



LEADERSHIP LEDGER

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IN THIS ISSUE

2026 Alumni
Gala Honorees

Remembering
T. Rogers Wade

2026 Alumni
Homecoming Weekend



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

CAMILA KNOWLES

CHAIRMAN, LEADERSHIP GEORGIA

Happy Summer! 'Tis the season for beach reads, summer baseball, sunscreen, and ... **Leadership Georgia dues!**

Your membership and the dues that support it, play a vital role in making our programs, events, and outreach possible. Being a dues-paying alumni has its benefits. Some, like receiving a hard copy of the LG directory, are tangible. Others are less tangible. The less tangible benefits include knowing that you are staying connected to and supporting an organization that is making a real difference in the lives of our participants and in the communities from which they come.

This year, annual dues are \$200 per household. Dues are used to sustain alumni programming and fund organizational operations so that each year Leadership Georgia can continue to fulfill its mission of preparing strong and effective leaders for the future development of this state. We ask that you pay your annual dues on or before September 1st.

In addition to paying dues, we also encourage you to consider becoming a **Fanning Fellow**, which consists of a \$1,000 contribution to the LG endowment.

You can pay your dues online or you can email director@leadershipgeorgia.org if you'd like to receive an invoice. I am grateful for your ongoing commitment and proud to have each of you as part of our community.



PAY YOUR DUES



Scan to pay dues

Stay connected. Stay engaged. Support
the future of Leadership Georgia.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

CHANDRA HARRIS

PRESIDENT, LEADERSHIP GEORGIA

While summer's in full swing, preparations are underway for **Leadership Georgia's Sixteenth Annual Alumni Awards Gala**. This year's celebration, ***Where Legacy Takes Flight***, will take place on Saturday, November 14 at the inspiring Delta Flight Museum in Atlanta and promises to be a memorable evening of connection, recognition, and celebration.

Our annual gala is more than a reunion of classmates and friends. It's an opportunity to honor leaders whose service and impact reflect the very best of Georgia. In this issue of *The Ledger*, you'll meet our 2026 award recipients and learn more about the remarkable ways they are strengthening communities and advancing our state.

Tickets for the gala go on sale July 7th and are \$300 per person or \$500 per couple.

As the culmination of another outstanding year of Leadership Georgia class and alumni programming, the gala is a special opportunity to gather as a community, celebrate our award honorees, and reflect on the legacy we continue to build together. I look forward to seeing you there.

LEADERSHIP GEORGIA ALUMNI AWARDS GALA

WHERE LEGACY TAKES FLIGHT

— at the —

DELTA FLIGHT MUSEUM
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2026

The Spirit of DELTA

TICKETS ON SALE NOW:

LEADERSHIP GEORGIA HONORS FIVE LEADERS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GEORGIA

Every year, Leadership Georgia recognizes individuals whose leadership extends beyond titles and professions; leaders whose influence can be felt in communities, classrooms, boardrooms and across generations of Georgians.

This year, Leadership Georgia will honor five distinguished leaders during the 2026 Leadership Georgia Alumni Gala on November 14, recognizing their extraordinary contributions to business, public service, philanthropy, higher education and community impact throughout the state.

The 2026 honorees represent the spirit of Leadership Georgia: collaborative leadership rooted in service, innovation and a deep commitment to strengthening Georgia.

“These honorees represent the very best of Leadership Georgia,” said Leadership Georgia Board of Trustees Chairman Camila Knowles. “Their influence extends far beyond their professions or hometowns. Through mentorship, innovation, civic engagement and servant leadership, they have created lasting impact across Georgia and inspired others to lead with purpose.”

A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE



William “Dink” NeSmith
Class of 1983
Smithonia Community

Receiving Leadership Georgia’s **J.W. Fanning Award**, is **William “Dink” NeSmith**, co-owner of Community Newspapers, Inc.

Named after one of Leadership Georgia’s founders, the award recognizes a Georgian whose contributions through leadership and service have transformed communities across the state. NeSmith’s legacy of philanthropy, economic leadership and civic engagement has left a lasting imprint on Georgia communities large and small. His commitment to collaboration and statewide progress reflects the very ideals upon which Leadership Georgia was founded.

For more than two decades, **Vann Parrott** has helped shape Leadership Georgia itself.

Parrott, recipient of the **Frederick B. Kerr Service Award**, has served the organization in numerous leadership roles, including program chair, trustee, and president. His dedication to cultivating leaders in southwest Georgia and strengthening connections across communities has made him one of the organization’s most respected and enduring servant leaders.



Vann Parrott
Class of 2007
Thomasville, GA

Known for his steady leadership and institutional knowledge, Parrott’s influence can be felt throughout Leadership Georgia’s history and future.

LEADERSHIP ROOTED IN COMMUNITY



Jay Bailey
Class of 2015
Atlanta, GA

The **E. Dale Threadgill Community Service Award** will be presented to **Jay Bailey**, President and CEO of the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs.

Bailey's work has centered on expanding economic opportunity, workforce development and entrepreneurship throughout Georgia. Widely respected as both a business and civic leader, he has championed pathways for growth while helping bridge the gap between business leadership and meaningful community impact.

His leadership reflects Leadership Georgia's longstanding belief that strong communities are built through intentional, people-centered leadership.

The **Judge Horace J. Johnson, Jr. and Michelle Bryant Johnson Distinguished Public Service Award** recognizes **Kathryn Dennis** for her exceptional commitment to public service and community leadership.

As president of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Dennis has helped expand support for education, healthcare and nonprofit initiatives across the region. A dedicated Leadership Georgia alumna and supporter, she has consistently invested her time, leadership and expertise into strengthening both the organization and the communities it serves.

Her work exemplifies leadership grounded in collaboration, mentorship and long-term community impact.



Kathryn Dennis
Class of 1998
Macon, GA

INVESTING IN GEORGIA'S FUTURE LEADERS



Jere Morehead
Athens, GA

Leadership Georgia will also honor **Jere Morehead** with the **H.G. "Pat" Patillo Honorary Membership Award**.

Presented to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional support for Leadership Georgia despite not participating in the program themselves, the award recognizes Morehead's longstanding commitment to leadership development, civic engagement and higher education across Georgia.

As president of the University of Georgia, Morehead has helped strengthen Leadership Georgia's connection to one of the state's leading institutions while encouraging future generations of leaders to engage deeply in their communities and across the state.

THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS: REMEMBERING T. ROGERS WADE

T. Rogers Wade never wanted to be the center of attention. In fact, he did not like to be “fussed over.” Yet, for those of us fortunate enough to know him, mentor under him, learn from him, and love him, it feels impossible not to pause and honor a man whose quiet leadership shaped generations across Georgia.

For many Georgians, Wade’s legacy can be measured through the institutions he strengthened and the leaders he influenced. As one of the four founders of Leadership Georgia in 1972, he helped create a program designed to bring together emerging leaders from every corner of the state to build relationships, deepen understanding, and return home committed to serving their communities.



While Rogers helped shape institutions and influence leaders across Georgia, those closest to him remember something more personal. His greatest impact was found in relationships, through conversations, handwritten notes, thoughtful introductions, and wisdom quietly shared across a dinner table or long drive home.

He often reminded Leadership Georgia participants that the organization was never about “accoutrements and fru fru.” It was about people learning from one another, building trust across differences, and strengthening Georgia together. “Relationships, relationships, relationships,” he would say.

Over more than five decades, Rogers became one of Georgia’s most respected civic leaders, though he would likely cringe at hearing himself described that way. He served as chief of staff to U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge, advised governors and business leaders, led the Georgia Public Policy Foundation, served on the Board of Regents, and played pivotal roles in preserving Georgia’s military and economic strength.

Yet he cared far more about making Georgia better than making his own name bigger. In a world where leadership is often measured by visibility and volume, Rogers demonstrated the enduring power of humility, wisdom, kindness, and steady influence.

Even while navigating Georgia’s highest political and civic circles, Rogers remained deeply personal and deeply human. He loved good meals, good books, duck hunting, the University of Georgia, and long conversations with friends. He had a dry wit and gentle humor that instantly put people at ease. Even his well-known resistance to doctors’ advice about dessert became part of the lore that endeared him to so many.

During Alumni Homecoming Weekend, surrounded by generations of Leadership Georgia alumni, it felt especially fitting to reflect on Rogers' enduring influence.

Leadership Georgia was never just a program to him. It was a living example of what Georgia could become when people chose connection over division and service over self-interest. As Teresa MacCartney (LG '15) shared during the Alumni Weekend Tribute, "When Rogers Wade spoke, people stopped what they were doing and leaned in to hear the wisdom. He did not command attention. He earned it."



His godson, Jay Neely (LG '06), spent much of his life watching others seek Rogers' counsel, admire his judgment, and benefit from his generosity. Reflecting on that example, Jay shared, "What I realize now is that Rogers never simply taught leadership. He modeled it. Quietly. Consistently. Faithfully."



Rogers Wade's legacy lives on not only in Leadership Georgia, but in every community, boardroom, classroom, and friendship shaped by those he encouraged along the way.

And though he never wanted to be fussed over, Georgia will continue to do exactly that for generations to come because leaders like Rogers Wade are rare, and the legacy he leaves behind is far too meaningful to quietly pass by.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES RENAMES SCHOLARSHIP FUND



When Marcia Bryan Wade passed away in 2017, Leadership Georgia honored one of its earliest champions by establishing the Marcia B. Wade Scholarship Fund. As the wife of founder Rogers Wade, Marcia played a meaningful role in the creation and launch of what would become Georgia's premier leadership development program. Her belief in Leadership Georgia's mission never wavered, and her support remained steadfast throughout her life.

In 2026, the Leadership Georgia Board of Trustees voted unanimously to rename the fund the Rogers and Marcia B. Wade Tuition Assistance Scholarship, recognizing the lasting contributions of both Marcia and Rogers Wade. Announced during Alumni Homecoming Weekend, the change honors the partnership, vision, and commitment to developing leaders that helped shape Leadership Georgia from its earliest days.

ALUMNI HOMECOMING WEEKEND CELEBRATES LEADERSHIP GEORGIA'S ENDURING LEGACY

There's something special about coming home to Leadership Georgia.

This year's Alumni Weekend in Athens carried particular significance as alumni from across the state gathered in one of the cities most deeply connected to the organization's beginnings.

Several of Leadership Georgia's founding leaders helped shape the organization's vision in Athens, making it a fitting backdrop for a weekend centered on homecoming, legacy, and lifelong connection.

The weekend officially began Friday afternoon as alumni arrived in Athens, checked in, and reconnected with classmates, friends, and fellow leaders from across the state. The energy was immediately evident as attendees gathered, many picking up conversations exactly where they had left off months, or even years, earlier.

That evening, alumni filled the historic Georgia Theatre for a welcome celebration that set the tone for the weekend ahead. Against the backdrop of one of Athens' most iconic venues, attendees shared stories, renewed friendships, and welcomed newer alumni into a community that spans generations. The evening served as a reminder that while Leadership Georgia programs may last only a year, the relationships formed through the experience often last a lifetime.



On Saturday, alumni had multiple opportunities to connect through activities designed to bring people together in both familiar and unexpected ways.

Mahjong & Mingle offered a relaxed atmosphere where experienced players taught newcomers, conversations flowed easily, and laughter could be heard throughout the room. More than a game, the event created space for meaningful interaction and relationship-building, reflecting the spirit of curiosity and connection that has long defined the Leadership Georgia network.



For those looking for a little friendly competition, The Social Serve Pickleball Tournament delivered. Alumni of all skill levels took to the courts, cheering one another on and embracing the camaraderie that comes from shared experiences. Whether competing for bragging rights or simply enjoying time together, participants demonstrated the same collaborative spirit that has connected Leadership Georgia classes for decades.



LG PLAY: INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

While alumni spent the weekend reconnecting with friends and classmates, the next generation of Georgia leaders was busy creating memories—and discovering their own potential.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, LG Play delivered one of its most successful programs to date, welcoming the children of Leadership Georgia alumni for a weekend filled with creativity, exploration, and hands-on learning. The milestone year reflected not only the growth of the program itself, but also Leadership Georgia's ongoing commitment to investing in future generations of leaders.



The weekend kicked off Friday evening with *A Night at the Gym*, a high-energy, circus-themed experience that immediately immersed participants in the spirit of fun, teamwork, and discovery. The gymnasium was transformed into an interactive playground where children moved between activities designed to spark imagination and encourage participation.





Saturday morning brought *Innovation Under the Big Top*, a STEAM-focused experience that encouraged participants to think creatively, solve problems, and explore new ideas. Inspired by the wonder and curiosity of the circus theme, children rotated through hands-on activities and demonstrations designed to make learning engaging and accessible.

From science experiments and engineering challenges to interactive presentations and creative projects, participants were encouraged to ask questions, test ideas, and work together to discover solutions.

The weekend concluded with *Sing for Your Snacks*, a lively showcase that brought participants and families together to celebrate the energy, creativity, and accomplishments of the weekend. As children took center stage, families witnessed firsthand the confidence, enthusiasm, and friendships that had developed over the course of the program.

For LG Play Program Chairs Susannah and Tripp Maddux, the weekend represented much more than a series of activities. It was an opportunity to invest in the next generation of Georgians while creating an experience that balanced learning, leadership, and fun.

Ten years after its founding, LG Play continues to embody the spirit of Leadership Georgia. By creating opportunities for children to learn, collaborate, and grow, the program extends Leadership Georgia's legacy beyond alumni and into the next generation—ensuring that the values of curiosity, service, leadership, and community continue to inspire Georgia's future leaders for years to come.





The weekend culminated with the Alumni Homecoming Celebration at the Foundry Pavilion, where alumni gathered to honor Leadership Georgia's enduring impact across the state.

A particularly meaningful moment included a tribute to founding member Rogers Wade, whose vision and leadership helped establish the foundation for what Leadership Georgia has become today.

Reflecting on the weekend, Leadership Georgia President Chandra Harris shared, "What made this Homecoming so meaningful was seeing alumni from every generation reconnect through shared experiences, memories, and an unwavering commitment to Georgia. The weekend was a powerful reminder that Leadership Georgia's greatest strength has always been the relationships built along the way."

For many attendees, the weekend served as a reminder that Leadership Georgia is more than a professional network. It is a lifelong community rooted in service, leadership, and a shared commitment to strengthening Georgia.



As alumni departed Athens, one thing remained clear: while programs may end, the Leadership Georgia experience continues to connect leaders across generations, industries, and communities — always calling them back home.



INTRODUCING THE 2026 REGION ROCKSTARS

LEADING LOCAL. CONNECTING STATEWIDE.

The Region Rockstars program was created to strengthen alumni engagement and foster meaningful connections across Georgia. Selected by Leadership Georgia trustees, Region Rockstars serve as volunteer ambassadors within their regions, bringing alumni together through local gatherings, encouraging involvement in Leadership Georgia programs and initiatives, and helping strengthen a vibrant, connected network of more than 3,000 alumni. By leading local and connecting statewide, these dedicated volunteers help ensure the Leadership Georgia experience continues long after graduation.



Region 1

Eric & LaDonna Collins
Class of 2025



Region 2

Nick & Natalie Challen
Class of 2025



Region 3

Alex & Anne Harris
Class of 2025



Region 3

CJ & Kelli Stewart
Class of 2023



Region 3

Fred Hicks
Class of 2022



Region 3

Thomas & Frances Beusse
Class of 2024



Region 4

Barry & Kim Debrow
Class of 2023



Region 6

Tray & Marjie Roquemore
Class of 2023



Region 7

Steve & Anna Sanders
Class of 2023



Region 8

Shana Young
Class of 2019



Region 9

Kailey Dees
Class of 2018



Region 10

Orson & Jazz Burton
Class of 2025



Region 11

Claire Walton
Class of 2023



Region 12

Neilie Dunn
Class of 2024

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

Peach State Pride

LEADERSHIP GEORGIA COLLECTION



Peach State Pride is honored to collaborate with Leadership Georgia on an exclusive collection built for those who lead with purpose. From classic polos to versatile pullovers and everyday hoodies, each piece was thoughtfully designed to represent the strength, connection, and pride that define leaders across Georgia.

SCAN TO SHOP

