Meet the FPP Class of 2024

On October 4, 2022 we ushered in the new junior cohort of Future Philanthropists! Having returned to in-person meetings last year, the 30 students selected into FPP were very happy to get together and meet each other at the Student/Parent Orientation session. This cohort will be responsible for making grants totaling $50,000 to nonprofit organizations located in Oak Park, River Forest and bordering communities including the Austin neighborhood. Every year, FPP receives requests for support that far exceed the amount of money available. They will need to decide which organizations they will fund, knowing they cannot fund them all. These decisions are not made easily. But, through the curriculum provided and the guiding hands of their mentors, we have every confidence that this group of outstanding students can meet the challenge!

Congratulations to the Class of 2024!

Vilas Advani  
Emerson Amstutz  
Lucas Crossman  
Josh Curry  
Nellie Dargis  
Natalie Dauphinee  
Sonja de Jong

Nora Derks  
Sahiba Dhillon  
Roan Doody  
William Healy  
Zoe Hendrickson  
Phyliss Kreiter  
Maria Kunigk-Bakalar  
Kate Lewis

Avery Lucas  
Ashley Mandell  
Kathryn Meister  
Gabriella Morales  
Sebastian Mrotzek  
Anthony Ortiz-Ferrer  
Brady Sorg  
Beatrice Spell

Shea Sturtevant  
Max Timchak  
Saskia van der Meer  
Mara Vogen  
Olivia Wangerow  
Gabrielle Williams  
Josh Wood

Junior Mentors for Class of 2024

ADAM ALONSO  
SARAH FINNEGAN  
WENDY WILL  
JOE SMITH  
SANJAY PATEL
Editor’s Note

Philanthropic leaders share certain core characteristics that set them apart from others. Paradoxically, for the majority of us, personal wealth is not one of them. While money is the coin of the philanthropic realm, the broader notion of authentic philanthropy is defined more by one’s personal values and less by one’s financial status. The historically misleading perception that philanthropists are represented only by the rich and powerful has obscured the reality of widespread and genuine expressions of humanitarianism that are demonstrated every day by everyday people across the country.

With that in mind, teaching the art, science and business of philanthropy to the next generation without providing a strong foundation of values-driven pedagogy would miss the point. Therefore, our program model nurtures a philanthropic mindset in students which is both a major goal and a significant outcome of the program. Instilling this mindset in students can lead them to a life-long commitment to philanthropy. For youth who are “coming of age”, this means infusing several values:

1) Social Responsibility – Understanding that the root words for philanthropy translate to “love of humankind” and that one’s belief in the ideals of freedom, equality and equity is sacrosanct.

2) Problem Solving – Knowing that unraveling the root cause of a problem, as opposed to addressing symptoms, represents the highest and most important purpose of change-based philanthropy.

3) Relationship Building – Realizing that one’s ability to associate with and engage others in social change activities includes a commitment to be a catalyst, convener, communicator and collaborator.

4) Resourcefulness – Recognizing that creative approaches, innovative ideas and critical thinking are the only ways to make an effective, meaningful and long-lasting difference in the world.

The success of FPP rests on our ability to teach the art, science and business of philanthropy that results in each student’s commitment to these values and to their making lasting social change during their lifetime.

Rick King

What Does Success Look Like?

By Jim Russell, Mentor

Welcome to our new junior cohort, and to our returning seniors who will complete their FPP experience in May 2023. Now is a great time for each of you to think about what success in the Future Philanthropists Program looks like.

When you joined FPP, you read that it was “…a teen leadership program that provides students with philanthropic business knowledge and real experience granting money to local nonprofits.” In the short term, success includes things like learning philanthropy basics, awarding grants to local nonprofit organizations, and doing local service projects. In the longer term, success includes raising money to maintain and increase the endowment.

But there is another measure of long-term success: the development of leadership skills such as integrity, empathy, emotional intelligence, judgement, courage, vision, and passion. During the two-year FPP program, you build these skills by following a virtuous cycle: Learning, Practicing, and Passing The Word. After the program, your cycle keeps going! Here’s how it works.

• You PASS THE WORD which is a high-value way to reinforce leadership skills! For example, as seniors, you model leadership for the juniors and the community as you conduct fundraisers. As FPP graduates, you can share powerful stories in the FPP Post about how your leadership skills contributed to your academic and work successes.

• You LEARN these skills in the FPP curriculum, and mentors model these skills. Seniors work in teams to develop and present brief presentations on these leadership skills, which helps the knowledge stick.

• You PRACTICE these skills almost as soon as you enter the program. For example, juniors use empathy and judgement for site visits, and when negotiating with fellow juniors about which nonprofit organizations will receive grants. Seniors use all seven skills when planning, promoting, and producing fundraisers.

So, success looks bigger than you thought! Now, success means learning and conducting philanthropy PLUS adopting the leadership virtuous cycle.
News From FPP Grads

Charlie Rhomberg, FPP ‘14

I got my undergrad degree in Business Administration/Finance from the University of Southern California. There were many great parts of my college experience—making lifelong friendships within my fraternity, going to football games, and studying abroad in Budapest, Hungary. But for me, the best part was getting the opportunity to live in a new place and grow into an adult there. It wasn’t easy moving thousands of miles away, knowing barely anyone in my freshman class. I feel like if I had stayed closer to home for college, I wouldn’t have grown as much.

I am living in Newport Beach, CA with my fiancée, Emma Seavy, FPP ‘14, and our dog, Jokai. Coming out of college, I worked in corporate finance at Edwards Lifesciences for 3 years. I left that job this past March to strike out on my own and start my own writing business. That business has taken off and I currently serve 4-6 clients through content marketing (blogs, copywriting, etc.), newsletters, and research pieces. Being my own boss has its pros and cons, but I’m happy with the career transition that I’ve made. I’m always happy to talk with prospective clients, who can reach me via my LinkedIn or at crhomberg21@gmail.com.

I recently completed a fellowship at the climate education company Terra.do, where I dove deep into the environmental, social, and economic consequences of climate change. The intersection between sustainability and economics is of deep interest to me, and I’ve leveraged my learnings from Terra into various business and volunteer opportunities.

I currently volunteer with the California Doughnut Economics Coalition (CalDEC), which looks at how the principles of economist Kate Raworth’s book *Doughnut Economics* can apply to California. CalDEC has been the non-profit I’ve been most engaged with recently. We’re in the process of securing funding and initiating education sessions with local schools and government agencies. I also occasionally volunteer at Renewable Farms in Aliso Viejo, CA.

FPP brought in lots of great speakers, both from the business and non-profit worlds, that taught me so much. It made me realize that philanthropy is, in many ways, capitalism at its best. Making grants to organizations doing good work is an investment, just like a business would make. You want to ensure that the money will be used properly and create a return that’s higher than what you put in. I don’t think I would’ve found CalDEC if it hadn’t been for FPP. Charity will always be necessary, but philanthropy is how communities thrive over time.

Emma Seavey, FPP ‘14

I attended University of Denver for both my undergraduate and graduate degrees. I graduated from DU in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts, where I majored in psychology and double minored in criminology and English literature. After graduating, I was accepted into University of Denver’s Graduate School of Social Work from which I graduated in 2021 with a Master of Social Work degree (MSW).

I currently live in Orange County, California, where I work as the Program Manager for California Youth Services (CYS). They are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based out of Laguna Hills. CYS provides substance abuse youth prevention and intervention programs and counseling for teens and families in and around Orange County. CYS’ mission is to provide intervention, support, and counseling services to those who are navigating life’s challenges with emphasis on substance use, academic challenges, behavioral, and mental health struggles.

At CYS, I run an alternative-to-suspension program for high school students, providing intervention and psychoeducation regarding substance use and its impacts on individuals, families, and society as a whole. This mission is close to my heart as mental health has had a huge impact on me, my family, and various other people in my life. I entered the field of social work in an effort to be able to help individuals in some of their hardest and most vulnerable times. I am incredibly proud to be able to do the work that I do with an organization like California Youth Services. In addition to my work as Program Manager, I am also a private counselor, providing therapy to individuals ages 15-24.

Throughout my undergraduate career, I volunteered with various organizations in the Denver Metro area as a member of my sorority. Since moving to Orange County, I have volunteered at beach clean ups. In addition, I completed two volunteer internships as a part of my graduate program, one with Boys and Girls Club, and one with Mercy House, a non-profit serving the homeless population. Within my role at CYS, I have been involved in grant writing and fundraising efforts and I am consistently mentoring students who enter my program. On a more personal note, this past year, I advocated for survivors of sexual harassment by sharing my own experience as a survivor.

I am happy to share that I became engaged to a member of my FPP cohort, Charlie Rhomberg. We got engaged in Mexico in 2021 and we will be married in June 2023 in Colorado!
Eric Frost, FPP ’14

I received my Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science at Macalester College. I enjoyed the independence and creativity that came with studying a technical course load at a liberal arts school and helped to develop my interests and knowledge in the field. Macalester is also known for its internationalism which I valued greatly and helped to shape my perspective of global experiences.

I am living in Minneapolis working for Sogeti as a Senior Consultant, primarily in Cloud technology software development. Through work I have been able to volunteer at food packaging organizations like Feed My Starving Children. Living in the Twin Cities, I have also supported the George Floyd Memorial Foundation and other mutual aid fundraising activities to support my local community.

For the past two years I have been a volunteer for the Minnesota Esports Club as a coach and organizer for local events. We provide after school gaming setups for recreational use and also for competition through the Minnesota Varsity League (MNVL). Esports is growing rapidly in colleges and universities, so helping to provide coaching for players pursuing and achieving scholarships through gaming has been very fulfilling to me.

Before Covid, I traveled to Korea, Singapore and China to see my friends’ hometowns and more recently visited Spain and Hawaii. I play amateur soccer and volleyball with my friends while studying Swedish!

FPP helped me experience both sides of nonprofit work during my two years and work through identifying what makes a nonprofit successful. Coming to agreement with a large group of fellow philanthropists helped me find solutions when working on consultant projects with team members. I greatly value my time with FPP and what we were able to accomplish and look forward to supporting them for years to come!

Anna Rossa, FPP ’15

I graduated from Loyola University in Chicago with a degree in Advertising & Public Relations. My favorite part of my college experience was being a part of Loyola’s student communications agency, Inigo Communications. We got to produce work for real clients and I feel like this was a springboard for getting my career started.

I currently live in Chicago in Lincoln Park. For the past year and a half, I have been working at Google in a rotational development program within the large client sales division of Google’s Global Business Organization. I have also been helping out with the communications agency that I was a part of during my time at Loyola. I mentor students looking to go into client services and help the agency with strategic projects related to their growth and innovation.

When I was at Loyola, I was heavily involved with The Anti Cruelty Society and it is something I am looking to get back into. It was great to spend time with so many animals and see the meaningful work the organization does for people and their pets.

I am now in Long Island, New York. I moved here right when the pandemic began and have been living with my parents. I had a chance to take a step back and focus on my own health for a while, and now I am completing a master’s in Physiology and Biophysics at Stony Brook University where I also do research in the Neurosurgery department.

I’ve been volunteering at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and as an alumni...

Nakisa Dashti, FPP ’16

I was lucky to be able to study Neuroscience and Sociology at Northwestern University, and my favorite part (besides the beautiful campus, of course) was being a part of Peer Health Exchange. PHE is a national organization that partners with public high schools and universities all around the country to bring college student volunteers to engage in dialogue with high school students about health related topics. The main goal of PHE has always been to empower youth to make their own decisions based on knowledge. Our roles as educators were to simply guide the students through dialogues that would allow them to feel comfortable and safe in asking questions and learning about their own health, the resources available to them, and how to make decisions for themselves.

I am now in Long Island, New York. I moved here right when the pandemic began and have been living with my parents. I had a chance to take a step back and focus on my own health for a while, and now I am completing a master’s in Physiology and Biophysics at Stony Brook University where I also do research in the Neurosurgery department.

I’ve been volunteering at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and as an alumni...
admissions interviewer for the University. But my most valuable volunteer experience has been with a community kitchen called Welcome Friends Kitchen. Welcome Friends is a not-for-profit community soup kitchen that serves the Port Jefferson (and surrounding villages/towns) area in Long Island. The organization’s goal is to provide hot meals, snacks, and some groceries to residents experiencing food insecurity. I have always been passionate about food insecurity.

I grew up in Istanbul, which unfortunately has a large homeless population, and my family has always valued sharing and donating our blessings with our neighbors and friends. I also love cooking and secretly wish I had gone to culinary school (maybe in another life), so being able to volunteer and cook was a great opportunity to combine my passions. I have met so many amazing people who also volunteer at the kitchen, some of them professors, some of them also students, some of them retired from their careers, and I always learn so much from their different perspectives. Sometimes it’s how to chop most efficiently to make it in time for dinner pick-up, other times it’s reassuring to hear how their journeys through the roads less traveled still led to success. It is so nice to gather and volunteer our time together for our shared passion. Most importantly, it is such a privilege to be able to cook for members of our community and, hopefully, provide them with nutritious meals they deserve.

It was so empowering to be able to make actual decisions in FPP. I feel that as young people, sometimes it doesn’t feel like we can make a tangible impact on our world. But being able to raise money, make decisions on how to donate it, and volunteer our time and efforts into our own community, and even go back and see how our support can create immediate impact for others, is a great privilege. FPP really is like the first taste of adult privilege and responsibility. We all have our dreams and passions, and being a part of FPP definitely encouraged me to keep chasing mine, even if at times they seemed too far away. It also taught me that anyone can make a lasting impact and there are many ways to be philanthropic (remember the three pillars)! I still haven’t heard of anything remotely related to FPP when I compare my high school experience to those of my friends.

I graduated from Western Illinois University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration and a minor in Dance in May 2020. College opened my eyes to another world of service. After I joined the philanthropy committee striving to benefit our foundation and ensure children have the proper school supplies they need to excel each school year.

I’m currently residing back in River Forest at my second home. I am working at Maywood Fine Arts, where I was a young student and then later helped fund as an FPP member. We provide quality and affordable arts education for the Maywood and surrounding communities. My job title might be the Office Coordinator, but I’m simply more than that. I’m a mentor, counselor, advocate, and much more for our youth.

Recently, I spent a week and a half helping a friend who’s living in Florida who was affected by Hurricane Ian. FPP has taught me there’s various forms of philanthropy and I encourage current members to explore all routes. For me, I love to give back to the community hands on. Whether it is flying down to help a friend in need or giving back to the arts organization that’s helped me become who I am today. I love to give back and inspire our youth to become leaders and reach for the stars.

In May of 2022, I graduated from Fordham University with a degree in Humanitarian Studies and minors in Psychology and Irish Studies. I had begun looking for jobs within New York City in the non-profit sector in February and was coming up empty handed time and time again. Beginning in September of 2021, I was watching my peers announce they had secured after graduation jobs on LinkedIn, but I had chosen a sector that was unlikely to hire in advance, leaving me feeling uncertain of my future.

In the late spring, my efforts were starting to pay off and I began as a Strategic Events Assistant for the Office of Development at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in late July after a much needed family vacation in Colorado. In my position I support and contribute to the external fundraising and stewardship events that are hosted by the Office of Development. On average, our department of five people puts on 80 some events every year, including Board of Advisor meetings, galas, and lectures.

These all contribute to raising money and awareness for the Medical Center and School’s accomplishments, research, and students. For example, a few weeks ago we hosted a benefit to raise money for the Transplant Forum here at Columbia which funds research into much needed advancements in the world of major organ transplantations. A few weeks before that we hosted the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeon’s Legacy Dinner which honors scholarship recipients and donors to those funds. At the majority of our events, we
make sure to feature real stories from real people as well as educational material to help our donors and attendees become more connected to the cause (and possibly consider donating...).

At these events, and in the periods leading up to them, I rely on foundational skills that I learned in FPP – donor relations, fundraising mindsets, logistical management and many more.

As Joe Smith likes to remind me, when I was a senior, I (unplanned) got up on a chair in the middle of our FPP Silent Auction and shared my story and relationship with FPP and encouraged the attendees to consider donating so that more teenagers like me could feel heard, seen and appreciated for their voices and talents. I like to think that that very moment helped me realize that I am where I should be today. I am proud to be part of the progress that CUIMC is pushing for, and I am so grateful to my mentors at FPP for helping me establish a foundation to build upon in my career.

Alyssa Mandell, FPP ’18

My experience with the Future Philanthropists Program, as well as professionally, was and has been shaped by the interactions and relationships originating at the site visits to local nonprofit organizations. I believe that having the chance to witness the drive behind these organizations and the people they were made up of, matched by implemented programs and other various efforts to positively impact the targeted communities, could be considered the glue of the FPP.

It offers like-minded high schoolers insight and creates an opportunity to expand their understanding of the importance of supporting others. This has propelled me into my professional work, which has involved providing that support and helping give people the necessary tools for them to be successful and independent. The opportunities of this program have guided me down a path of creating, maintaining, and strengthening connections.

FPP is now on LinkedIn!
https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12709081/

Join Today...Start Networking
Alexandra Sossa, Executive Director of FLAP, approached FPP with the urgent need for Chromebook tablets for low-income Latinx youth living in Berwyn, Cicero, Austin and other surrounding communities who could not afford to participate in the virtual learning environment necessary during the pandemic.

Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project

In May 2022, FPP students awarded a $6,000 grant to the Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project to support low-income Latinx youth.

The mission of the Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP) is to improve the working conditions for low-income immigrant workers and families. They specifically work with industries associated with lawn care and landscaping, food harvesting, cannery, greenhouse, poultry, nursery, and restaurant businesses. It accomplishes its mission by providing community outreach, legal education, services to prevent human labor trafficking, and pro bono legal defense to stop family separations by helping immigrants secure dual citizenship for the children.

Latinx parents who experienced oppression in their home countries understand that education for their children is a way out of generational poverty. As member of the working poor, Latinx immigrant workers toil 12-14 hours a day, doing work others do not want to do, in hopes that their children will not suffer the same deprivations they have. Low-income Latinx children are generally at a disadvantage when it comes to learning given that many parents are themselves not educated.

When schools shuttered during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, it exposed the fact that many low-income households were not set up for virtual learning. FLAP knew that if it didn’t do something to help these households adapt to technology-driven learning that the children could fall way behind.

Alexandra Sossa, Executive Director of FLAP, reached out to FPP requesting to be considered for a grant that would help them address this problem. In their application, FLAP described the urgent need for Chromebook tablets for low-income Latinx youth living in Berwyn, Cicero, Austin, and other surrounding communities. In these areas, families often cannot afford e-learning materials, many schools do not allow students to take their classroom tablets home and, even when home Wifi is available, households do not have enough tablets to allow each child to work independently.

In addition to the Chromebooks, the request included funding to train high school-age students to actively pursue social justice for immigrants by becoming trained Community Navigators. Community Navigators are the eyes and ears of the community for the purpose of helping those who have been exploited or discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity, or economic status. Providing teens with working knowledge about immigration law, social services, public service, and nonprofit resources management can lead to important social advocacy efforts led by student volunteers. By identifying felt needs in the community and referring families to professional personnel at FLAP, these teen Community Navigators provide an incredibly important service and engage in often career-changing experiences.

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

– Barack Obama

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FPP Alumni Join TPI Board

The Board of Directors of Three Pillars Initiative announced recently that 3 FPP alumni have been elected to the national board: John Burns, FPP '12, Peyton Olszowka, FPP '18 and Gavin Sorensen, FPP '16. They joined other FPP alumni who are currently serving on the Board: Grace Derks, FPP '18; Maggie Healy, FPP '15; Charlie Lemke-Bell, FPP '19; Maille O’Connell, FPP '15; Sydney Rayburn, FPP '18; and Fran Reckers, FPP '14. In total, 60% of the national TPI governing board membership is represented by FPP alumni.

Three Pillars Initiative was established in 2018 for the purpose of taking the FPP model of youth philanthropy education to national scale. At this time, similar programs have been launched in Grand Island, NE; Beckley, WV; Buffalo, NY; Houston, TX; Hamilton, NE; and Wausau, WI. More locally, new affiliate programs have launched in St. Charles, Elmhurst, and the North Shore.

Joeisms

People work for one of two reasons: to make money, or to make a difference. Beware of people who are working for neither.

“A man who stands for nothing will fall for anything.”
– Oscar Wilde

This issue’s Joeism article is more targeted to our FPP Alumni. It is my hope that these insights are worth the reading time of the other audiences I endeavor to serve.

As you have begun your professional lives, you have moved away from the structure of the educational system, you have become responsible for your own economics now and in the future. You are doing so in a time where uncertainty is a growth industry and having patience is more than a challenge; it is a vocation. That is not a terrible thing.

The Latin root of the word vocation is vocatio. It means a calling or a summons. Placed into the context of the business world, it is an occupation to which a person is especially drawn or for which they are suited, trained or qualified. A vocation is the intersection of efficiency and passion, tempered by the other things and people in your life that are important. A vocation is what puts the real in reality.

The good news is that you can live your life with a vocational sense, and the ability to make money and to make a difference remain viable options. You have already had some exposure to that combination from your FPP experience. Remember the money you made for the program by your fund-raising efforts and the way those grant funds continue to make the positive difference in our community. You are on the right path. Strive to stay there.

We will always be your Mentors.

“If you love the hell out of what you do, you are usually pretty good at it.”
– Chuck Yeager (first pilot to break the sound barrier)
Total U.S. giving continues its upward climb...

Total Giving
1981-2021
(in billions of dollars)

Total giving reached $484.85 billion in 2021, a 4.0 percent increase in current dollars.

...but individuals continue to give less than 2% of their income.

Individual Giving as a Percentage of Disposable Personal Income
1981-2021
(in current dollars)

In 2021, disposable personal income increased 6.1 percent in current dollars from 2020, or 1.3 percent adjusted for inflation. This compares with 4.9 percent growth in individual giving between 2020 and 2021, or flat growth of 0.2 percent adjusted for inflation.

Source: Published by Giving USA; researched and written by IU/IPUI Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.