

UpDate

NEWSLETTER OF THE FOUNDATION & FORD ALUMNI • 2025

Celebrating 50 Years of Fueling Student Leadership

What a night it was and what fun we had sharing laughter, memories, friendship!

This year marks a golden milestone for the Ford Dimension Program, a legacy of excellence, leadership, and community impact 50 years in the making. Founded in 1974 by visionary businessman Jim Burke and his daughter Mikie Hay, the program was created to empower high-achieving high school seniors across Bakersfield to become thoughtful, engaged leaders. What began as an investment in youth potential has grown into a tradition that continues to shape lives, schools, and communities.

To celebrate this milestone, we recently hosted our 50th Anniversary Celebration, a special evening that brought together past and present student leaders. Held at Luigi's, the event reunited alumni from across the decades, many seeing each other for the first time since high school. Laughter filled the room as "Fordies" caught up, shared memories, and smiled at old photos featuring corduroy suits, big hair, and even bigger bows.

While the evening was lighthearted and fun, it also reminded us of the program's deep and lasting impact. Many alumni have gone on to do meaningful work across the country and around the world. Others have remained in Bakersfield, continuing to invest in the community and help develop the next generation of leaders.

On the following pages, we invite you to explore the accomplishments of our current student leaders, along with special features on alumni and key contributors. Mr. Burke was lovingly remembered throughout the evening and throughout this issue. Though he is no longer with us, his presence is still felt.

You'll see not just his reflection, but his thumbprint on every page — a lasting mark on the hearts, minds, and futures of those he inspired.



2025 Dream Builders



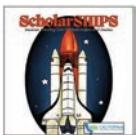
Team "Don't Sleep on Sleep"

Sponsored by Bank of the Sierra

In partnership with local businesses and speakers, this team hosted an event for high school students at CTEC to raise awareness of sleep's vital role in their health. They also produced and created an educational video that will be viewed in high school health classes. This fun project inspired teens to prioritize restorative rest!

\$250 donated to CTEC's Jump Start Fund

TEAM MEMBERS: Top Row Thomas Buckley Garces, Angel Gallardo-Aguilar East, Albert Abad Stockdale, Samuel Ayeni Frontier
Bottom Row Malia Giumarra Garces, Alexandra Cruz Del Oro, Valeria Jirano West, Charlotte Rivera BCHS



Team "ScholarSHIPS"

Sponsored by California Resources Corporation

Working alongside Kern County high schools, the team hosted a scholarship fair to help students learn about scholarships, grants, and vocational opportunities. This interactive workshop equipped students with the tools to make college more attainable. Bakersfield High School plans to make this fair an annual event. The team was awarded "Best All Around" and received an extra \$250 to donate to their nonprofit.

\$500 Donated to Contreras Foundation

TEAM MEMBERS: Top Row Thomas Woods BHS, Andrew Chow Highland, Byron Alfaro Golden Valley, Braden Mendiburu Liberty
Bottom Row River Carreno Highland, Sara Sepulveda Stockdale, Rachelle Barreyro Frontier, Sophia Camou Garces



*"I don't know what your destiny
the only ones among you who will be really happy a*

Community Projects

Team Photos FROM EVENT NIGHT
soluxe | creative
solux creative.com



Team "Air Aware"

Sponsored by Dignity Health, Mercy and Memorial Hospitals

With the goal of empowering our youth for a "breath of fresh tomorrow," this team educated middle school students about the health effects of poor air quality through presentations at several schools. They also installed Purple Air monitors to raise awareness and inspire young people to take action for cleaner air and a healthier community!

\$250 donated to Valley Fever Institute

TEAM MEMBERS: Top Row Matthew Fan BCHS, Mahdov Gantong Highland, Vaughn Forsyth Independence, Charley Gless BHS
Bottom Row Mark Mikhail Stockdale, Shelbie Porter Liberty, Sienna Surgener Garces, Baleigh Organ Frontier



Team "Book It"

Sponsored by Grimmway Farms

To promote literacy in underserved areas, this team partnered with ROC, Children First, and local businesses to build, decorate, and install four Little Free Libraries across Bakersfield. They celebrated with a fun-filled story time in the park, where local children helped mark the occasion by leaving their colorful handprints on each library as a lasting symbol of community and connection.

\$250 donated to Children First

TEAM MEMBERS: Top Row Quinlan Ray Frontier, Noah Santillan Highland, David Guillan Stockdale, Andres Acevedo West
Bottom Row Brooke Tallon Liberty, Elianna Garcia East, Alicia Hall BHS, Madeline Baker BCHS



*will be, but one thing I do know:
are those who have sought and found how to serve."*

— Albert Schweitzer



Follow Us! @ FordDreamBuilders

The Jim Burke Education Foundation 2025 | 3

Funding Students' Futures

Since 1988, the Education Foundation has provided over **\$737,000** in scholarships for high school seniors. Our foundation is grateful for all of the community support and generous contributions that make it possible for us to award 32 Ford Dream Builder student leaders with a **\$2,000 scholarship** to aid with college expenses.

The Foundation also presented **fifteen additional scholarships** to seniors that actively demonstrated leadership and rose above personal challenges.



Valeria Jirano, Noah Santillan, Baileigh Organ and Sara Sepulveda Recipients of the Bank of the Sierra Scholarship

Through a grant, Bank of the Sierra provided four scholarships to our students. Larry Velasquez, Market President and Ford Dream Builders advisor, presented the scholarships. Currently, Valeria is attending Cal Poly SLO, Noah is at UC Berkeley, Baileigh is attending UC Santa Barbara and Sara is also at UC Berkeley.



Thomas Woods Recipient of the Vaughan Family Scholarship

This scholarship honors the Vaughan family, who have been an integral part of our program since its inception in 1975. Jeff Vaughan presented this scholarship on behalf of their family. Thomas is attending UC San Diego.



Charlotte Rivera, Sophia Camou, Alicia Hall and Shelbie Porter Recipients of the Mikie Hay Friendship Scholarship

These four exceptional young women received scholarships in the name of our founder, Mikie Hay, which was funded by her Pi Phi sorority sisters. Mikie presented the scholarships on behalf of her Pi Phi friends. Charlotte is attending San Diego State University, Sophia is serving as the Sentinel for California FFA, Alicia is attending Cal Poly SLO and Shelbie is at the University of Alabama.



Thomas Buckley, Malia Giumarra, Madeline Baker, Charley Gless Recipients of the Ray & Joan Dezember Memorial Scholarship

The Ray and Joan Dezember Memorial Scholarships are in honor of two people who not only believed in our motto of "Service Over Self", but strongly believed in the youth of our community. Four scholarships were presented by Katie Dezember Werdel and Kathleen Ezell on behalf of their family. Thomas is attending Notre Dame, Malia is at UCLA, Madeline and Charley will both be attending the University of South Carolina.



River Carreno Recipient of the Bakersfield Swim Academy Scholarship

This year we were honored to have a new scholarship awarded by Gabe Woodward. He loves supporting students through his work at the Bakersfield Swim Academy as well as being a member of our Education Foundation board. River is attending UCLA.



Dignity Health
Mercy & Memorial Hospitals





The Dr. and Mrs. Crowley Humanitarian Scholarship

Each year, the Foundation Board selects an individual, couple, or family who has been a strong supporter of our program and our community to be honored with a scholarship in their name. This year, we are proud to recognize Dr. Jeffrey and Sarah Crowley, a local family that has been a loyal advocate of the Ford Dream Builders program.

The Crowleys have generously supported our mission and have served on numerous community boards and organizations. Their three sons—Patrick, Ryan, and Sean—all participated in our student leadership program and

continue to demonstrate what it means to live with purpose and put “service over self.”

This year's Humanitarian Scholarship is awarded to Albert Abad, a recent graduate of Stockdale High School, where he served as ASB President, PacRIM President, and was involved in the National Honor Society, Spanish Club, and BioMed Club. Albert will be attending UC San Diego, with plans to become a pediatrician.

Thank you to the Crowley family for your continued support and commitment to our youth and community!

Meet Our “Full Ride to Success” Students!

Byron Alfaro [UC Berkeley](#)

Byron was awarded the prestigious Gates Scholarship, a highly competitive, full-ride scholarship granted to only 300 students nationwide each year. The rigorous application process spans approximately 12 to 14 months and includes multiple stages of evaluation. Byron's exceptional academic achievements, leadership, and dedication earned him this distinguished honor. Along with attending the University of California, Berkeley, he was honored to earn a spot on their marching Cal Band. Byron's advice to high school students applying for scholarships is simple yet powerful: “Don't be scared to apply.” He reminds students that scholarship programs are actively looking for applicants, and that taking the first step can open doors to incredible opportunities.

Shelbie Porter [University of Alabama](#)

Shelbie is a recipient of The Presidential Package through the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. She qualified by taking the PSAT and achieved a score high enough to become a National Merit Finalist. As a result, she was awarded a full-ride scholarship to the University of Alabama. In high school, Shelbie managed to balance her academics and extracurricular activities through strong time management skills. What made it easier, she says, is that she was genuinely passionate about everything she was involved in, which made the busy schedule both fulfilling and enjoyable.

Angel Gallardo-Aguilar [University of Pennsylvania](#)

Angel was selected for the prestigious QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship, a highly competitive, full-ride award given to high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds. He began the intensive application process in the spring of his junior year, ultimately earning a spot in the QuestBridge College Match program. Out of thousands of applicants nationwide, Angel was one of just 2,627 students to receive this life-changing scholarship. As Angel prepares to begin his college journey, he looks forward to stepping outside of his comfort zone, knowing that new and unfamiliar environments will challenge him to grow and bring out the best in him.





Ford Dimension: 50 Years of Student Involvement

1975-1976 Mary Baird • Leon Harris • Marianne Logan • Sterling Wilson **1976-1977** Mary Burlington • Nahum Chandler • Anna Ermigarat • Fr. Craig Harrison • Mike Kelly • Kerry Kelly • Tom Moore • Clair Trotter **1977-1978** Mark Andrew • Karen Coulston • David Eastwood • Pam Knight • Blaine Randolph • Teri Phillips • Jeanne Van Schaack • Scott Whitley **1978-1979** Jill Brock • Harriet Rice • Dr. Peter Ruiz • Vince Sakowski • Juliana Secor • Greg Towery • Darryl Tucker • Jeff Vaughan **1979-1980** Silvia Aguila • Julie Bowser • Judy Fisher • Gina Franconi • Bonita Iritani • Shawn Kelly • Scott Kohlbush • Pam Norris • Pete Rodriguez • Mark Wu **1980-1981** Mary Busacca • Darrin Craig • John Denvir • Julie Duggan • Dr. Charles Flowers • Becci Gutierrez • Dr. Fred Teixeira • Leslie Wetterholm • Peter Wu **1981-1982** Julie Amenta • Michael Cassady • Cathy Curtis • Mary Kay Haller • Dr. Fred Lanningham • Nathan Lehmann • Clare Loken • Brett Morris • John Perisich • Cynthia Wong **1982-1983** Tracy Andrew • Tim Blanton • Jeanne Denvir • Jim Freitas • Kathy Goodwin • Patrick Lencioni • Mark Luttrell • James Moore • Robert Mosley • Shari Ortiz • Dana Sears **1983-1984** Helen Chao • Jack Coronel • Rowena Dalton • Diane Haller • Dr. Matthew Jones • Joel Judge II • Jay Julian • Kimberlee Kingsbury • Alicia Ritter • Jeff Walls **1984-1985** Marcie Antongiovanni • Karen Banducci • Chris Cunningham • John Garone • Paul Goodwin • Chad Hendrix • Dr. Dineen Johnson • Lisa Maloney • Shem Oesch • Beth Wainwright **1985-1986** Brian Adams • Amy Anspach • Lisa Caswell • Alonzo Hill • Laura Keith • Jay Kuster • Amy McMurtrey • Doug Morrison • Robert Ruiz **1986-1987** Dr. Nalyn Ang • Tina Antongiovanni • Doug Camenisch • Robert Duquette • Brian Jett • Doug MacMillan • Annie Madsen • Erica Schmidt • Todd Sorrell • Mike Williams • Dr. Sally Wonderly **1987-1988** Maria Bernal • Brian Enge • Jennifer Hartenberger • Anton Holty • John Kovacevich • Dr. John Kuss • Renee Massey • Cathy Muxlow • Nicole Parra • Gary Rush • Bryan Taylor • Hilary Werdel **1988-1989** Bernice Garza • John Gillett • Vanessa Goodey • Karyn Lewis • Camille Mosley • Peter Parra • Cassie Pulscamp • Scott Reade • John Werdel • Derek Yurosek **1989-1990** John Anderson • Shelley Anthony • Tess Bernal • Matt Billings • Nate Cooper • Katie Dezember • Justin Fortmeyer • Nicole Gafford • Mike James • Jason Rankin • Trisha Stiles • Chandler Wonderly **1990-1991** Alexis Ash • Jeneen Arrache • Dr. J.W. Beard • Angelique Berens • Jason Cherry • Aimee Dover • John Grant • Matt Ornelaz • Robert Ray • Deborah Robertson • Mike Serban • Sunshine Smith • Brandon Taylor **1991-1992** Jim Beagle • Jeff Buckey • Kristen Carstensen • Payam Edalat • Corey Funk • Adam Icardo • Bridgette Loyd • Chad Manning • Karen Morales • Beth Oesch • Zachery Shaffer • Cindy Sopko • Katie Werdel **1992-1993** Tom Antongiovanni • Taylor Ashland • David Beard • Emmry Cattani • Deborah Finn • Carrie Gillett • Brian Grant • Nick Herndon • Alison MacGuire • Joo-Jin Ong • Sharon Stephenson • Jody Thomas **1993-1994** Amanda Duquette • Anica Dutto • Joseph Etcheverry • Amador Galvez III • Jay Heisey • Jason Karr • Sharon Koenig • Carmella Lucas • Tim McAbee • Beth Nakashima • Nicolette Ornelaz • Craig Reid • Jeremy Scheidle • Melinda Smith **1994-1995** Steven Acosta • Mike Echeverria • Kenny Eynaud • Angie Grah • Jason Hodgson • Amber Jung • Adam Kovacevich • Jamie Larma • Kelly Loyd • Tiffani Ludd • Brian Sherrill • Michelle Sopko • Jody Yakstitch • Elliot Zimmer **1995-1996** Michelle Bella • Katie Brewer • Lauren Brock • Ryan Carstensen • Ryan Doolittle • Russell Hinney • Gary Lewis • Trish Rhode • Jamal Watkins **1996-1997** Don Bynum • Andrew Elms • Janelle Giumarra • Janelle Green • Matthew Hadden • Kayla Jones • Nicole Rizkalla • Jackie Sisante • Dan Thorp • Josh Williams **1997-1998** Matt Antongiovanni • Laura Brommelsiek • Reagan Franks • Jarrod Hicks • David Klein • Jeff Larma • Niki Perez • Andrea Pfister • Crystal Porter • Bernardo Salcido • Jason Waugh • Anna Wegis **1998-1999** Vidhya Bala • Tiffany Campbell • Luis Caric • Antone Chicca • Lesley Clifford • Willa Crosby • Thomas Fiori • Ryan Green • Marques Mascarinas • Rikky Penney • Nicole Sampley • Min Su • Allison Ulbrich **1999-2000** Katie Benham • Elisa Carroll • Jason Carter • Alex Fong • Ryan Garcia • Melissa Grimm • Kate Hersberger • Sydney Howard • Megan Jager • Taliah Nuriddin • Aaron Orndorff • Todd Sachs • Kevin Thelen • Amanda Whitten **2000-2001** Mohamed Ahmed • Katy Assatourian • Natalie Erlendson • Patrick Frazier • Eric Garthoffner • Mark Gonzalez • Lisa Green • Elizabeth Hill • Feven Kiflegiorgis • Chase Nunneley • Shannon Robertson • Rylan Rozell • Amy Sakowski • Joseph Sithole • Kirstin Woody **2001-2002** Sarah Audeo • Andrew Boylan • Ray Crosby • Kathy Elliott • Nicolette Eyherabide • Christina Gutierrez • Tyler Hair • Brandon Jones • Alex McGillivray • Peter Nichols • Stacey O'Neill • Nick Reese • Kevin Saiki • Jared Smith • Kristina Smith • Amanda Weddle **2002-2003** Jacob Ceccarelli • Céleigh wChapman • Paige Hill • Eric Hughes • Brian Jacobs • Courtney Lewis • Steven McCutcheon • Melissa Miro • Amerika Niño • Kevin Porter • Jared Schwacho • Rebecca Scoonover • Greg Swertfager • Laura Thomas • Patience Thompson **2003-2004** Amberia Allen • Denise Benavente • Marley Bynum • Chase Chapman • Suzanne Dezember • Ellen Dobie • Whitney Johnson • Keith Legro • Alexandria Madera • Tom Montgomery • Andy Reese • Josh Stephens • Darren Thomas • Joe Whittington • Laura Yoon **2004-2005** Ian Brenner • Rosie Etcheverry • Matthew Hammett • Stephanie Hankinson • Bradley Huge • Courtney McKinley • Neha Mehta • Ryan Newbrough • Patrick Noland • Natalie Ryan • Matthew Scanlan • Joshua Speidel • Renee Taylor • Katherine Thomas **2005-2006** Jessie Garcia • Andia Heydari • Matthew Hicks • Mitchell Lecrone • Patrick McDermott • Lindsey Shambaugh • Talesha Triplett • Cori Tucker • Josh Waldon • Kelsey Woodard **2006-2007** Brian Anderson • Denise Ellison • Rick Gonzalez • Jessica Hagen • Matt Heiss • Nick Northrop • John Pierucci • Christina Quintanilla • Zochilt Ramos • Brittney Smith **2007-2008** Brant Bonetti • Aaron Dobie • Tesfa Habebo • Hannah Haggerty • Ana Heydari • Justin Koh • Peter Mitchell • Angelina Roman • Bryce Vlach • Carolyne Vu **2008-2009** Joey Bermudez • Derrick Chan • Liz Crowe • Jackie Garcia • Paul Guaglianone • Laura Hicks • Deepa Kannappan • Riley Scott • Evan Szablowski • Allison Wiener **2009-2010** Joanne Bae • Austin Davis • Kirby Ellis • Charles Glavin • Melissa Merrill • Grant Paulson • Lauren Richardson • Samantha Valdez • Drew Wiggins • Andrew Whittington **2010-2011** Cory Barker • Lauren Cline • Dwyane Facho • Alex Gomez • Corey Hobbs • Brandon Louey • Jocelyn McGill • Sarah Moore • Victoria Nakagawa • Vid Reddy **2011-2012** Nicole Angelini • Christopher Bedke • Seth Champness • Enoch Chang • Jotthe Kannappan • Zeno Lee • Scout Ocampo • Paola Pena • Teddi Pierce • Spencer Shoemaker **2012-2013** Brock Burger • Derek Frost • Ryan Holmes • Connor Kingsbury • Erica McCall • Abigail Mejia • Ashly Mohankumar • Theimus Roberson • Anne Shambaugh • Brianna Wright **2013-2014** Marbella Avalos • Annie Bardet • Vincent Del Papa • Christina Fuentes • Ariella Goldstein • Gurjot Kaur • Christopher Mazmanian • Alex Mazzeo • Alex Medina • Jaskaran Sandhu **2014-2015** Joseph Aguilar • Olivia Belda • Nia Brazzell • Nelson Chandler • Lisa Darquea • Jordan Dawson • Amrit Dhillon • Elizabeth McMurray • John Soper • Ali Vaughan **2015-2016** Alexis Adjei • Garrett Andrew • Chandler Beck • Cassidy Grimsley • Garret Kingsbury • Neal Mathew • Noelle Pardo • Nicolle Sanchez • Brock Simpson • Brittany St. Clair **2016-2017** Sophia Caputo • Ryan Crowley • Samantha Jimenez • Raguvir Kunani • Artemis Mansur • Zach Parham • Caleb Pollema • Kyra Sales • Shikha Srinivas • Tyler Sweaney **2017-2018** Fernando Argueta • Mikaela Cardenas • Michael Del Mundo • Austin Gaines • Caleb Garcia • Karla Guzman • Liane McQueen • O'zie Sagbohan • Molly Soper • Jackson Vaughan **2018-2019** Claire Champagne • Amador Gallardo • Naomi Jennings • Margo Kuney • Naveen Mathew • Payton Renz • Nate Roodzant • Jessica Stump • Fernando Tello • Shotaro Yamaguchi **2019-2020** Natalie Hawatmeh • Jasmine Garza • Mahima Kunani • Chase McLewis • Zachary McNaughton • Benji Nixon • Nick Pardo • Keshav Patel • Hailey Plugge • Aleyna Young **2020-2021** Lauren Buetow • Isabella Caputo • James Guerena • Luz Lara • Isaac Larroque • Joachim Ma • Jake Nahama • Phoebe Nguyen • Briceen Rigby • Madalyn Schonauer **2021-2022** Iman Abumeri • Jacob Borda • Sophia Curutchague • Dara Deru • Sam Ellis • Cristal Flores • Garrett Quinn • Janae Hutson • Liam O'Connor • Travis Plugge **2022-2023** Mukul Anand • Joshua Braun • Gabriella Camou • Kaitlyn Corral • Daniel Hall • Bella Hawatmeh • JT Toler • Ivan Tran • Sofia Truong • Aiden Young **2023-2024** Kelsey Abraham • Zachary Been • Harjaisal Brar • Branton Dickey • Noor El Kereamy • Natalie Hawkins • Katie Johnson • Michael Kyei • Nathan Martinez • Sarah Celine Pursel **2024-2025** Rachelle Barreyro • Thomas Buckley • River Carreno • Vaughn Forsyth • Valeria Jirano • Braden Mendiburu • Noah Santillan • Sienna Surgener • Brooke Tallon • Thomas Woods

BACK ROW

Jack Hopkins BHS

Luke Tobias Garces

Benjamin Pursel BCHS

John Eoh Centennial

Gabriel Olango Stockdale

FRONT ROW

Riley Taft BHS

Kate Wegis Garces

Methea Hansen Frontier

Rosalinda Rodriguez Mira Monte

Danni Fletcher Centennial



**the Ford
Dimension**

2026 BOARD MEMBERS SELECTED

Welcome to Our Ford Family!

“It Runs in the Family: A Rare Dimension Legacy”

Benjamin Pursel FD '26 & Sarah Celine Pursel FD '24

In the Ford Dimension program, every student brings a unique story, but it's rare to see that story shared by siblings. This year, we're proud to spotlight Benjamin Pursel, a current Dimension student, and his sister Sarah Pursel, a standout from our 2024 class. Their shared passion and commitment is a lasting impact of the Ford Dimension experience. We asked them to reflect on what the program has meant to them—and how being part of it, two years apart, has shaped their journey.

Sarah expresses, “My favorite thing about being in Ford Dimension was getting to pray over our city's students at the Bakersfield Prayer Breakfast. It was so much fun, and we were by far the best-dressed group there! Putting on the matching suits always made me feel so honored. I felt like I was a part of something bigger than myself as I represented the youth of Bakersfield.”

Benjamin shares, “I believe the biggest way my sister helped pave the way for me was always being my friend, not just a sibling. She has always been one of my biggest supporters. It didn't matter if it was late at night before my interview or on the way to the Ice Cream Social, she would always encourage me.”

Together, Sarah and Benjamin exemplify the spirit of Ford Dimension—grounded in service, driven by purpose, and strengthened by family. We can't wait to watch Benjamin represent our program as he follows in his sister's footsteps!





INTRODUCING THE 2025-2026 Dream Builders

Photos by:
soluxe creative
soluxecreative.com

Building Dreams Note by Note

"I am always amazed by how much support Bakersfield gives to the youth in the arts. Whether I'm dancing in the Nutcracker or performing with the Bakersfield Youth Symphony, this community always shows up. Bakersfield has given me so many opportunities, and now, through Ford Dream Builders, I'm thrilled to give back and make a positive impact on the place that has supported me every step of the way."

—Jenna George, Stockdale High School



Spotlight on Excellence Sophia Camou Takes the Lead

What started as a hope to show goats and try a few speaking contests has turned into an incredible leadership journey for Garces graduate and Ford Dream Builder Sophia Camou. After joining FFA her freshman year, Sophia was encouraged by her advisor, Mrs. Rossi, to run for regional office. This led to many late nights of preparation and, ultimately, her election as San Joaquin Regional Sentinel. From there, her love for leadership only grew. She went on to serve as San Joaquin Kern Inyo Regional Vice President, Garces Memorial Chapter President and Secretary, a National Delegate, Sacramento Leadership Experience attendee, State Sub-Committee Chair, and Washington Leadership Conference attendee.

Now, as the newly elected California State Sentinel, Sophia will spend the year traveling the state, facilitating conferences, and representing more than 108,000 FFA members, all while staying rooted in her passion for agriculture. After her year of service, she will head to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as part of their honors program. Sophia says she feels 'unbelievably blessed and honored' for all that FFA has given her, and it's clear she's just getting started!

We are so incredibly proud of you Sophia, and all that you've accomplished. We can't wait to cheer you on and watch you shine throughout your year of service as California FFA State Sentinel!



ABOVE STUDENTS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Jack Dunlap BHS, Marylin Diaz South, Mikel Iturriria Centennial, Jenna George Stockdale, Segen Von Flue BHS, Anabel Alvidrez-Tovar BHS, Abigail Rose Menta Garces Memorial, TJ Ellis BCHS, Erendira Salceda West, Cristian Camou Centennial, Fatima Aceves Soltero Liberty, Logan Jenkins BCHS, Diego Benitez Stockdale, Arlene Ramos Golden Valley, Imanni Brar Liberty, Brandon Altamirano Foothill, Zoey Hernandez Foothill, Reagan Young Liberty, Jorge Cervantes Mira Monte, Jordyn Dutto Highland, Levi Delgado East, Aidan Kimmel Frontier

Dream Builders Alumni: 22 Years & 89 Civic Projects

2003-2004 Jacqueline Bartell • Ximena Benitez • Nick Braaten • Vanna Cable • Madisyn Coniglio • Lauren DeBranch • Carey Demos • Jon Dickson • Jeffrey Elms • CheyLinel Gaston • Justin Grammy • Michael Gutierrez • Ben Hicks • Tara Howlett • Andrew Huge • Michael Hughes • Daniel Hughes • Jessica Koh • Kristin Love • Roxanne Martinez • Philip McDermott • Cody Meek • Laura Northrop • Katie Pierruci • Rena Romanini • Blanca Sanchez • Lisa-Marie Stramaglia • Tiphanie White **2004-2005** Michael John Arraztoa • Katie Barton • Jennifer Berry • Katie Berry • Akriti Bhambi • Lyndon Braganza • Caitlin Chapman • Niles Dhanens • Kristen Edwards • Megan Elrod • John Gaugel • Neil Gehlawat • Jordan Hall • Kristen Hay • Jonathan Hughes • Rena Jacobs • Jeff Lippert • Gustavo Luna • Ashley Mettler • Anna Miro • Mary Grace Panos • Emily Parker • Alex Parsons • Albert Raygoza • Brittany Rice • Gina Rossi • John Scott • Marci Scott • Emma Shapiro • Jennifer Shuler • Jessie Simonson • James Tasker • Ebony Villasenor • Kirsten Wirth • Mercedes Yezpe • Amanda Zvirblis **2005-2006** Taylor Barnes • Domenick Buck • Matt Cappuccio • Josh Cella • Candy Cuestas • Amy Dezember • Ashley Dunn • Sarah Franz • Ben Giesbrecht • Dustin Glentzer • Mark Goya • Gregory Gutierrez • Chris Holloway • Meagan Jackson • Summer Jordan • Maria Krauter • Nathan Longcrier • Catie Mueller • Alexis Nelson • Stacie Nichols • Raechel Paine • Chris Ruiz • Paige Phillips • Justin Salters • Elizabeth Scarbrough **2006-2007** Byron Alexander • Audrey Austin • Katie Belluomini • Katrina Berry • Andrew Bryant • Matthew Cuellar • Kaseem Cornelius • Marco De Leon • Amanda Haney • Nick Harrington • Nicholas Houchin • Taylor Hurt • Kevin Kobliska • Melissa Lucas • Sydney Mackessy • Alexandra Maxwell • John Moore • Mandy Morley • Nancy Nasrawin • Viet Nguyen • Filiberto Nieves • Nnenna Odeluga • Courtney Richmond • Ryan Wingate **2007-2008** Taylor Alexander • Mara Arevalo • Kseniya Astakhova • Geoffrey Becker • Heather Brenner • James Creech • David Heisler • Danae Jarrett • Nina Krauter • Peter Kelly • Jacob Loeffler • Kevin Lott • Divya Manohara • Samuel Musick • Nick Niavez • Devin Russell • Terryn Soelberg • Julianne Thomas • Paige Tucker • Kehaulani Valos • Monique White **2008-2009** Nicole Banister • Kristina Barrientos • Julia Berchtold • Clay Camp • Mayra Estrada • Ashlyn Eyraud • Lynsey Fringer • Michael Golich • Alejandro Gonzalez • Bryan Grimm • Taylor Hankinson • Nathaniel Ketelhut • Geoffrey Lee • Libby Loeffler • Alex Mitchell • Josh Novins • Vinny Oddo • Deborah Pena • Meghan Prout • Josh Shambaugh • Lynn Tasker • Sarah Urata **2009-2010** Sandra Aldama • P.J. Atchison • Brian Austin • Morgan Barnes • Rosalinda Cortez • John Cummings • Matt Darr • Kyle Gillespie • Mona Gupta • Amy Kelly • Kacie Mills • Elise Norris • Hillary Orton • Cici Pandol • D.J. Pepito • Justin Roney • David Roth • Cornelius Sackey • Rodolfo Salgado • Morgan Solorio • Lisa Soper • Paul Steele **2010-2011** Samson Ahferom • Kirsten Albers • William Beechinor • Eli Carroll • Mackenzie Carter • Lance Collins • Marley Dawson • Sophia Garcia • Julio Gonzalez • Juan Heredia • Jessica Hernandez • Bryce Keene • Daniel Kooren • Gage Marchini • Mason Otten • Archne Patel • Melanie Reis • Gagandeep Samra • Manpreet Sandhu • Viviana Sanchez • Meagan Shambaugh • Chad Spalinger **2011-2012** Kayla Bernardino • Annie Berry • Cory Camp • Molly Chandler • Gabriela Cuevas • Austin Donovan • Lauren Fringer • Cameron Hines • Sharonjeet Kaur • Joshua Miller • Leah Moore • Danny Munoz • Kelsie Rhodes • Scott Riccomini • Grecia Rivera • Ali Schroeter • Luigi Soper • Joshua St. Clair • Nick Treiberg • Curtis Valencia • Tyler Valencia • Carli Yoro **2012-2013** Paige Basconcillo • Connor Brady • Corbin Burns • Nolan Cooney • Katie Cornford • Xitlaly Estrada • Connor Fischer • Joshua Gaddis • Abby Grisedale • Esperanza Gutierrez • Charles Hale • Heather Hansen • Robert Keathley • Caroline Kim • Renae Lewis • Emily Norris • Joshua Park • Alexander Pearson • Sean Tieu • Alice Verderber • Hunter Villanueva • Bailey Wanner **2013-2014** Karen Aguirre • Sara Baldridge • Anthony Busacca • Ali Champness • Patrick Crowley • Michael Cushine • Nicholas Del Mundo • Andrew Francis • Angelica Fuentes • Harmaneet Gill • Gabriel Glazer • Austin Huckaby • Claryce Lazerson • Brittney Lu • Gabriel Macias • Daisy Mercado • Grant Obenshain • Angelica Osorio • Alexis Robles • Casey Ross • Augustine Vasquez • Ben Ward **2014-2015** Christian Alcala • Alexis Ayala • Ulysis Baal • Victoria Boyd • Bridget Boylan • Hannah Contois • Karlee Cornford • Anthony Delatorre • Yuya Fujita • Matthew Haley • Douglas Johnston • Aaron Levins • Cristian Magdaleno • Conner Marden • Zac Pyle • Elisa Quinonez • Anycia Reyes • Jessica Savarese • Bailey Slayton • Zulima Uribe • Brett Voth • Leigh Whitson **2015-2016** Andrew Alemán • Chandler Basconcillo • Julia Castro • Ethan Francis • Lexi Gibson • Shawn Hill • Kaylee Holland • Jordan Holmes • Jordian Hunter • Madeline Kuney • Fahad Molla • Ryan Morosa • Veena Narashiman • Libby Otten • Andre Paradise • Jesus Perez • Grace Prall • Cameron Reeves • Lucas Solis • Gabriel Torres • Aaron Wan • Payton Yee **2016-2017** John Abrams • Jackson Carroll • Gabriela Chumpitaz • Ishani Desai • Spencer Glazer • Luisa Guzman Gomez • Carlos Hernandez • Raja Kumar • Grace Martinez • Clayton Nalesnik • Sean Nguyen • Karen Quezada • Carlos Ramirez • Laura Randolph • Krystal Raynes • Emma Reynolds • Kathryn Rodriguez • Edgar Sanchez Jr. • Tommy Toretta • Daniel Tweedy • Andrea Uribe • Victoria Von Flue **2017-2018** Emily Aldritt • Eddy Aleman • Dawn Bransby • Nyoko Brown • Ethan Estrada • Manny Flores • Malcolm Francisco • Noe Garcia • Adam Hererra • Bryce Jackson • Emily Johnston • Aarushi Kapoor • Logan King • Kim Marquez • Noah McNaughton • Alexis 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The Jim Burke Education Foundation 2025 | 9

On The Road to Success

Jeff Vaughan
 Class of 1979



Owner of Vaughan Exploration and founding board member of the Jim Burke Education Foundation. As a part of the Tearaways band, Jeff played at Beatleweek in Liverpool, UK.

Doug MacMillan
 Class of 1987



Cooking is a family business starting with Rosa's Ristorante Italiano. Doug is now an award winning executive chef and owner of Vista and Ada's Fish House in Pismo Beach—Buon Appetito!

Dr. Jody Thomas
 Class of 1993



Clinical psychologist, Adjunct Faculty Stanford School of Medicine, Founder/CEO of the Meg Foundation—dedicated to empowering kids and families dealing with pain and medical anxiety.



1975

1982

1989

1997

2005



Pat Lencioni
 Class of 1983



Founder of The Table Group, speaker, author of 13 books focusing on teamwork and organizational health, including "Five Dysfunctions of a Team."

Zach Shaffer
 Class of 1992



Television and Broadway actor known for his roles "Oh, Canada," "Tripped Up," and "Smash." From his days at West High to the Broadway lights in NYC, we can't wait to see what's next!

Lesley Clifford
 Class of 1999



Vice President of Merchandising at Rothy's. A graduate of the University of Arizona, Lesley has been involved in corporate merchandising for over 20 years.

ess

From excelling students to successful business and community leaders—what a ride it has been!

Keith Legro

Class of 2004



Vice President/Head of Marketing (Americas) at Fender Musical Instruments Corp. We remember your rich voice singing, "Over the Rainbow" at Jim Burke's funeral.

Erica McCall

Class of 2013



Following a five-year professional career in the WNBA, Erica is now the Assistant Women's Basketball Coach at Stanford. She tells the team, "Give yourself grace, have fun and stay present."



2011

2025

2019



Austin Davis

Class of 2010



Our first "Fordie" to work for the Ford Motor Company! He started in 2014 and is now the Ford F-150 Marketing Manager. Jim Burke must be smiling from heaven.

Sophia Caputo

Class of 2017



Currently on a sabbatical from Workforce Transformation at Deloitte to raise \$100,000 for the non-profit Sharing Hope Africa. Keep up the good work!

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The Jim Burke Education Foundation 2025 | 11

Celebrating our Incredible Alumni Advisors

At the heart of the Ford Dream Builders program are the dedicated advisors who volunteer their time, energy, and wisdom to support student teams. These mentors serve as guides, role models, and cheerleaders throughout the year-long journey of creating meaningful community service projects. Their impact shapes confident, compassionate, and community-minded young leaders long after the program ends.

This year, we proudly spotlight several advisors who are also program alumni. Once mentored themselves, they now give back by supporting the next generation. Their passion and firsthand experience bring unique depth to the mentoring process.

We're honored to share their stories and celebrate the legacy they continue to build.



Alex Parsons

Dream Builders
Class of 2005

Alex loved being a part of one of the first Dream Builders teams. As a member of team Wells Fargo, their project, Kids Reaching Kids, invited students to write heartfelt letters to children receiving care at Madera Children's Hospital—a simple yet powerful gesture of encouragement and hope. One of Alex's favorite aspects of the program was meeting and learning from people of all backgrounds. It's an experience that left a lasting impression.

After High School: Alex earned a degree in agriculture from Fresno State and now works as the Planting Manager in the potato division at Grimmway Farms. Inspired by the amazing advisors he had, Alex returned to offer the same mentorship. Of the many projects he's supported, he says the most recent class stood out for its deep connections, strong teamwork, and outstanding execution.



Shem Oesch

Ford Dimension
Class of 1985

Shem recalls being a part of Ford Dimension in the early days of the program. Though the structure was different, the spirit of leadership and learning was strong. A standout memory was a field trip to a Ford Motor Company marketing conference in Southern California—an exciting glimpse into the professional world that left a lasting impression.

After High School: Shem earned a degree in aerospace engineering from San Diego State but eventually returned to Bakersfield. He now serves as Vice President of Engineering & Construction at Grimmway Farms. Inspired by his daughter's participation in the 2023–24 Dream Builders class, Shem returned as a team advisor the following year. One highlight was watching students engage with young readers during the Little Libraries Event Day—a meaningful full-circle moment of giving back.



Isabella Carreno

Dream Builders
Class of 2020

Isabella remembers being on team Dignity Health. Her team's project, ELEVATE, focused on educating young adults about the real-life consequences of drug and alcohol abuse. Through impactful outreach, they aimed to spark honest conversations and empower youth to make informed choices. A favorite memory was helping with the annual Ford Picnic—an early bonding moment that brought her team closer together.

After High School: Isabella earned her degree in political science and journalism at UC Berkeley. She now serves as a U.S. Department of Energy Innovator Fellow for Oregon and is preparing to attend law school at the University of Washington. Returning as a team advisor felt like a natural step. She credits the program as a cornerstone of her journey and is proud to pass that inspiration forward to the next generation.



Tyler Sweeney
Ford Dimension
Class of 2017

Tyler and The Garlic Company team created a project entitled, Let's Globe, that brought culture and connection to the Bakersfield Boys and Girls Club through weekly themed events. By introducing underprivileged youth to different countries and customs, they sparked curiosity and global awareness.

For Tyler, the highlight was seeing the kids' excitement as they explored new cultures together.

After High School: Tyler earned a full-ride academic scholarship to Santa Clara University, graduating with honors in commerce management and a minor in entrepreneurship. Now a Customer Success Manager in the tech and telephony space, he returned to Dream Builders as a team advisor. A standout moment was watching his team, Project Air Aware, connect with students about air quality in a creative and engaging way. For Tyler, the magic of the program lives on through mentorship.



Laura Thomas
Ford Dimension
Class of 2003

Laura has fond memories of helping lead community projects across Bakersfield. A favorite memory was mentoring students at her former elementary school through the Lunch Buddy initiative, which sparked her passion for service.

After High School: Laura attended UC Davis on a basketball scholarship and now leads Global Moderation for Ads, Augmented Reality, and Fraud operations at Snapchat. Returning as a team advisor has been a full-circle journey, especially sharing the experience with her sisters. She's spent two years advising Team Bank of the Sierra and is continually inspired by students' creativity and drive. Looking ahead to her third year, Laura is excited to keep giving back to a program that helped shape her path.



Ali Border
Dream Builders
Class of 2014

As part of team Memories in Flight, Ali helped to honor local veterans by preserving their stories through recorded interviews and video clips. Spending time with these heroes gave Ali a deep appreciation for service and community that continues to shape her values today.

After High School: Ali earned an MBA, and degree in mechanical engineering at Aburn. She is now President of Kern Steele Fabrication, Inc. For Ali, being an advisor is more than mentorship, it's an investment in Kern County's future. Her favorite part when working with her current team is the early brainstorming phase, where students share thoughtful, meaningful ideas to improve their community.



Vinny Oddo
Dream Builders
Class of 2009

Vinny's team project, Share Your Sole, partnered with children experiencing homelessness to design custom shoes. Connecting with local organizations and making a real impact left a lasting impression. For Vinny, the most rewarding part was building relationships with community partners and seeing the collective effort come to life.

After High School: Vinny earned a BA in economics and business from Westmont College and attended Pepperdine Law School. Now a partner at Klein DeNatale Goldner, he returned as a Dream Builders advisor to give back to the program that shaped his path. Vinny finds each year inspiring and enjoys watching students grow into thoughtful leaders, and some have come back to be his interns!



Nicolette Thomson
Ford Dimension
Class of 2002

Nicolette recalls when it was just Ford Dimension, a single group of 13 members. She fondly remembers visiting local elementary schools and bonding with a student buddy at Thorner Elementary. Another favorite memory was the Ford Focus billboard photo shoot, where she joked about her "acting faces" being displayed around town.

After High School: Nicolette earned a degree in Criminology from UC Irvine and later trained as a pastry chef at the Culinary Institute of America. Her career took her across the country before she returned to Bakersfield in 2016 to pursue nursing. Now an ICU nurse at Bakersfield Memorial Hospital, she volunteers as a Dream Builders advisor.



With heartfelt thanks, we recognize these 2024–2025 Advisors for their dedication and contributions:

Ali Border, Bella Carreno,
Gaby Chumpitaz, Jane Couperus,
Elliot Feng, Gabriela Gonzales,
Liz Haley, Tori Jacobs,
Lisa Jacoby, Vinny Oddo,
Shem Oesch, Alex Parsons,
Donna Sharp, Tyler Sweeney,
Laura Thomas, Nicolette Thomson,
Sarah Trichell, Larry Velasquez

"I feel honored to have met Jim Burke, and to have been impacted by his legacy. Being in the program gave me the confidence to believe that I could be a leader...and allowed me to see that my work in community projects could make a difference."

Kate Hersberger Greenberg
Ford Dimension Class of 2000

Kate is Vice President of Marketing and Communications at Washington Spirit, a professional women's soccer team based at Audi Field in Washington, D.C.



What a Party!

Congratulations Mr. & Mrs. Bill Rector!

Winner of this year's Ghost Party sweepstake prize of two airline tickets from **Uniglobe Golden Empire Travel**. Safe travels and have a wonderful adventure!

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Boo! Your Ghost Party invitation is in the mail. Join us!

Many thanks to Ray Watson Jr. at
Uniglobe.
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How It Will Continue

The legacy of Jim Burke and his spirit of generosity continues to be the driving force of the Foundation. Contributions of time, resources, and talent from advisors, directors, and community supporters have enabled the Foundation to grow in its support of education through scholarships, grants and leadership programs such as Dream Builders.

Please consider joining us in furthering the living legacy of Jim Burke through the Education Foundation!

Scan QR Code to contribute online:



Or contribute by check payable to:

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P.O. Box 316, Bakersfield, CA 93302

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Treasurer Report

Where We Stand Financially

Thank you, Kern County! Once again, you have generously donated to the Jim Burke Education Foundation. This has allowed us to fund our Dream Builders program and provide financial support to many outstanding Kern County students and educational programs. Last year we received approximately **\$79,705** in community contributions through Ghost Party donations and memorial gifts.

In March 2025, the Foundation granted **\$72,000 in college scholarships**. This year, we maintained the scholarship amount at \$2,000 for every Ford Dimension—Dream Builder student leader and continued funding special recognition awards and renewal scholarships because of our donors' generosity. The Foundation also provided financial grants totaling \$1,250 to four educational programs in Kern County and funded \$25,425 for the Dream Builders student leadership program.

Of the total assets, the Foundation has exceeded its goal of establishing a \$1 million endowment fund that will help provide additional funds for education. The balance on June 30, 2025 was \$1,700,817

Summary of Foundation Financial Activities as of June 30, 2025

Total Income	.....	\$ 113,520
(Contributions, Fundraisers and Investment Income)		
Expenses		
Scholarships and Grants	.....	\$ 73,000
Dream Builders	.....	\$ 25,425
Fundraising	.....	\$ 23,532
Community Outreach	.....	\$ 15,822
Total Expenses	.....	\$ 137,799
Net Loss	.....	(\$24,425)
Total Assets at 6/30/2025	\$ 1,700,817



JIM BURKE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO EXCEL

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Where Are They Now? Catching up with Ford Dimension Alum Jim Freitas

From sporting his Ford Dimension suit in 1983 to shaping the future of aviation, Jim Freitas is flying high — literally! Reflecting on his time as a member of Ford Dimension, Jim shares: “The Ford Dimension wasn’t just an experience, it was a catalyst for enduring relationships, a deep appreciation for community service, and marking a personal milestone: receiving my first blue blazer!”

Today, Jim leads Product and Airplane Development for Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Customer Support. He’s the go-to guy for making sure Boeing’s newest jets, such as the 737-10 and 777X, enter service smoothly and impress customers around the globe.

Jim’s journey in aerospace began at McDonnell Douglas in 1986 before joining Boeing in 1990. Since then, he has worn many hats (and probably a few flight headsets), from leading 737 global support to helping airlines get the most out of their fleets. He also played a big role in developing icons like the original 777 family and the 767 Tanker.

He holds a B.S. in aeronautical engineering from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and an MBA from Pepperdine. But don’t let all those degrees fool you. Jim is just as passionate about biking, golfing, and globetrotting with his wife Laurie and their four daughters as he is about airplanes.

Jim Freitas proves that big dreams and a blue blazer can take you just about anywhere!

*Jim is just as
passionate
about biking,
golfing, and
globetrotting
with his wife
Laurie and their
four daughters
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KEEP IN TOUCH!
Update Our Alumni List



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