FIRST STAR

IMPACT REPORT

2022

THE PROPERTY OF first

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST

## OUR MISSION

First Star provides high school youth in foster care with the opportunity, tools, and support to successfully transition to self-sufficiency through higher education or other viable pathways.



We envision a world where youth in foster care have equitable opportunities to acquire education and skills to achieve fulfilling and productive adult lives.

## **A LETTER FROM** OUR CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Over the past year, our team has worked hard to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of young people across the country. Through our programs and services, we have helped youth in foster care achieve academic success, gain access to mental health resources, and build meaningful relationships with caring adults. I am pleased to report that our impact has been significant, starting with the successful completion of our long-term strategic plan and transitioning our First Star network into an Objectives and Key Results environment - paving the way for innovation, growth, and enhanced educational experiences for our scholars!

- In 2022, 97% of our scholars graduated high school. This significant improvement in our June 2021 graduation rate of 86% demonstrates not only the brilliant work our First Star scholars are doing but also the urgent need for us to conduct our transformative program in the high-touch, in-person manner our scholars benefitted from pre-pandemic. Nationwide, only 50% of youth in care graduate high school, but we've shown our high-impact interventions have a profound effect.
- 91% of our scholars enrolled in college. 9% opted to pursue non-post-secondary options, increasing the employment rate of First Star scholars from 57% to 67%! Of our non-high school graduates, 100% completed their GED, marking a more than 15% increase on the 5-year-average.
- Our exceptional Academies across the country play a significant role in building compassionate and inclusive communities at their universities that nurture every young person's potential.
- We supported more than 150 Alumni with microgrants, internships, and mentorships an enrollment increase of 20% year after year.

As excellent as these achievements are, we never rest on our laurels at First Star. Not only because we strive to improve every year, but because there are always more talented young people in foster care who need our support to realize their potential. As we advance, we are strengthening our organization in the following areas to continue helping First Star scholars and alums achieve their dreams:

- Reach and Serve More Youth Youth Impacted by the Child Welfare System
- Enable the Youth We Serve to Rise to their Highest Potential
- Pursue and Invest in Partnerships that Uplift our Mission, Further our Influence & Create Value in the Collective Network
- O Strengthen Our Fiscal Position and Organizational Effectiveness to Sustain our Today & Scale Our **Tomorrow**

None of this would be possible without the support of our incredible community of donors, volunteers, and partners.

Your generosity and dedication to our cause have been essential to our success, and we are grateful for your ongoing support. As we look ahead to the future, we are committed to continuing our work to support teenagers and young adults to create a brighter future for all young people! Thank you for being a part of our mission and for helping us make a difference in the lives of so many!

In Solidarity,

Lyndsey C. Wilson MA CEO, First Star, Inc.



# WE MAKE LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS IN YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

First Star highlights the power of community and connectedness in creating change. The First Star Academy program centers academics as a pathway into achievement, and achievement is impossible without the uplift and support of community.

## FIRST STAR ACADEMIES FIRST STAK ACADEM ACROSS THE NATION



**SERVING 750 SCHOLARS** 

**SERVING** 

## **OUR ACADEMY PROGRAM**

#### **WE INVEST IN EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY**

First Star's Academies are a long-term college-prep program for high school students in foster care that includes immersive residential summers on a university campus and monthly sessions during each school year. We keep our scholars on track for high school graduation and prepare them for higher education and adulthood by providing specialized programming that addresses the academics, life skills, and adult support needed by students in foster care. Our innovation lies in our holistic model embedded within a university community that also supports self-determination, social and interpersonal skills, career preparation and advocacy.

Data captured in June of 2022 shows a return to pre-pandemic success

97%
OF FIRST STAR SCHOLARS
GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL
(UP FROM 86% LAST YEAR)

#### **COMPARED TO LAST YEAR, THE CLASS OF 2022 HAD AN:**

11% Increase in high school graduation rate 6% Increase in two-year college enrollment 66% Accepted to four-year colleges



We are so excited to announce that many of our scholars have chosen to attend their host University!

#### Oh, the Places They'll Go

Some of the colleges and universities our recent alumni were accepted to:

Arizona State University
Bowie State University
College of Staten Island
CSU Los Angeles
CSU San Bernardino
Delaware State University
Fairmont State University
Fashion Institute of Technology
Florida State University

Howard University
Illinois State University
Kent State University
Loyola Marymount University
Manhattan College
Morehouse College
Northern Arizona University
Rollins College
Rowan University

Southern Utah University UCLA University of Central Florida University of Florida University of Illinois, Chicago University of Miami University of Utah Utah State University Valparaiso University

#### 2022 FIRST STAR SCHOLAR GRADUATION REPORT



#### FIRST STAR VS. NATIONAL OUTCOMES

**97**%

graduated from high school in June 2022 compared to 50% of foster youth nationwide

**91**%

are pursuing higher education compared to 10% of foster youth nationwide

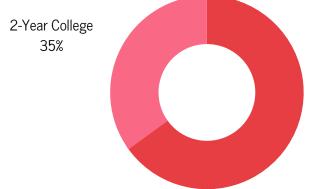
**66**%

are pursuing higher
education by enrolling in four
year colleges

#### **2022 SCHOLAR OUTCOMES**

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION TRACK

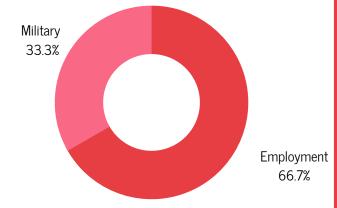
Of the scholars who graduated in June of 2022, 91% enrolled in post-secondary education. Post-secondary education includes universities and colleges, as well as trade and vocational schools.



4-Year College 65%

#### **EMPLOYMENT OR MILITARY TRACK**

Of the scholars who graduated in June of 2022 who did not enroll in higher education, the majority entered the workforce.



#### FIRST STAR ACADEMIES



First Star Arizona State **University Academy** 

Phoenix. AZ



Paloma Delgado, Academy Director



First Star CSU San **Bernardino Academy** 

San Bernardino, CA



Kurt Manio. **Academy Director** 



First Star Illinois State **University Academy** 

Normal, IL



Stacey Wiggins, **Academy Director** 



First Star Kent State **University Academy** 

Kent. OH



Danielle Green-Welch, Academy Director



First Star KVC West Virginia Academy

Charleston, WV



Walter Swoope, **Academy Director** 



First Star Old Dominion **University Academy** 

Norfolk, VA



Dr. TaShara Bailey, **Academy Director** 

#### **KEY ELEMENTS OF A FIRST STAR ACADEMY**



#### 

4 year college preparatory program for youth in foster care focused on academics and life skills



#### **VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT**

Weekly mentoring and tutoring sessions, as well as an open environment to connect and build community through virtual hangouts



#### PEER MENTOR ENGAGEMENT

Peer mentors are comprised primarily of undergraduates at the host university who are former foster youth or first generation college students

#### **2022 FIRST STAR ACADEMIES**



First Star Sacramento State Academy

Sacramento, CA



Trahn Pham. **Academy Director** 



First Star UCLA Bruin **Guardian Scholars Academy** 

Los Angeles, CA



Karina Garcia. **Academy Director** 



First Star University of Miami Academy

Miami. FL



Maria Pia De Castro. Academy Director



First Star University of **Utah Academy** 

Salt Lake City, UT



Nicolas Contreras. **Academy Director** 

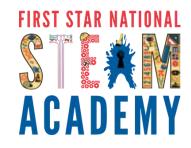


South Jersey First Star Collaborative

**New Jersey** 



Isaiah Showell. **Academy Director** 



First Star National Steam Academy



Kilan Ashad-Bishop, **Program Director** 

#### **KEY ELEMENTS OF A FIRST STAR ACADEMY**

#### 侧, CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

Seminars and workshops that provide tools to caregivers to become advocates for their youth



#### **SUMMER ACADEMY**

Immersive residential enrichment program on a university campus focused on building academic, life skills, and healthy relationships.



#### SCHOLAR ADVISORY **COMMITTEE**

Leadership opportunity for scholars focused on becoming civically engaged and enacting change in their local communities

## WHAT SCHOLARS ARE SAYING ABOUT FIRST STAR'S IMPACT



94% of First Star Scholars believe attending college is possible for them

of First Star Scholars say that getting good grades is important to them

of First Star Scholars feel like they have a plan for the future

76% of First Star Scholars feel stronger because of their experience in foster care

of First Star Scholars feel like First Star has helped them DREAM BIGGER



## **OUR ALUMNI PROGRAM**

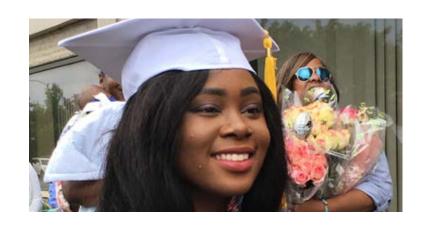
#### **WE INVEST IN CONTINUED SUCCESS**

The continued success mindset is why community, belonging and long-term relationships are central to First Star programs. We hope to be a family our scholars rely on while in the program and after they graduate.

The Alumni Program is an extended First Star family for our high-school graduates, a resource connecting our alumni throughout the country via social media, newsletters, reunions, and more. Our goal is to remain connected with alumni to ensure they have access to resources and the First Star network as they transition into adulthood, career, and advanced education.



First Star has always been there for me. I'm extremely happy to wake up every day realizing that people are rooting for me and I'm rooting for myself.



A growing network of alumni from our Academies - we've seen a 45% increase in enrollment with new members enrolled from all First Star graduating classes since 2015. The Program partners with over 10 organizations to provide direct service and resources including microgrants, laptops, financial literacy courses, mentorship, internships, and more.



I'd like to thank the First Star Community for making a huge turn for me in my life. Every day you guys give me opportunities left and right that have been a huge success for me, and for that I am extremely grateful to be part of this First Star Family.

Beth Martinez Class of 2021

#### **ALUMNI PROGRAM MICRO-GRANTS**

Alumni Program Micro-Grants support scholars and alumni who experience resource barriers as they pursue their post-secondary goals. Micro-grants are awarded for educational expenses, professional development, basic needs, and technology. Through the Alumni Program, our grantees receive free financial literacy courses from Mana Money School.

IN 2022, 25% OF OUR ENGAGED ALUMNI REQUESTED AND RECEIVED ASSISTANCE FROM THE ALUMNI MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM

**TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED TO ALUMNI: \$19,676.79** 

#### **2022 ANNUAL EVENTS**

MICRO-GRANTS USAGE

BASIC NEEDS 47%
HOUSING 20%

JOB SUPPORT 13%
EDUCATION 10%
TECHNOLOGY 10%

The Alumni Program hosts an annual award ceremony and holiday reunion to celebrate the achievements of our alumni. On June 25th, we congratulated our graduating seniors and welcomed them into the program. On December 3rd, we celebrated the holiday season, and due to our Giving Tuesday fundraising efforts by our First Star Board of Directors, each First Star Alumni received a generous holiday gift card!

Thank you for the continued support you have given me along the years. I couldn't be where I am today without this program. My appreciation is too much to even express in words.

Tadae King-Williams Class of 2019



### **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**

"I'm a 23 year-old college student at Pasadena City College studying business administration with hopes of transferring to UC Berkeley next year.

My experience at First Star was incredible. I loved having a community I could rely on and one that cared about my success as a foster youth. As much as I appreciated the academic support First Star provided, being able to go out and do things with peers that were like me was the best thing I was able to experience. There weren't a lot of foster youth in my city, so feeling normal when I was with First Star was a relief.

I love being able to speak out for foster youth through the documentary film <u>Possible Selves</u>. I hope others see that success isn't a straight line for anybody, but more importantly no matter the circumstances you are in - you can succeed.

I continue to be involved with First Star as an alumnus in hopes that First Star can continue to support high school foster youth students and provide the same eye-opening experiences for them as they did for me."

Alex Ballentyne, First Star Graduate

- Class of 2018

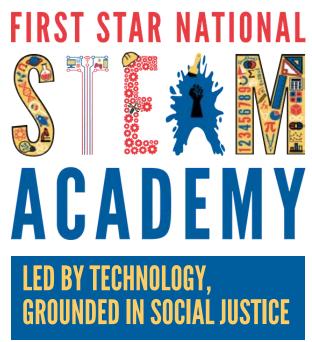


## **OUR VIRTUAL STEAM ACADEMY**

#### WE INVEST IN INNOVATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

To extend our reach outside of our traditional academy program, we created The First Star National STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Academy, a virtual enrichment program for youth in foster care led by technology and grounded in social justice. This curated approach includes culturally responsive content from professionals who have similar life experiences and/or backgrounds and validates and affirms each participant's experiences. In 2022 we focused on the Science of Creativity and the Science of Sports.





In 2022 we conducted network wide interactive First Star National STEAM Days to promote scholarly engagement in science, engineering, technology, arts, and mathematics. Team members joined the scholars in person to help facilitate learning. In addition, the STEAM program moved to asynchronous offerings; our series of interactive Tech Talks are paired with a STEAM lab, materials grants and facilitated instruction.

#### **2022 TECH TALK SPEAKERS**

#### **WATCH ALL OF OUR TECH TALKS**

#### **NEUROSCIENCE & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



Jeff Stibel Founding Partner of Bryant Stibel, entrepreneur and author

#### **WATCH NOW**





#### **BIOCHEMISTRY & BIOTECHNOLOGY**



Dr. Morgan Mitchell Associate Product Manager at SCIEX with a PhD. in Biochemistry

#### **WATCH NOW**





#### FINANCIAL TECH WITH FLOWTRACK



Ramon Pitter CEO. Chief Investment Officer CIO. & Co-Founder



Warren Rickards Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) & Co-Founder



Mika Ohiorhenuan Chief Operations Officer (COO) & Co-Founder

#### **WATCH NOW**





#### **CANCER BIOLOGY & COMICS**



Dr. Jaye Gardiner Postdoctoral Fellow researching Pancreatic Cancer at the Fox Chase Cancer Center and Illustrator

#### **WATCH NOW**





## **OUR COALITION BUILDING**

#### **WE INVEST IN COLLABORATION**

#### THE CALIFORNIA FOSTER YOUTH PRE COLLEGE COLLECTIVE

First Star leads a coalition of seven California nonprofits called the Foster Youth Pre-College Collective (tFYPC). tFYPC's mission is to ensure youth in care have access to meaningful and engaging educational support programming grounded in best practices and focused on achieving high school graduation and post-secondary matriculation rate that match or exceed those of their peers in the general population.



Compared to other middle and high school students, foster youth require more intensive, frequent, and individualized supports to help them graduate high school, prepare for college, and compete in the workforce. There is no mandate for child welfare systems to ensure youth in their care complete high school and receive the skills and supports they need to prepare for post-secondary programs. In the absence of prescriptive oversight and dedicated funding, the educational progress of thousands of young people in the custody of the state is at risk. The Destination Graduation Report (authored by tFYPC) outlines the persistent challenges facing youth in foster care, shares reflections about their educational journeys, reviews prior attempts to address the issue, and proposes collaborative solutions to close the opportunity gap for this high-needs student population.



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE

In October, the First Star Network was able to gather in person for a return to our annual conference in Sacramento. We were joined by stakeholders, including Sacramento State President Robert Nelsen, First Star alumna Amy Duarte, and First Star UK Director Lorna Goodwin. Our three days together were characterized by the spirit of Sankofa: focusing on learning from the wisdom gained over the past several years to ensure a strong future for First Star. As CEO Lyndsey C. Wilson noted, "It was so nice to reflect on the past few years and come together to collaboratively determine the strategic direction we will take together as a network moving forward."



Conference highlights included a Q&A with David Ambroz, a long-time First Star friend, about his riveting new memoir <u>A Place Called Home</u>, and a session of learning from the experiences of First Star Sacramento State Academy scholars and caregivers.





During the conference, we were proud to present First Star Kent State University Academy Director **Danielle Green-Welch** with the **2022 First Star Brilliance Award**, honoring those who have gone above and beyond to serve our scholars. Danielle leads the way at the First Star KSU Academy with the support of her team to uplift scholar engagement and success.

Danielle founded the Scholars Advisory Council, centering student voices and bringing attention to the issues that are most important to youth in foster care. We're so fortunate to have someone with Danielle's charisma, character, strength, and visionary leadership as part of our First Star family! Congratulations on being the 2022 First Star Brilliance Award recipient!

## METALLICA'S HELPING HANDS CONCERT & AUCTION

#### **WE COLLABORATE WITH OTHER NONPROFITS**

Metallica's <u>All Within My Hands Foundation</u> is dedicated to creating sustainable communities through workforce education, the fight against hunger, and other critical local services.



First Star CEO Lyndsey C. Wilson took the stage with Metallica for their Helping Hands Concert & Auction on December 16th in Los Angeles. Thank you to All Within My Hands Foundation and Jimmy Kimmel for this incredible honor! Lyndsey even got to bring along a First Star alumna to meet the band!



## FIRST STAR 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

2022 brought First Star in-person programming, full of hugs and laughter. We are so excited to continue to foster excellence and joy in scholars across the United States in 2023. We are thrilled to have you on this journey with us!



In April, First Star scholars and staff from Academies at Sac State, CSUSB and UCLA joined First Star CEO, Lyndsey C. Wilson in Monterey CA, at the Foster Youth Education Summit.



In July, in partnership with Fairmont State University and the NASA IV&V Education Resource Center, scholars from our First Star KVC West Virginia Academy engaged in hands-on space camp curriculum. This state-of-the-art technical skill training included STEM engineering activities as well as opportunities to develop critical research and leadership skills with a focus on Weather and Climate science and applications.



Read the Fostering Families

March/April 2022 Article

CEO Lyndsey C. Wilson was interviewed for a Fostering Families Today's article highlighting how technology impacts the child welfare system. In the article, educational advocates underscore the ongoing challenges faced by young people in care, including growing behavioral issues in the classroom, difficulty accessing technology and a lack of school transportation. However, despite school closures and the disruption of regular routines over the past two years, little data is available to reflect how this subset of students has fared academically.



In May, Foster Care Awareness Month, the Scholars Advisory Committee held the "I Dream A World" Advocacy Forum. This virtual forum was an opportunity for First Star scholars to dialogue about issues that are relevant to them and the world as they see it. Focusing on Racial Justice & Equity, Foster Care Awareness, LGBTQ+ Rights and Awareness, Mental Health, and Suicide Prevention, we invited legislators and organization representatives who have shown interest in these topics to engage in healthy conversation with our scholars, to hear their concerns, and to talk about ways to move toward improvement.



During Foster Care Awareness month,
First Star KSU scholars and chaperones
headed to Washington DC with new
luggage thanks to Tiffany Haddish and
the She Ready Foundation. During their
four-day trip, scholars visited the National
Mall and the Smithsonian complex, the
Pentagon Memorial, and Arlington
National Cemetery. A highlight of the trip
included a visit to the African American
Museum of History and Culture. Team
First Star walked so much that they had
to dip their feet in a fountain!



**Watch the CBS Evening News Piece** 

In December, the CBS Evening News featured the First Star UCLA Bruin Guardian Scholars Academy, highlighting one of our Scholars who became a First Star Peer Mentor and is now a graduate of Chapman University. The piece focused on a unique element of First Star: the relationships formed among our Scholars and staff AND between current and former youth in care through our Peer Mentors.

### I DREAM A WORLD

Where 8 to 10 houses felt like a home

Where a child doesn't get taken from their family and feel all alone

A child is removed from traumas that may be not be fully known

And is placed with strangers who constantly remind them that they are not their own

Arrive with nothing but a trash bag

Fitting for how you often get treated

Just another kid

Just another piece of paper to be passed around and discarded

Maybe the foster parents are just bad apples in a barrel

But maybe it's the system that's gone rotten

I dream a world

Where a child is given a home they deserve

Where the weight of their past is not treated as a burden

For the people who have signed up to be their parents

are fully prepared to love, accept,

and support the weight of the world

that child carries behind the story of their plastic bag

I dream a world

Where foster parents are better trained

So that foster children can heal

and not suffer anymore pain

so that their hurt can can be a learning tool

Teach foster parents

So that children aren't treated

as a poorly taught lesson

I dream a world so that future foster children can live a better one than me

Shannon S.





## FINANCIAL SPOTLIGHT

#### **Expenses**

Fiscal Year 2022

WE APPRECIATE OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

For the fifth consecutive year, First Star has received a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid (previously GuideStar). Thank you for trusting us with your donations, your time, and your goodwill.

Management & Fundraising 12.5%

Program Services 87.5%

## THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS 2021 & 2022 INDIVIDUAL DONORS & FOUNDATIONS

#### \$250,000 +

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Walter S. Johnson Foundation CG Charitable

#### \$100,000-\$249,999

Angell Foundation
ASU Women and Philanthropy\*
Bill & Deirdre Catuzzi
Children's Trust\*
Give Back Foundation\*
Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation
Julian Grace Foundation
Jessica & Steve Sarowitz
Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

#### \$50,000-\$99,999

Angell Foundation
Annenberg Foundation
Bryant Stibel
Educate Tomorrow\*
May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust\*

#### \$25,000-\$49,999

All Within My Hands Foundation
Batchelor Foundation
Braitmayer Foundation\*
Jay Paul Deratany
Dwight Stuart Youth Fund
Green Foundation
Hilda and Preston Davis Foundation
In-N-Out Burger Foundation
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Leeds Family Foundation\*
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Our Kids of Miami-Dade and Monroe\*
Our Little Light Foundation
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation\*

#### \$5,000-\$24,999

Anonymous
David Beugen
Change Reaction
The Columbus Foundation
Cloud Family Foundation Fund
Craig H. Nielsen Foundation

**Fdison International** Elizabeth Fitzpatrick Glen & Elizabeth Friedman Jeanne Friedman Glenda G. Morgan Charitable Foundation\* Brian Gray Judith & Bruce Hackett The Herman Foundation Johnny Carson Foundation Marilyn S. Broad Foundation McDonough Foundation\* Diane and Ron Miller Fund Joseph H. & Florence A. Roblee Foundation Rosenthal Family Foundation Jen Sargent Stephanie Sperber Strottman Family Fund Vince & Jacqueline Thompson

#### LEVERAGED FUNDING FOR FIRST STAR ACADEMY PROGRAMS

In addition to the financial support First Star has received directly over the past two years, our University partners have received over \$6M in direct public funding to support their First Star Academy programs. These gifts include:

\$3M

in ESSER funds to the First Star ASU Academy

\$1.5M

in the <u>22-23 California State</u> budget to support First Star Academies within the California State University System

\$1.2M

in the New Jersey <u>2021</u> and <u>2022</u> State Budgets for our New Jersey Academies

\$1M

from the US Department of Education to support the First Star University of Utah Academy and the Impact Scholars program



## **OUR CORE VALUES**



#### **EMPOWERMENT**

We believe in providing the freedom and tools that support successful progression towards individual and collective goals.



#### **COLLABORATION**

We build relationships to collectively work as a community to support our scholars. We know we cannot do this work alone, and therefore we depend on our partners.



#### **COMMITMENT**

We are committed to achieving educational and early- adulthood success for youth in foster care. This is critical to inspire transformational change for our Network and scholars.



#### **FAMILY**

It takes a village to raise a child, and to that end we embrace the backgrounds and perspectives of all the individuals within the First Star Family. We foster a welcoming environment that honors and appreciates their individual experiences, beliefs, and values.



#### **DIVERSITY**

We strive to examine our own biases and privileges and the different voices from our community to focus on diversity, inclusivity, and equity. Every decision made with our stakeholders bears this in mind.



#### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

We embrace and integrate accountability into everything we do, individually and collectively, to honor our commitments to all stakeholders serving youth across the country who have experienced the foster care system.

## FIRST STAR BOARD MEMBERS



Peter Samuelson
First Star President
& Co-Founder



**Raul Cardenas, Jr., PhD**J.K. Mullen High School



Michael H. Cook Liles Parker PLLC



**Brian Gray, CPA**Gursey | Schneider LLP



**Judy Hackett**Bryant Stibel



**Adalyce Hollis**First Star Alumna



**Philip Hong, PhD.**University of Georgia



**Janet Rosenzweig, PhD.**University of Pennsylvania



Adrien P. Sebro, PhD.
University of Texas,
Austin



**Stephanie Sperber**Lion Forge Entertainment



Kathleen Strottman
Glen Vista Partners



Vince Thompson

Middleshift

**Lyndsey C. Wilson**First Star CEO

**Robin Winston León**First Star COO

## FIRST STAR TEAM MEMBERS



**Lyndsey C. Wilson**Chief Executive Officer



**Robin Winston León**Chief Operating Officer



Jennyann Gallo
Expansion and Alumni
Program Manager



Marquel Reid
Academy Engagement
Coordinator



**Brian Ritchey**Director of Academy Engagement



**Jessica Va**Development and Special

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Janice Frew
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**Desiree Isola**Alumni Program Assistant





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