



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**ADVANCING THE HOTEL INDUSTRY,  
ONE CAREER AT A TIME.**



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# Letter from the President

Dear Friends of the AHLA Foundation,

At its heart, the hospitality industry is about people – their dreams, their potential, and their dedication to serving others. Through the AHLA Foundation, over its 75+ year history, we've witnessed thousands of individuals discover meaningful careers that allow them to build better lives for themselves and their families. Each success story represents a ripple effect that advances our industry and strengthens communities.

Our vision of creating opportunity knows no bounds. The AHLA Foundation remains steadfast in our commitment to ensuring the hotel industry is a place of access and opportunity for all. We believe that everyone deserves a chance to experience the unique rewards of a hospitality career, to grow professionally, and to achieve their dreams. This belief drives everything we do at the Foundation, from attracting and inspiring newcomers, to supporting the growth and advancement of seasoned professionals, to combating human trafficking and celebrating women in the hospitality industry.

None of this would be possible without you – our donors, strategic industry partners, allies and champions who share a passion and

commitment for nurturing talent and fostering excellence in hospitality. Your generosity has enabled us to reach more individuals, create more opportunities, and make a far-reaching impact in 2024.

Today, our industry continues to face a significant labor shortage, with more than 1 million open positions nationwide. To address this, we will remain focused on expanding career pathways for untapped talent, ensuring that anyone who wants to build a career in hospitality has resources and opportunities to do so.

The AHLA Foundation plays a critical role supporting individuals at every stage of their hospitality journey - from recruitment to retention to career growth. Through scholarships, apprenticeships, mentorship, and leadership development programs, we are ensuring that anyone, regardless of background, can thrive in this industry.

Thank you for your support. It makes every success story possible, and your continued partnership will help us create countless more opportunities for our people and advance our great industry in the years to follow.

With deepest appreciation,

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**Julienne Smith**

2024 Chair of the Board of Trustees  
AHLA Foundation

**Kevin F. Carey**

AHLA Foundation CEO & President

# Why Workforce Development Matters

**W**hen you think of the hotel industry, you might first picture buildings, beds, and amenities. But at its heart, the hotel industry is powered by people – more than 8 million individuals who transform spaces into experiences through their dedication to exceptional service. From front desk agents who welcome weary travelers with a warm smile, to housekeepers who ensure comfort and cleanliness, to culinary teams who create memorable dining experiences, it's our workforce that brings hospitality to life. These professionals don't just fill jobs; they create moments, solve problems, and build relationships that define the guest experience. This human element is why the AHLA Foundation focuses on investing in people – because we know that while buildings provide the stage, it's our workforce that makes hospitality happen.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to inspire, support, and elevate all who work to advance the hotel industry and create opportunities for the workforce to reflect the communities it serves.



Hotels are powerful economic engines, driving growth that extends far beyond their walls – supporting a vast ecosystem of tourism, transportation, entertainment, and local services throughout their communities.

The hotel industry thrives when its people thrive. Through the AHLA Foundation, we're not just addressing workforce challenges – we're creating a powerful cycle of success. When we invest in our people, personal growth empowers industry excellence, invested employees become inspiring leaders, and the pursuit of opportunity creates lasting careers in hospitality.

Every scholarship we award, every training program we fund, and every career pathway we provide strengthens both individual futures and our industry's promise.





### INVESTING IN FUTURE LEADERS

Education remains one of our most powerful tools for developing tomorrow's industry leaders. In 2024, we invested **nearly \$1 million in scholarships**, supporting 360 students across more than 80 institutions. Our expanded **HBCU Travel Scholarship program** reached a record **63 participants across six historically Black colleges and universities**, reflecting our commitment to building a diverse leadership pipeline. These scholarships do more than fund education – they create connections to industry mentors, provide networking opportunities, and offer professional development resources that help students transition successfully into hospitality careers.

### COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS: OPENING DOORS TO OPPORTUNITY

The first step in building a strong workforce is introducing talented individuals to the possibilities of hospitality careers. Many of tomorrow's industry leaders haven't yet discovered the potential of a hospitality career. In 2024, our **Empowering Youth Program (EYP)** – with the help of a grant from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation – helped **over 200 individuals across Los Angeles, Orlando, and Austin** discover hospitality careers. Each participant represents not just a job filled, but a career launched, and a life potentially transformed.

# Our Work



## RETENTION

### BUILDING CAREERS, NOT JUST JOBS

Employee turnover costs the hotel industry billions annually, but the real cost goes beyond finances. When experienced employees leave, we lose institutional knowledge, guest relationships, and team cohesion. AHLA Foundation was **recognized by the Department of Labor in 2024** as an Apprenticeship Ambassador for our role in addressing this challenge head-on. By enrolling **400 new apprentices (through 18 employers)** in 2024 and reaching **over 2,000 total participants across 86 employers** in our Registered Apprenticeship program, we're showing employees that they don't need to leave to grow. Each apprentice who advances represents both cost savings for their employer and a strengthened industry talent pipeline. This program's success lies in its practical approach to career advancement. Apprentices earn while they learn, gaining new skills without leaving their current roles. Our apprenticeship program has three tracks: **Manager, Hotel Cook, and Maintenance Employee**. The program's expansion to include Maintenance Employee certification, which celebrated its first graduates in 2024, demonstrates our ability to adapt to industry needs while creating new advancement pathways.

### START HERE, GROW ANYWHERE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A STRATEGY

The Foundation's **Professional Development scholarship** offers qualified employees access to earn **over 20 different industry certifications** that help retain and advance the workforce. Through the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, these certifications cover everything from entry level and department head skills to executive level certifications. In 2024, as a result of a concerted effort to market and promote scholarship options, the Foundation awarded 377 individual scholarships, a significant increase from prior years.



"This AHLA [Foundation] apprenticeship has changed my life in multiple ways. It has given me the opportunity to learn, more in depth, about the hospitality industry. I have grown as a leader and further built relationships with departments and department heads that I did not have before. The online courses were great learning opportunities, and in some cases, reminders of things I have learned about all aspects of the industry."

**Savannah Thomas,**  
**Remington Hotels**

# Uniting the Hotel Industry Against Human Trafficking

The AHLA Foundation's **No Room for Trafficking (NRFT)** initiative represents the hotel industry's comprehensive commitment to combat human trafficking and support survivors. NRFT raises awareness the prevalence of human trafficking's while positioning the hotel industry as a leader in private sector solutions. In 2024, NRFT **trained over 308,400 industry professionals** to recognize and report suspected instances of human trafficking, which is about a **20% increase from 2023**. Since the beginning of the NRFT initiative, the anti-trafficking training – developed by Marriott and administered by PACT – has been completed more than 2 million times, bringing our cumulative total to **2.2 million** since the inception of this initiative. The Foundation attended nine forums where leaders gathered to share best practices and track progress toward eradicating human trafficking in the hotel industry.

Through its groundbreaking **NRFT Survivor Fund** – the first of its kind in hospitality – NRFT provides direct support to community-based organizations that help trafficking survivors rebuild their lives. The **650 survivors** supported through our Survivor Fund show how the industry can come together to disrupt human trafficking, equipping individuals with meaningful employment opportunities to protect vulnerabilities.

## NRFT SUMMIT

The AHLA Foundation's No Room for Trafficking Summit brings together hoteliers, survivors, and cross-industry partners in a powerful demonstration of our industry's united commitment to combat human trafficking. Through expert panels and the sharing of best practices, participants strengthen their knowledge and capabilities while forging stronger networks for prevention and response. The Summit exemplifies how the hotel industry is taking a leadership role in addressing this critical issue, working across sectors to strengthen the industry's comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to human trafficking.





# NRFT Survivor Fund Grantees



## 2024-2025 NRFT SURVIVOR FUND GRANTEES



## MICROGRANTS

In addition to the Survivor Fund awards to community-based organizations that provide direct services to survivors, AHLA Foundation also awarded **10 microgrants in 2024** for specific material purchases to organizations that support the development, empowerment, and economic independence of survivors.





# Paying It ForWard

## ADVANCEMENT

**T**he AHLA Foundation's ForWard initiative is transforming the landscape of hospitality leadership through strategic investment in women's professional growth. In addition to the inspiring ForWard Conference and ForWard regional events, the ForWard initiative includes:



### **BUILD Leadership Practicum**



### **ELEVATE Leadership Practicum**



### **ForWard Network**



### **Peggy Berg Castell Award**



Photo L-R: Elizabeth "Liz" Wolff, Anna Blue, Sheila Johnson, Harry Javer

The **Peggy Berg Castell Award** recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to elevating and advancing women in the hospitality industry. **Sheila Johnson, CEO and Founder of Salamander Collection**, received the Peggy Berg Castell Award at The Lodging Conference 2024.

"I am honored to be a recipient of the Peggy Berg Castell Award and to be recognized in our industry as a champion for women. I share this award with my entire team of dedicated professionals who also share my values," said Sheila Johnson.

# Night of a Thousand Stars

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The AHLA Foundation's signature Night of a Thousand Stars gala stands as a testament to the brilliance of hospitality's brightest talents. This annual celebration brings together hundreds of industry leaders to honor remarkable individuals at the property level who exemplify the spirit of hospitality, while raising crucial funds for workforce development initiatives that shape the future of hospitality.

Through four distinguished **Stars of the Industry awards**, we recognize the diverse talent that drives our industry forward: rising stars under 30 who bring fresh energy and innovation, promising students who represent hospitality's next generation, women leaders who create pathways for others to succeed, and outstanding employees who demonstrate extraordinary dedication to service. The 2024 event raised nearly \$1 million to support AHLA Foundation initiatives aimed at strengthening industry's workforce.

Photo L-R: 2024 Foundation Scholar of the Year Olivia Cannella; 2024 AHLA Foundation ForWard: Paving the Way Award winner Lina Patel; 2024 North Star Award winner Colby Bracy; 2024 Stevan Porter Emerging Hospitality Leader of the Year Adrian Adriano III





# ForWard Conference & Regional Events

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The AHLA Foundation's ForWard Conference is a transformative gathering that celebrates and empowers women leaders in hospitality. The **signature 2-day event** brings together industry changemakers for inspiring keynotes, dynamic workshops, and meaningful networking.

**ForWard Regional events localize the experience of the ForWard Conference** by bringing ForWard's energizing blend of professional development, mentorship, and community-building to key markets – expanding our reach and ensuring more women in hospitality can access the tools, networks, and inspiration to advance their careers and lead our industry forward. In 2024, the ForWard Conference brought together **884 professionals** for high-impact learning and networking. The six regional events – hosted in Atlanta, GA; Columbus, OH; Washington, DC; Chicago, IL; Las Vegas, NV; and Orange County, CA – extended these opportunities to **540** additional participants.



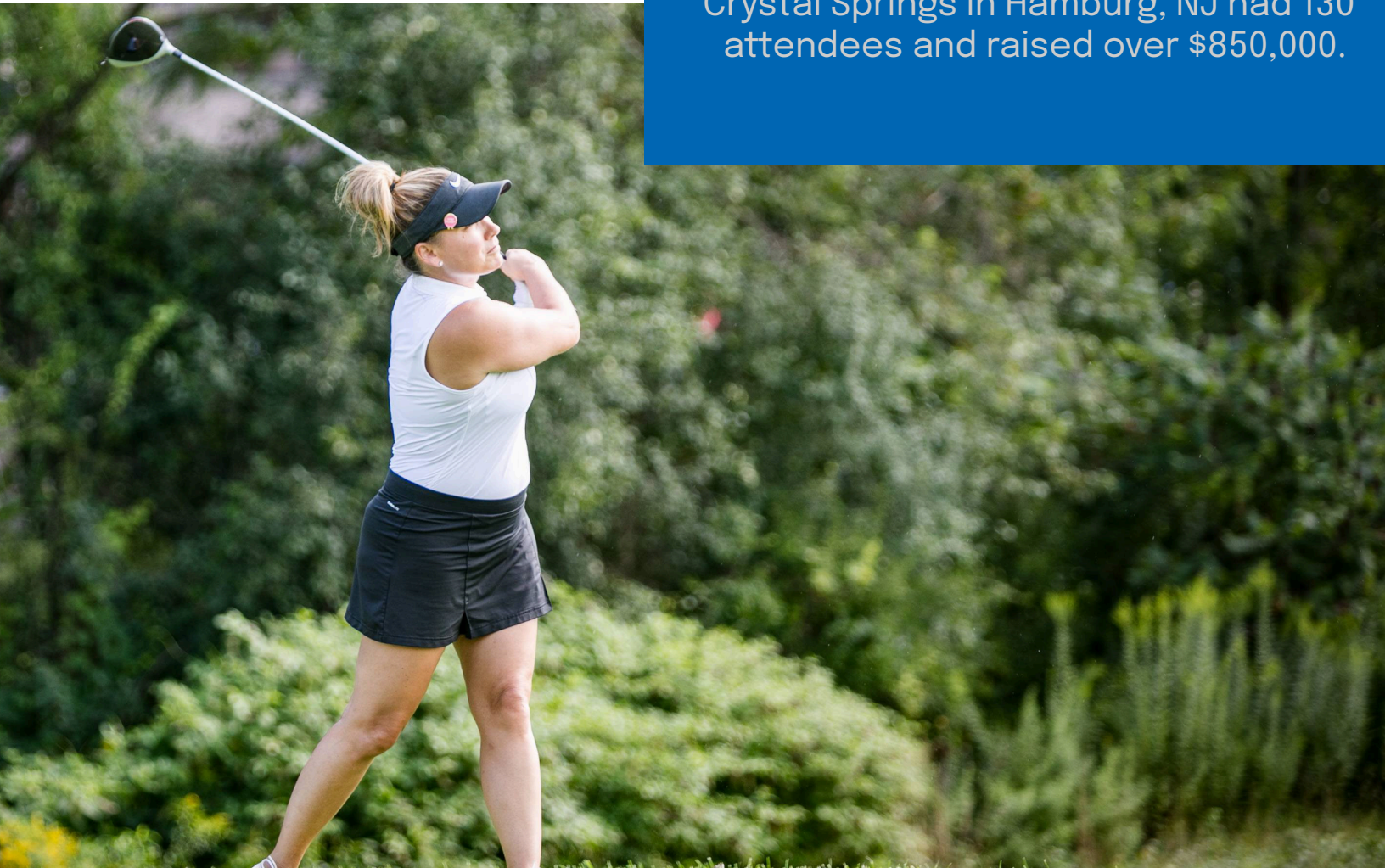


# OFFSITE

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The Classic – **AHLA Foundation's second largest fundraising event** – is an annual golf tournament and social activity event designed to bring together hoteliers and suppliers, golfers and non-golfers alike. OFF-SITE offers powerful networking opportunities to connect on and off the course with key brands, management companies, ownership groups, and industry leaders all while supporting the Foundation's mission and programs.

The 2024 OFF-SITE: The Classic at Crystal Springs in Hamburg, NJ had 130 attendees and raised over \$850,000.







# SPONSORS & DONORS

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◆◆◆◆◆ FIVE DIAMOND \$250,000 and above



THE J. WILLARD AND ALICE S.  
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◆◆◆◆ FOUR DIAMOND \$100,000 - \$249,999



◆◆◆ THREE DIAMOND \$50,000– \$99,999



◆◆ TWO DIAMOND \$25,000– \$49,999

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Avendra International	G6 Hospitality Franchising	MAX HBO
Best Western International	HEI Hotels & Resorts	Nareit Foundation
Jon and Ellen Bortz	Hilton	NewGen Advisory
CBRE Hotels	Highgate Hotels	RDI-USA
Corning	Host Hotels & Resorts	Rockbridge Capital
Crescent Hotels & Resorts	Kevin Jacobs	Standard Textile Co.
Davidson Hospitality Group	Justin Knight	Vision Hospitality Group

◆ ONE DIAMOND \$10,000– \$24,999

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- Scott Trebilco
- Jonathan Wang
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**SILVER \$1000 - \$4999**

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- Arash Azarbarzin
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- Suraj Bhakta
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- The Broadmoor Hotel
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- Adrian Adriano
- Sherry Akins
- Katie Allen
- Jason Altberger
- Cory Ambrose
- American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- Sachin Amin
- Anonymous
- Bret Arriola
- Donna Arthur
- Younes Atallah
- Stephanie Atkisson
- David Attardi
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- Madison Austrich

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- Jason Ballard
- Leena Baran
- Alyssa Barnes
- Amy Bayer
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- Lysie Bennett
- Scott Berman
- Troy Berns
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- Vipul Dayal
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- Lynn Denton

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**The list is reflective of gifts/commitments received in 2024 and does not reflect commitments made for 2025. Donors to the NRFT Survivor Fund are denoted with an asterisk. AHLA Premier Partner contributions are indicated with a P.**