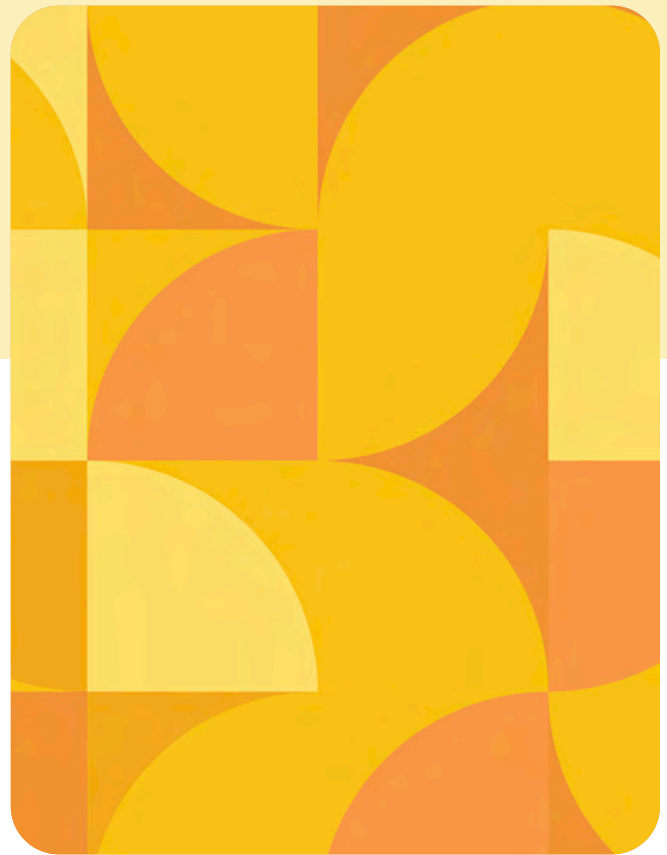


# We're Thinking Bigger

2024 Impact Report



**think**  
BIG for kids

We're  
thinking  
bigger.



#### Dear Friends and Supporters,

Together we are breaking the cycle of poverty for kids. Every young person deserves access to quality education and opportunities that build the confidence and skills to achieve their potential. Think Big for Kids provides middle and high school students in need with a three-pillar program to excel in today's workforce: Career Exploration, Mentorship, and Job Readiness and Training.

A staggering 40 percent of the population struggles to meet basic financial needs. Many working families earn above the poverty line but fall far short of what it takes to survive, let alone plan for their children's futures. That is why we reference the \*ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) framework as a true measure of economic vulnerability. Think Big offers a solution for these kids: a pathway to personal achievement and financial well-being.

#### Our Impact

This inaugural annual report, which includes highlights from the 2023-24 academic year, provides an opportunity to share the impact we are making in the lives of thousands of young people. Our programs have experienced significant growth, thanks to the incredible generosity and tireless efforts of our partners, donors and volunteers.

#### Connectivity to Kids

Every interaction with our kids informs how we invest in, deliver and measure Think Big's programmatic journey. We continue to seek new ways to meet the evolving needs of today's kids and to cultivate positive outcomes. We're developing a mobile app to make our programs more accessible and personalized for each student, and we look forward to launching it during the next academic year.

#### Regional Impact

Think Big started in Tampa Bay and has grown to include programming in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Greater Washington and New Jersey. We are deepening our impact in these regions by further expanding our program pillars to support even more students on their Think Big journey.

#### Partner & Volunteer Engagement

Our impact is made possible by a large network of non-profit organizations, community-minded companies and passionate individuals. Think Big partners represent diverse career paths, and our volunteers provide an invaluable source of support for our kids. As we continue to grow, we are actively recruiting additional partner companies, volunteers and mentors to ensure that every kid can benefit from our mission.

As we reflect on this past year, we are filled with gratitude for the unwavering support of our Think Big community. Our progress is a testament to the impact we can have when we work together and Think Bigger.



**Amy Alley**  
Executive Director



**Tony DiBenedetto**  
Founder and Board Chair

\*UnitedforALICE.org

Thank you to  
our Strategic  
Partners



A-LIGN



# Who We Are

Think Big for Kids is a national non-profit that partners with companies across numerous industries and likeminded organizations to provide the awareness, guidance and support young people need to set and achieve their post-graduation goals.

## Our Mission

We are breaking the cycle of poverty by preparing kids to excel in today's workforce.

## Unique Three-Pillars Program

- 1 Career Exploration
- 2 Mentorship
- 3 Job Readiness & Placement

## Programming in Six Regions

- Tampa Bay (headquarters)
- Atlanta
- Chicago
- Dallas
- New Jersey
- Greater Washington



**7,000**  
kids served since 2016

# Our Vision



## 2023-24 Academic Year Impact

**42**  
program sites

**365**  
career showcases & workshops

**82**  
scholarships awarded

**100+**  
corporate and affiliate partners

**400+**  
volunteers

**1665**  
kids participated in career exploration

PILLAR ONE

# Career Exploration



The first of Think Big's three-pillar approach, Career Exploration introduces middle schoolers to a wide variety of career paths. Designed to spark a passion in every student, our programming promotes self-discovery, confidence and empowerment to enter high school with a plan for success. From hands-on career showcases to workshops focused on soft-skills development, our volunteers deliver hope, excitement and endless possibilities to kids as they navigate the critical early teen years.

### Career Exploration Includes an Introduction to:

- Multiple industries
- Companies of all sizes
- Available jobs & roles
- Career paths from Tech to Trades
- Career & personality affinity
- Soft-skills development

### What Do the Kids Think?

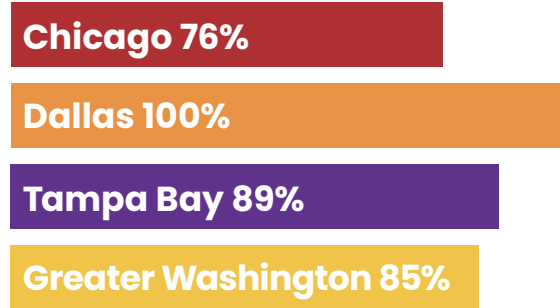
More than 1,665 kids across 42 sites in six regions participated in 365 career showcases and workshops during the 2023-24 academic year.

#### Enjoyed Career Showcases



Agreed that Think Big is helping them discover careers they find interesting

#### Would recommend Think Big to a friend



While you may hear about a shortage of skilled and trained cybersecurity professionals in the workforce, there is no shortage of young people who would like to be skilled and trained in cybersecurity if given the chance. At ReliaQuest, we know it is our responsibility to create those opportunities by raising awareness of the careers available in this dynamic field. We are proud of our partnership with Think Big for Kids and appreciate what this organization does to create a bright future for thousands of young people in our community."

KIM HILL, CHIEF OF STAFF AND HEAD OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS



### Power in Partnerships

Think Big forms Affiliate partnerships with other likeminded non-profit organizations that provide locations for our program that enable us to serve more kids.

"I'm impressed by how Think Big programs effectively engage students and expose them to a multitude of career opportunities. It's inspiring to witness how these initiatives spark curiosity and empower individuals to explore diverse paths, creating a vibrant learning environment that nurtures both personal and professional growth."

ANITA TALOFF, AFTER-SCHOOL ALL-STARS SITE COORDINATOR



100% of our Affiliate Partners would recommend Think Big to other non-profit programs.



FRIENDSHIP CHRISTIAN ACADEMY



## PILLAR TWO

# Mentorship



Think Big's Mentorship program provides an opportunity for students to receive personalized educational and career guidance. Students are paired with a mentor as they enter high school or throughout their post-graduation journey. Our mentors help their mentees choose the right educational path, remain accountable and plan for life after high school. Think Big mentors offer a trusted source of support and stability as our kids transition into adulthood in pursuit of their personal and professional goals.

### How We Provide Mentorship

- Dedicated champion for goal setting & accountability
- Development of educational & career paths
- Course & academic program selection
- Regular meetings & touch points
- Pairing based on career interest & personality

### 100% of Think Big Mentees

- Look forward to meeting with their mentor
- Feel like they are getting the support they need from their mentor
- Feel comfortable discussing academic concerns with their mentor
- Believe their mentor is helping them with future plans after graduation

**"I love that I can talk to Sheryl about my academic goals and she can offer me helpful advice and guidance for how to reach them. I also love that she cares enough to reach out and give me ideas for how I can stand out as a student and prepare for my future career. She always makes me feel capable and secure in whatever I choose to do."**

KE'DAVIA, THINK BIG MENTEE AND 2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

### Meet Jeff and Benaiah

As one of Think Big's founding partners, Jeff Priede, owner of JDP Electric, has shared his passion for electrical contracting with hundreds of students. After participating in a hands-on career showcase, Benaiah expressed interest in becoming an electrician. Benaiah has since become matched with Jeff as his mentor and earned the 2024 JDP Electric Apprenticeship. The apprenticeship, which provides on-the-job training and electrical trade school tuition, will offer Benaiah a direct career path to full-time employment with JDP Electric.



**Every child deserves to be exposed to all things possible. It is the duty of the mentor to provide that. I exposed Benaiah to the electrical trade. That was easy! What Benaiah is doing is not. He is pushing with all his might every day to reach his goals. I have no doubt he will succeed!"**

JEFF PRIEDE, THINK BIG MENTOR



**97% of mentees would recommend the Think Big for Kids Mentorship Program to their friends or family.**

RESULTS ACCORDING TO SURVEY OF MENTEES FOLLOWING THE 2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR

PILLAR THREE

# Job Readiness & Placement



Think Big's Job Readiness & Placement pillar helps kids transition into young adulthood with the resources and support to pursue their chosen career path. Thanks to our donors, volunteers and partner companies, we offer multiple opportunities for skills development, work experience and scholarships beginning in high school through the completion of on-the-job training, technical programs or college. Our goal is for every student to enter the workforce with the confidence, passion and education to achieve their career goals.

### How We Build Tomorrow's Workforce

- Job shadowing
- Skills development workshops
- Internships
- Apprenticeships
- Scholarships for trade schools, community college, universities
- Job placement assistance



### Think Big's Internship Program

More than 40 high school and college students took part in Think Big's internship program during the 2023-24 academic year.

- 100%** of students were satisfied with the overall experience
- 100%** felt the internship influenced their career goals
- 82%** felt that communication was the biggest skill they learned, with problem solving as the second

RESULTS ACCORDING TO SURVEY OF STUDENTS FOLLOWING INTERNSHIPS DURING THE 2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR

### Thinking Big for the Future

Think Big offers eight types of scholarships, ranging from general studies to concentrations in business, entrepreneurship, law enforcement and technical trades. Of the 82 students who were awarded scholarships in 2024:

**55%** are attending a four-year university

**36%** are attending community college

**5%** are attending technical and trade school

**4%** are determining their plans



### A Time of Celebration

Over 250 people, including scholarship recipients, their families and Think Big supporters, came together on May 11 at the Marshall Student Center on USF's Tampa campus for a fun-filled afternoon of celebration.



By awarding me the Think Big Scholarship, I can concentrate on what's important – my education. Your financial generosity has allowed me to be one step closer to achieving my goals and has inspired me to help others by giving back to the community. I hope one day I will be financially stable and able to help other students achieve their goals just as you have helped me."

AIYANA H.

# Volunteers

## Think Big Supporters

From career showcase hosts and mentors to committee members and community advocates, we rely on the time and talents of the Think Big network to make our mission a reality.



### Tampa Bay Advisory Board

Tony DiBenedetto, Founder and Chair  
Holly Grogan  
Stephanie Markese  
Bob Riddell  
Jennie Treby  
Jennifer Williams

### Atlanta Advisory Board

David Brown  
Dom Cristelli  
Kina Franklin  
Leslie Roberts  
Phil Watson  
Hayley Witt

### Chicago Advisory Board

Ken Berry  
Jose Gonzalez  
Chris Joseph  
Lydia Kelley  
Matt Merrick  
Crystal Morris  
Leah Ojesina

### Dallas Advisory Board

John Carridine  
Mandi Crume  
Rosa Manges  
Brian Priestley  
Izzy Ramirez  
Duke Skarda

### New Jersey Advisory Board

Jim Bowman, Chair  
Jaime Bowman  
Tyler Bowman  
Mike Corridon  
Laura Crowley  
Sally Glick  
Mike Goor  
Mark Kuehn  
Elizabeth Matlaga  
Brian McEvily  
Richard Shorten

### Greater Washington Advisory Board

Michael Batt, Co-Chair  
Amir Capriles, Co-Chair  
Stacey Dessecker  
Andrea Evans  
Rachel DiBenedetto  
Dana Fallon  
Julie Holmes  
Layla Mailoudi  
Zoe Marcuse  
Marc Matthie  
Caryn McGarry  
Michael O'Shaughnessy  
Peter Pilawa  
Sarah Sava  
Amit Sircar  
Chris Tacinelli  
Jennifer Taylor

# 2023-24 Volunteers of the Year

Think Big announced Volunteers of the Year for the Tampa Bay region during the annual Appreciation Event held in October 2023.



**Saxon Baum**  
True North Society Chair and Career Showcase Volunteer



**Yvette Clayton**  
Mentor for over 3 years



**Karen Smreker**  
Career Showcase Host, True North Society Board Member



**Eric Spaulding**  
Mentor for over 3 years



# Why Volunteer with Think Big?

**“I love when you see a kid engaged with the activity and how proud they all get when they complete the task.”**

NICOLE HAHN



**“Engaging in fun, interactive activities that make learning about careers exciting and memorable for kids. It’s a great way to give back to the community by supporting educational initiatives and helping to build a future workforce.”**

MADELYN WILLIAMS



**“I’ve found it really rewarding to listen to what the kids have to say and share in their energy and optimism.”**

TYLER PUSEY

**“Seeing how different presentations are of varying degrees of interest to each student. It’s fun to see them light up when they connect with a topic, company or presenters.”**

MARIA LASHINGER



## Think Big’s Young Professionals

Think Big’s group of young professionals, True North Society members serve as career showcase hosts, mentors and workshop leaders. In addition to networking and volunteer opportunities, the group’s inaugural signature event, Chips for Charity, raised over \$70,000 in November 2023 for the True North Society Passion Scholarship, funding scholarships for 16 high school seniors.

## The True North Society Board

- Saxon Baum, Chair
- Stephanie Baum
- Marla Carangi
- Peter Cecora
- Julie Curry
- Miles Harrell
- Meghan O’Keefe
- Karen Smreker
- Omar Soliman
- Allie Spurrier
- CJ Steadman
- Sam Stein
- Taylor Wallace





# Partners

## Think Big Partners

Think Big's mission to break the cycle of poverty is made possible only by the support and involvement of partner organizations representing a wide range of sizes, locations and industries.



### Strategic Partners



### National Partner Companies

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3Cloud Solutions       | Clifton Larson Allen       |
| A Plus Group Solutions | Contract Leasing           |
| Accenture              | Crestron                   |
| Access Self Storage    | Crisis Center of Tampa Bay |
| Amazon Web Services    | Daines Financial           |
| Audi of America, Inc.  | Deloitte Consulting        |
| Bake More Pies         | DPR Construction           |
| Bank of America        | EY                         |
| Bloom Catch            | Fairfax County Government  |
| Bohler Engineering     | Felician University        |
| CIBC                   | Florida Funders            |
| Citi                   | Goodwin Living             |
| Citrin Cooperman       | GOROVE SLADE               |
| Clark Construction     | Granicus                   |

- Grow Financial Federal Credit Union
- Haneke Design
- Hays
- ICF
- Inova
- JDP Electric
- Johnson & Johnson
- JP Morgan Chase
- Mack Boring & Parts
- Manhard Consulting
- MetLife
- Mettler Toledo
- Microsoft
- Navy Federal
- New Jersey Land Improvement Contractors of America
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Northern Virginia Technology Council (NVTC)
- Paws 'n' Rec
- Phillip Jeffries
- Port Jersey Logistics

- Publix
- Regions Bank
- RevStar Consulting
- Situation Project
- Sloan Valve
- SME Solutions Group
- Stevens Institute of Technology
- Suncoast Credit Union
- Sunrun
- Tampa Electric
- Tampa General Hospital
- Trenam Law
- Trilogy Sound Studio
- Truist
- Valley Health
- Velosio
- Virginia Tire & Auto
- Winston & Strawn LLP

### Affiliate Partners

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| After-School All-Stars                   | Friendship Christian Academy       |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago            | Hillsborough County Public Schools |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Clifton            | Hillsborough Education Foundation  |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas     | Pinellas Education Foundation      |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County      | Tampa Bay Tech                     |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta      | Triad Foundation                   |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Monmouth County    |                                    |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Paterson & Passaic |                                    |
| Boys & Girls Club of the Suncoast        |                                    |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay          |                                    |
| Fairfax County Public Schools            |                                    |
| Frameworks                               |                                    |

# Donor Impact

## Think Big Givers

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Think Big is providing education and opportunities to thousands of young people in need as they plan for and achieve their post-graduation goals.



**In-kind and financial contributions from corporate sponsors, individuals and grants enable us to expand Think Big's impact through initiatives such as:**

- Scholarships & internships
- Career pathway development
- Program resources for students & graduates
- Technology & transportation needs

**"I love that Think Big takes such a direct approach to breaking the cycle of poverty simply by exposing youth to the multitude of opportunities that exist and by mentoring and encouraging them to believe in themselves in pursuing a future they might otherwise not even be aware of. It is truly transformational in the lives of the thousands of youth involved in this program."**

BRIAN DEMING, DONOR

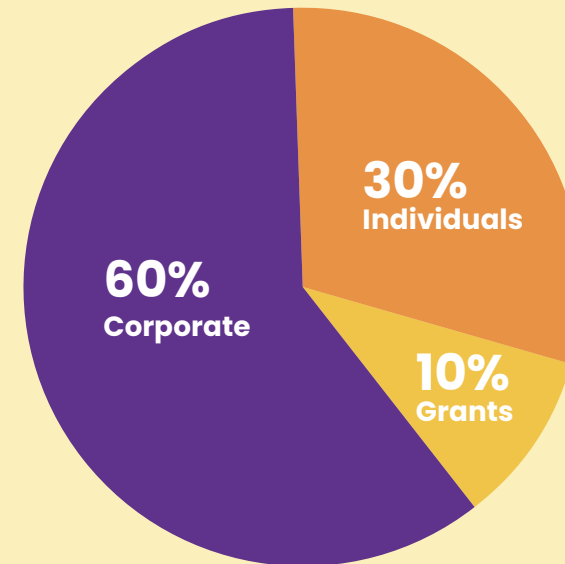


**It's important to me personally to support this mission, and an incredible opportunity to engage A-LIGN's company culture to be involved in the programs at Think Big. We are helping make a difference by giving back to our community and committing an annual donation to provide needed resources to Think Big as a Strategic Partner."**

SCOTT PRICE, FOUNDER & CEO OF A-LIGN



## Think Big's Funding Sources



THINK BIG FOR KIDS IS A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION. TAX ID: 83-3978138



**"Think Big is a selfless organization that truly puts our communities before their own interests with integrity and impact. From traveling to our Chicago clubs to inviting us on field trips, Think Big has bridged many opportunity gaps for our youth and communities."**

DIAMOND BELL, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF CHICAGO COLLEGE ACCESS SPECIALIST



**When I think about the impact that the Think Big program has had on our school, the immediate word that comes to mind is rejuvenation. Students now have attainable goals, teachers have the students' attention, and that is having an impact on the community!"**

MAURICE WOOD, FRIENDSHIP CHRISTIAN ACADEMY PRINCIPAL



**think**  
BIG for **kids**

[thinkbigforkids.org](http://thinkbigforkids.org)