant so much to them, which in turn fulfilled me as well. Despite having to be masked up, the crinkle of eyes due to a smile encouraged a conversation and built strong relationships.

JACK: I learned what it truly means to be flexible and imaginative. Working with seniors was difficult due to the nature of the pandemic. This drove us to develop creative new ideas to engage with the seniors. On a personal level, I grew to be more empathetic by helping those outside my usual bubble.

LITTLE LIBRARIES

GABE GEBREKRISTOSE built little libraries and installed them at three locations. To make sure these libraries can be useful long term, I gave each a starting set of 50 books provided by the Maryland Book Bank. The goal of this project was to help close the achievement gap, especially in the Covid era when libraries were closed.

GABE: I learned that to be a good leader you have to be a good communicator. Throughout the process of reaching out to organizations, coordinating dates, and everything else needed to complete the project, it wouldn’t be possible without getting out of my comfort zone and making sure every detail is explained and communicated.

NEST

LIANA HWANG built Nest -- an online database of life skills information, curated and supported by experts, aimed to help young adults transition to independent living. The site is mainly aimed at youth who didn't have strong support structures growing up, and includes categories such as nutrition, health, and financial literacy.

LIANA: I've learned much about leadership, including the fact that it's much harder than it seems! I had to really step up in terms of time management, coordination (since I've had to talk to a lot of experts and went through a lot of communication issues), and focus!

STUDENTS TO END POVERTY (STEP)

AARON TIAO and his team accomplished three goals to increase the impact and reach of STEP. They created chapters at Gaithersburg and Kennedy High Schools, built a website to improve STEP's communication and accessibility, and worked with Delegate Jared Solomon's office to support anti-poverty legislation.

AARON: I learned the importance of patience and persistence. Although the hours of cold emailing and preparation sometimes felt hopeless, the ability to persevere and stay composed was essential to achieving my goal. In the face of discouragement, pushing forward and never giving up is what will allow your project to thrive.

BLUEMARBLEKIDS

ALISON TRACKMAN created BlueMarbleKids, a series of educational videos focusing on climate change for elementary school students. Climate change can seem like such an overwhelming issue, especially at a young age. This project identifies ways young people can make a difference in their communities.

ALISON: I learned the importance of effective communication and planning ahead. Simple descriptions of topics in each video were crucial to engage successfully and educate elementary school students. I also created a schedule for myself, so I could keep track of my progress and manage the next steps of my project.

RAD, RECOGNIZING ABILITY IN DISABILITY

HANNAH TROUBH worked to educate businesses about the value of creating more inclusive work environments in order to increase employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities. RAD worked to help businesses see what they can do, why they should do it, and how exactly to get started.

HANNAH: I learned so much about how to work with others towards a common goal. Big projects have to be taken step by step. Little victories are still important. Failures can often lead you to an even better path. You can't be discouraged by others. Have confidence in the good you are doing.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO SERVE

GRANT FREEMAN worked to unify students of different backgrounds and cultures through service projects. Proceeds go to organizations working to control the surge in homelessness. We exceeded our projected membership by almost double giving us the means to make a difference in the community.

GRANT: One thing I learned about leadership throughout this process was that although being a strong leader is vital, having those dedicated enough to a cause to stand beside you and work to foster change is even more important. I learned that a leader isn't afraid to take a backseat at times and considers everyone's input fairly.

HELPING TO INTEGRATE (HI!)

ZÉPHYR SMITH AND NAHOMEN BERHE sought to harness the power of language to break barriers at BCC through student-to-student mentoring between ESOL and non-ESOL students. This didn't work as a Summer project because of how isolated ESOL students are, but will be developed this Fall.

ZÉPHYR: I learned about patience and trust. I had a hard time dealing with our barriers -- time, isolation, communication. It's okay if things go wrong, but it's important to get back up and try harder. I've learned that to be a leader in my community, I have to trust myself first.

NAHOMEN: I was able to take into account the importance of context and time. Addressing the problem wasn't enough, understanding it and learning the various facets of the situation was just as important. I feel our project can be strengthened based on how much knowledge we already know.

2021 Guest Speakers

Mark Bergel

The Shared Humanity Project

Sheryl Brissett-Chapman

National Center for Children & Families

JD Gorman, Tasneem Alim, Frahanco Deressa, and Neha Kohli

2019 and 2020 Lazarus Fellows

Jeff Burton

Bethesda Urban Partnership

Steve Hull

Bethesda Magazine

Cara Lesser

KID Museum

Ned Sherburne

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad

Tony Cohen

Menare Foundation at Button Farm

Dan Reed

just up the pike

Fellows Selection Committee

Carole Brand, Chair

Donna Atkinson • Craig Brown • Stephanie Clark

Corinne Goldsmith • Hunter Hogewood

Neha Kohli (2020 Lazarus Fellow)

CONGRATULATIONS TO JD GORMAN & SAMMER HAJHAMAD

Winners of the 2021 Extraordinary Teen Award from *Bethesda Magazine*

JD Gorman from the Lazarus class of 2019 and Sammer Hajhamad from the Lazarus class of 2020 were two of the 13 winners of *Bethesda Magazine's* prestigious Extraordinary Teens award showcased in the March-April 2021 edition of the magazine. Vikram Akwei, Lazarus class of 2016, was named one of *Bethesda Magazine's* Extraordinary Teens in 2018 and Karina Vasudeva, Lazarus Class of 2018, was named a 2020 Extraordinary Teen.

2021 SPONSORS AND DONORS

Program Founder

Bruce Adams

Leaders Institute Founder

Stephanie Clark

Founding Sponsor

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Michael Gelman and Joseph Baldinger, Trustees

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The Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation

Special Thanks

Bethesda Custom Framing • Bethesda Urban Partnership

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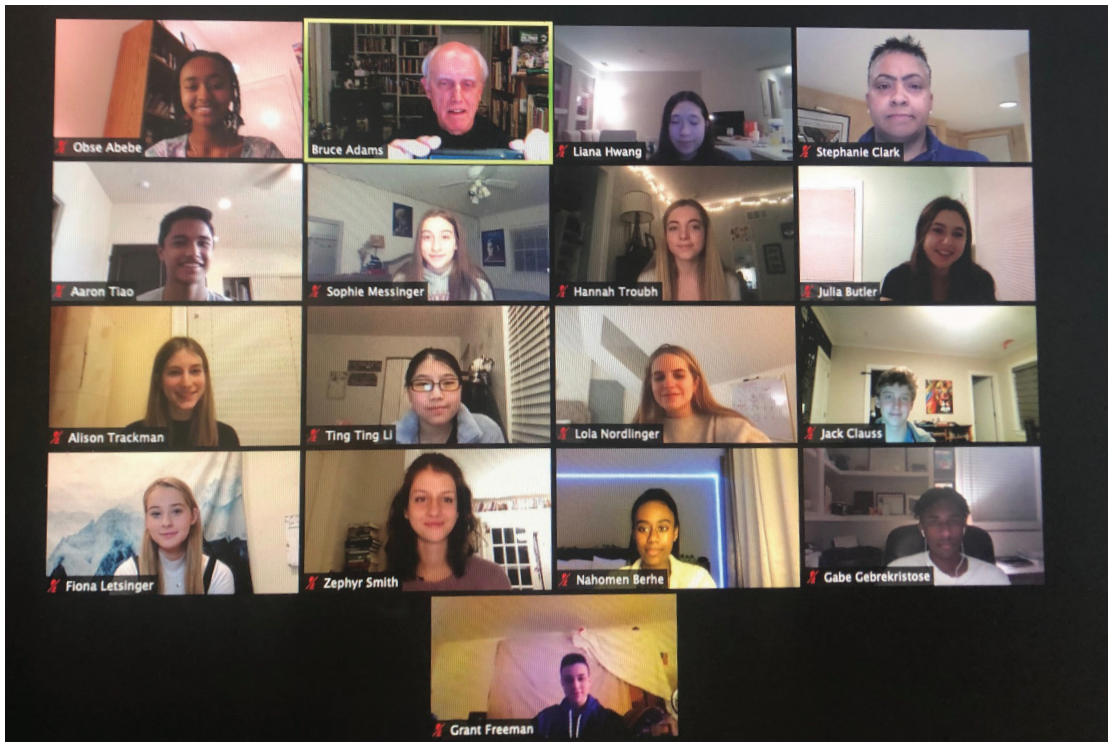
In 2018, the Lazarus Leadership Fellows Program became a program of **Leaders Institute**. Special thanks to Stephanie Clark, Founder of Leaders Institute, and to the board of Leaders Institute for agreeing to serve as our fiscal agent and to partner with us as we collaborate to develop global citizens for the twenty-first century.

To support the Lazarus Leadership Fellows Program, tax-deductible donations made payable to “Leaders Institute/Lazarus” may be sent to:
Leaders Institute/Lazarus, 7201 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 440, Bethesda, MD 20814.

Lazarus Leadership Fellows Program

1997-2021

*More than 71,000 Hours of Service to Our Community
Twenty-fifth Class of Lazarus Fellows*



Named in honor of Julius and Dorothy Lazarus in recognition of their years of service to the children of the Bethesda area and the generous financial support provided by their foundation, the Lazarus Leadership Fellows Program helps prepare high school juniors and sophomores for their civic leadership responsibilities as global citizens. Since 1997, the Lazarus Fellows have completed more than 71,000 hours of community service.

Over the years, the Lazarus Fellows have been supported by the following staff members: Hugh Adams, Carol Beach, Helen Blunt, Michael Chasnow, Michelle Diaz (*1997 Lazarus Fellow*), Alysa Emden, Laurie Haughey, Jordan Henry, Karen Jaffe, Jared Joiner (*2000 Lazarus Fellow*), Sandra Neufeld Ostrach, Melissa Roller, Ellen Schneider, and Helen Strang. Since 2018, Stephanie Clark of Leaders Institute has attended our seminars and supported the Fellows.

“Our students ought to be taught fundamental lessons that say democracy is precious, democracy is perishable, democracy requires active attention, and democracy requires hard work.”

— Roger Wilkins, Professor of History and American Culture, George Mason University