

VOICES OF SUMMER SEARCH

2023 Summer Search Bay Area Impact Report



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YEAR IN REVIEW

To our Summer Search community,

When I think of the past year at Summer Search, I feel a sense of pride at the power of our community and the impact we were able to make across the Bay Area with your collective partnership. This year, we served 3,981 high schoolers, post-secondary participants, and alumni – supporting them as they celebrate graduations, fill out college and job applications, start families, and become thriving members of their communities. As I try to sum up everything our site has accomplished over the past year, a few words come to the forefront: Transition, Emergence, and Strength.

The past year has been accompanied by a number of leadership transitions across the Bay Area site. Transitions provide opportunity, however, and I'm proud to say we were able to fill almost all of these key transitions internally (my role as Executive Director included). The stability that came with these internal promotions was crucial in helping our site continue with our work as planned, and the new leadership who came in from outside of Summer Search has brought with them fresh, new perspectives that will help to transform the way we approach our work.

Our program has rebounded and reemerged from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time since 2019, we hit our sophomore recruitment goal and sent over 190 high schoolers on summer experiences across the globe. We offered a full slate of in-person programming across our site, including group mentoring, community hikes and events, and career services workshops. We also brought together over 200 alumni from across the Summer Search network for an inspiring Alumni Summit in Boston, our first such gathering since 2018.

We've seen the full realization of many key areas from our most recent strategic plan. Our post-secondary program redesign has been fully rolled out and we are now supporting participants post-high school through our Transition and Pathways Programs. Through these intentional, student-centered changes to our programming, we have transformed the way we're bridging the gap after high school for our young people and are better equipped to support them whether they choose to pursue college or enter the workforce.

We strengthened our team by hiring additional staff members on our Outreach and Summer Experience teams. We also strengthened our impact across the region with new partnerships at schools in San Jose, Santa Rosa, and Richmond, and new relationships with local summer experience partners who align with our organizational values.

None of this would be possible without the incredible dedication of our staff, collaboration of our partners, and generosity of our donors. Thank you for your ongoing support, commitment to our work, and belief in our young people.

Warmly,

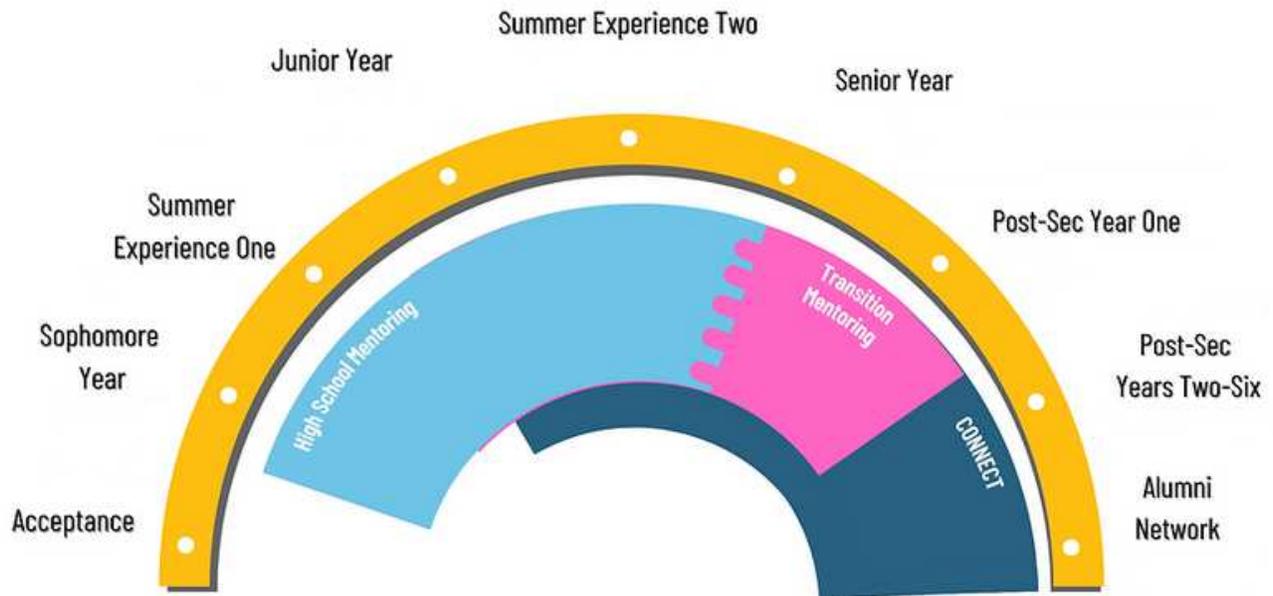


Kenyon DeVault
Executive Director, Summer Search Bay Area



PROGRAM OVERVIEW & IMPACT

Summer Search supports students in navigating the systemic barriers to success so they can achieve economic equity and a life of purpose. Summer Searchers receive culturally responsive mentoring for six years, two fully funded summer experiences, individualized post-secondary advising, and a lifelong national network of support.



Since 1990, Summer Search has served 3,969 young people across the Bay Area. In 2023, we served:



381
high school
participants from 22
schools



932
post-secondary
participants



2,656
program alumni

99% graduated high school.

68% earn a 4 year degree, compared to 21% of low-income students nationwide.

80% of alumni feel optimistic about future job opportunities, compared to 65% national average.

2.5x alumni report individual annual income 2.5 times greater than the average family income of participants.

3x alumni are three times more likely to report emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing than the national average.

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

Our high school program was a central component of our most recent strategic plan. Over the past year, we've seen incredible growth and stabilization across a number of initiatives – ensuring better support for our participants from their earliest introduction to Summer Search through high school graduation.

This year, we served 381 high school participants across 31 partner schools. We expanded our reach across the Bay Area with new partnerships at schools in Santa Rosa and Richmond, deepening our connections in two communities with longstanding ties to Summer Search, and reentered the South Bay with our first class of sophomores recruited this spring in East San Jose. With our program now reaching from Santa Rosa to San Jose, we are more focused than ever on ensuring we are providing our participants all of the supports they need to thrive in our program.

Expanding the Mentoring Experience

At the center of our work this year was the ongoing roll out and expansion of group mentoring. The Summer Search experience for our young people has always been anchored by the long-term relationship with their mentor, which continues to be one of the distinguishing factors between Summer Search and other mentoring programs. Group mentoring, coupled with ongoing 1:1 mentoring, has helped to transform our mentoring curriculum and the ways our participants examine themselves and the world around them. Participants have shared that they like the opportunity to talk about their future, get to know other Summer Searchers at their school, and discover things they have in common with their peers.

Since implementing group mentoring at the Bay Area site in 2019, we have gradually increased the number of schools in which we offer group mentoring. This year, 64% of our incoming class of sophomores and 54% of all of our high school participants were enrolled in group mentoring. We now have 21 group mentoring cohorts across 14 partner schools, with a goal to bring group mentoring to more schools over the next few years.

Now entering its sixth year, we are incredibly thrilled with the level of engagement and positive feedback we have received from participants and staff thus far. We continue to pilot new curriculum and formats for our groups and utilize group mentoring in tandem with 1:1 mentoring to develop long-lasting relationships with participants while providing them with outlets to express themselves and explore their identities.

2022-2023 School Partners

ACE Charter Schools
American Canyon High School*
Analy High School
ARISE High School
Coliseum College Prep Academy*
Cristo Rey San Jose High School
DCP Alum Rock
DCP El Primero
DeAnza High School
Downtown College Prep
Elsie Allen High School
Envision Academy*
Hayward High School
James Lick High School*
Life Academy*
LPS Richmond*
Madison Park Academy
Mission High School
MIT Academy
Mt. Eden High School*
Napa High School*
Novato High School
Oakland High School*
Overfelt High School*
Piner High School
Richmond High School
Roseland University Prep
San Rafael High School*
Sonoma Valley High School*
Tennyson High School*
Vintage High School*

**Group Mentoring School*

Program Spotlight - Alex Verheecke, Referral Partner & Alumna

Recruitment is one of the most important aspects of our program, as it's the first time potential participants are introduced to Summer Search. Our outreach team begins the recruitment process each winter by traveling to each of our partner schools to present Summer Search to interested students. At the center of the relationship with our partner schools is our Referral Partners. We have at least one Referral Partner at each school and work closely with them throughout the outreach process to find students interested in Summer Search.

There is no stronger connection to Summer Search than someone who knows our program firsthand, and we are fortunate to have a few Referral Partners who are actually alumni of Summer Search's program.

Alex Verheecke is a Summer Search alumna and 2004 graduate of San Rafael High School. She currently works as a Social Studies teacher at her alma mater and also happens to be one of our Referral Partners at the school. We asked Alex to share what it's like to be a Summer Search alumna supporting the next generation of Summer Searchers.

What does it mean to you to be a Summer Searcher?

I see it as an incredible privilege to be part of a program that never sees me as someone who has left. I have never gone through a major transition in life past 10th grade without talking to my mentors, former mentors, our alumni director Seth, our founder Linda, or fellow alumni. It's not a network, it's deeper and more meaningful. I have other alumni friends who are parents now and getting our kids together to play is especially touching. We talk about breaking cycles of generational trauma, of healing from our own, and of bringing up kids who won't qualify for Summer Search. It's wild.

How did the opportunity to become a Referral Partner for Summer Search come up?

My first weeks at San Rafael High my colleague and fellow Summer Search alum Lee Chretien told me I was joining his team! We tag-team our Summer Search work and it's one of my favorite non-teaching tasks.

As a Summer Search alumna, what's it like working with a new generation of Summer Searchers?

It's so fun. It's also frustrating to tell kids how amazing this program is and how much money and resources they could have and hear them say, "No, thanks." But that self-selection is important! If they're not interested, I drop it and focus on helping the kids who are. We have a special bond and I'm so glad to help facilitate their group mentoring on campus.

Do you have any highlights from your time as a Referral Partner?

I really enjoy working with Chano and Julia from the Bay Area team. They are so joyful and professional. Two students I nominated last year, Edith and Leslie, were in my Student Advocacy class and were both so quiet and shy at the beginning of the school year. After joining Summer Search, helping lead restorative circles on campus, and then joining our Link Crew program to help freshmen on campus, they have totally blossomed. Now they are active juniors in group mentoring and clear leaders for our school and Summer Search. They joined the tennis team and our school's Educator Academy. I'm so proud of them!



Alex and her Summer Search mentor, Eden Werring; Alex taking her daughter on a hike; Alex (far left) on her Deer Hill trip.

SUMMER EXPERIENCES

2023 felt like a return to normalcy in many respects for our Summer Experiences. This year, we sent 197 participants on summer trips, a number we hadn't reached since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During their trips, our Summer Searchers went on transformational trips across the globe, including outdoor adventures in Northern California and the Pacific Northwest, an arts program in Southern California, academic programming at Brown University, and service-learning trips in South America.

We were also thrilled to expand our summer experience offerings through new partnerships with local organizations, such as YMCA San Francisco and GirlVentures, an Oakland-based BIPOC nonprofit that combines outdoor adventure with social emotional learning for adolescent girls. Through these partnerships, we have been able to offer shorter experiences for students who aren't able to attend our 2-3 week-long trips and forge relationships with organizations whose values align with those of Summer Search.

Summer Experience Partners

Adventure Risk Challenge
Deer Hill Expeditions
Environmental Traveling Companions
GirlVentures
Outward Bound California
Sierra Nevada Journeys
Summer Springboard

YMCA BOLD and GOLD
YMCA San Francisco
Global Glimpse
Idyllwild Arts
Putney School Summer Programs
Summer@Brown

The Transformational Power of Summer Experiences

For many participants, their first trip after sophomore year is often the experience that fully cements Summer Search's purpose. With participants typically enrolling in Summer Search during the spring semester of their sophomore year, they only have a few short months to get to know their mentor and our program before embarking on their first trip. These first months are spent trying to develop a relationship with their mentor and learning how Summer Search will support them as they navigate the next several years of their lives.

We asked Melany, a Summer Search alumna and current Summer Search mentor, about her students and their experiences leading up to and following their first summer trip:



Coming out of the pandemic, where so many students were in virtual settings, I've noticed that many enter Summer Search with a hesitation to open up. They are still unsure about what Summer Search is, how it will impact them for the next several years, and how to interact with me, their mentor. Following their summer trips, however, many of my students returned with a deeper understanding of Summer Search, their reasons for participating in our program, and an openness to fully engage in the mentoring process.

Program Spotlight - Sammy Jimenez Munoz, Summer Search Participant

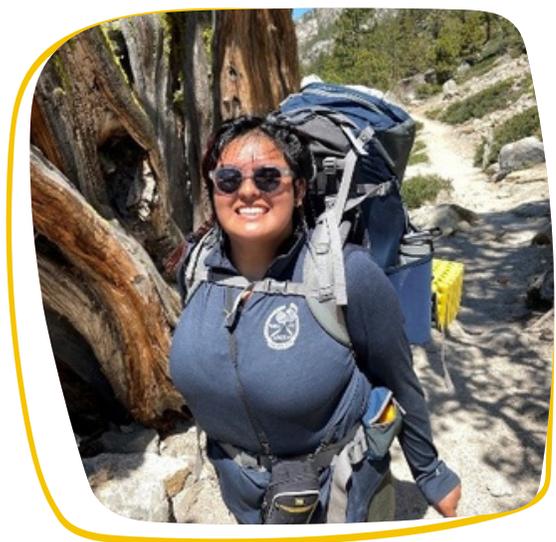
We invited Sammy, one of Melany's students, to share how her trip helped to transform her view of herself and her perspective of Summer Search.

Hello! My name is Sammy, and I am a current 11th grade student at Napa High School. I can't express how incredible and life-changing my experience was. I am a student who is very involved in school. 10th grade was super busy, and I found myself always being around people and doing so many things. I never realized how much that was taking a toll on me.

Before my trip, I never made time to reflect, to understand who I am, to understand my values, my self-worth. This is one of the reasons why I feel like this trip was life changing. I actually was able to connect with myself in a way I hadn't been able to in years. I was surrounded with people who had the same dreams, goals, and struggles as me. Being away from what was our normal gave us a reality check - no matter what, we were all just human.

We were given the safe space to talk about things we'd never had the chance to share. This trip was challenging in the sense that I was able to reflect on things I had been pushing back for months. I will forever remember the support and the love I received. This experience expanded my point of view on so many things. It made me realize I love giving myself time to just sit and take in life, that I don't have to be there for everyone 24/7, that there's more to life to enjoy than being caught up with drama and trying to be perfect at school.

My trip gave me the confidence to set boundaries. I now put myself first, something I had no idea I was struggling to do before my trip. Besides the personal growth, I also did some amazing things I never thought I would get to experience. I camped for two whole weeks, saw raccoons, deer, moon jelly, and a really up-close look at a bear. I got to go backpacking and kayaking (turns out I love to do both). I got to learn how to appreciate nature and the things around me. I wish everyone could experience what we did. I wouldn't change this experience for the world, and I know that the other life-long friends I made on the trip would say the same.



Sammy on her 14-day trip hiking in Point Reyes and Lake Tahoe with Environmental Travel Companions

POST-SECONDARY PROGRAM

At Summer Search, we embrace the diversity of post-secondary pathways available to today's young generation. Three years ago, based on student feedback, we overhauled our post-secondary program to better address the unique needs, challenges, and aspirations of our youth, splitting our post-secondary services into two programs: Transition and Pathways.

Transition Program

Low-income first-generation students are 4x more likely to leave higher education after the first year. In our Transition Program, students continue to receive the same intensive mentoring support that they receive in our High School Program to support post-secondary matriculation, while also being coached to navigate the resources provided in subsequent years of their post-secondary experience. 100% of the graduating classes of 2022 and 2023 are now enrolled in the program.

While the majority (94% of the Class of 2023) of our participants elect to attend a two or four-year college/university, some choose other paths, such as entering the workforce, joining the military, or participating in a vocational program. At the end of their junior year, students begin working with a Transition Mentor (in addition to their primary mentor) to prepare them for the transition from high school to their chosen post-secondary pathway. Transition Mentors support students in a variety of areas including:

- College applications, personal essays, and financial aid
- Resume and cover letter support
- Budgeting
- Exploring non-college pathways
- Matriculation steps

Mentors also work closely with participants to explore topics such as family, personal identity, decision making, and future planning.

Throughout their senior year, students work in tandem with their High School Mentor and Transition Mentor. Following graduation, students continue to work with their Transition Mentor through the first full year after high school for more intensive, hands-on support.

Program Spotlight - Marco Rodriquez

Marco Rodriguez, a 2023 graduate from LPS Richmond High School, is currently in his first semester at Contra Costa Community College. A talented artist with a burgeoning passion for tattooing, Marco was planning to pursue his tattoo interest full time after high school. Just before graduation, however, he decided to explore community college as an option. We asked Marco to share his experiences working with his high school mentor, Leo, and his transition mentor, Aus, to explore his goals and options following high school.

Can you share about your Summer Search journey?

When I started the program and met my mentor, we were still in quarantine, so everything was virtual. I wasn't very engaged with my mentor at first. I prefer to talk face-to-face and didn't enjoy having conversations over Zoom. My mentor left Summer Search after my sophomore year and I was paired with Leo.

Leo and I have a really good relationship. We were able to start meeting in person, which really helped me become more engaged. During some of my early conversations with Leo, we spoke about how Summer Search's program really works best when you put in the work – You only get out what you put in. That shift really transformed the way I engaged with my mentor and the program.

Leo introduced me to Aus during the fall of my senior year and shared that Aus would be helping me with the transition from high school and would be my full-time mentor after graduation. Aus made it a really easy transition and I felt like I could talk about anything with them.

How did Summer Search support your post-secondary path?

I've always loved drawing and became interested in the tattoo industry during my senior year of high school. I told Leo and Aus about my interest in tattooing and they were both encouraging and supportive of my desire to pursue it as my career. We started talking about the steps required to become a tattoo artist. College wasn't in my original plans, but Leo and Aus told me to keep all of my options open.

Toward the end of my senior year, I decided I wanted to go to a community college to see how I liked it. Aus helped me with the applications and I ultimately decided to attend Contra Costa Community College. I'm two months into college and really like it so far. I'm planning to transfer to a 4-year college after getting my Associate's Degree and have joined a program at Contra Costa that takes us to college campuses across the Bay Area.

What is your goal after college?

Tattooing is still my goal. I recently flew down to Los Angeles for a tattoo convention with the goal to network and try to get an apprenticeship. I ended up meeting a tattoo artist who owns a shop in Vallejo. He invited me to come to his shop to talk more about my goals. He looked through my portfolio and gave me some really helpful feedback about expanding the styles of artwork I want to pursue as a tattoo artist. He told me to build out my portfolio more and come back to his shop during the winter. He also told me to go check out other tattoo shops in the area and continue networking. The main tattoo styles I'm interested in are Realism, Japanese Traditional, and Chicano, but I'm trying to learn more and expand my skills.

Aus has been extremely encouraging throughout this whole process. They have told me to continue pursuing my drawing and learning more about the tattoo industry. They sent me a podcast about the history of tattooing and we've also spent time researching local tattoo shops during our check-ins.



Marco's artwork

Pathways Program

After working with their Transition Mentor for two years, our students shift to our Pathways Program. Here, with a team of dedicated staff across all of our sites, participants have access to a number of supports, including professional development opportunities, mental health, career, and financial resources, and networking events. The Pathways program provides flexibility for Summer Searchers in years 2+ after high school to connect to a variety of supports and resources when it feels most helpful to them. The 3 core programming components of Pathways include:

Mentoring

Access to a network-wide team of mentors, including a dedicated full-time Bay Area mentor on an opt-in basis. Mentoring topics include financial literacy, college transfers, academic advising, identity exploration, and career search support.

Targeted Programming

Summer Search identified four groups in which additional programming would be valuable. These groups include participants who are:

- Approaching graduation
- Enrolled in 2-year colleges
- Entering the workforce after high school
- Looking for health and wellness support

Summer Search CONNECT

CONNECT is our online platform that provides participants and alumni with access to networking opportunities, career coaching, and job and internship postings.



In the Bay Area, based on Post-Secondary participant feedback for additional mental health resources, we focused on building health and wellness programs this year. Last fall, we launched our first Summer Search Peer Wellness Group. In these peer-led groups, we polled participants to determine what topics they'd like to discuss. Two Summer Search participants were hired as Peer Wellness Ambassadors, where they worked with Summer Search staff to co-create sessions throughout the year. In the first year, our Ambassadors facilitated 7 group sessions for their peers virtually over Zoom, covering a variety of topics. Looking ahead, the Bay Area team will be collaborating with Summer Search Seattle this year to expand our Peer Wellness Group resources.



Having a space where everyone is able to talk allowed us to connect in a meaningful way. As an Ambassador, I was able to use my own experiences to help others who were going through similar problems as me.

Ying

2022-2023 Peer Wellness Ambassador

While our Pathways program is still in its early stages, our team is working hard to expand on the successes of the past year. Communication and listening to our participants' unique needs and challenges continue to be our main priorities as we work to build out our programming and resources in the upcoming year.

CAREER SERVICES

Each year, we host various opportunities for our college students and alumni to gain further knowledge and skills so they can elevate their professional experience. Our programming focuses on:

- Early Exposure
- Education
- Engagement
- Employment
- Empowerment

Career Coaching

Career Coaching is offered two times a year and is open to both post-secondary participants and alumni. This year, we had a total of 7 pairs engage in our career coaching program. Our Fall 2022 cohort included 5 Workday employees who volunteered to coach 5 alumni. In our Spring 2023 cohort, two of our Bay Area board members volunteered to coach 2 alumni. Each cohort went through an orientation, a meet and greet with their match, and 3 working sessions.

Canna-Bus Tour

For the second consecutive year, we partnered with Case for Cannabis to expose Summer Searchers to the variety of careers in the growing cannabis industry. This year, 14 alumni and staff joined for the tour which included stops at:

- CannaCraft Headquarters: CannaCraft is one of the largest cannabis production companies in the county. The tour included learning about career paths, including human resources, marketing and sales, and product development.
- Santa Rosa Junior College Shore Farm: This stop showcased Shone Farm, where students in Santa Rosa Junior College's Agriculture Program get hands on experience, including cultivating hemp and grapes. During the stop, Professor George Sellu touched on the differences between hemp and marijuana, federal policy around hemp cultivation, and innovative ways hemp is being used.
- Terra Dispensary: This stop showcased how dispensaries are creating spaces for cannabis education and community connection to flourish.



Difficult Conversations in the Workplace Panel

It is critical for first generation professionals to understand how to handle difficult conversations in the workplace. This outstanding panel touched upon topics such as: salary negotiations, promotions, power dynamics, and micro-aggressions. Summer Search Alum Samlecia Gaye, an employment attorney in San Francisco, served as moderator.



ALUMNI PROGRAM

Our Summer Search Alumni are thriving and it's critical that Summer Search keeps a pulse on the supports they need as they navigate their professional and personal lives, leadership, and financial well-being. From tips on salary negotiations to networking opportunities, our alumni program aims to speak to the wide range of alumni from recent college graduates to early professionals to seasoned professionals and parents.

Holiday Party

One of the highlights of the past year was gathering in person to celebrate the holidays for the first time since 2019. We were thrilled to partner with alumnus Ivan Lopez, a local artist and owner of Artillery Gallery, located in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District, to host the party. Alumni and post-secondary participants networked, built community, painted, and made s'mores in the backyard garden!



Alumni Summit

We were excited to gather the whole Summer Search alumni community for the first time since 2018 in Boston this past August. A total of 110 alumni representing all 5 Summer Search sites - including 42 from the Bay Area - attended this 3 day event. Themed "ReConnect, ReDiscover, Relgnite", the Alumni Summit included a variety of sessions, including a Friday night Welcome Reception, a conference with 13 breakout sessions, and an Awards Brunch where 3 Bay Area alumni were recognized with alumni awards.



Wellness Day

30 Summer Searchers came together to discuss their wellness practices and journeys. Alumni-led sessions centered on affirmations and intentions, restorative yoga, and included a Wellness Journey Panel. Our partners at BlackRock facilitated a session on financial wellness and our host, Dharma College, led a session on "Finding Joy in Work". Alumna Jessica Mosqueda also brought produce from her farm in Loomis, California to share with the group.



Reconnecting with the Summer Search community (as an alum) has been a transformative experience. This summer, at the Alumni Summit in Boston, I felt re-energized to create new bonds and empower myself through the informative breakout sessions. The following month, I had the opportunity to attend the Summer Search Cannabis Educational Experience. As an early career professional, it was an amazing opportunity to see and learn more about the seed-to-sale process and career opportunities within this multi-billion-dollar industry. I walked away feeling more knowledgeable about the industry and how I could be a part of it.

Justice Alford

Sales Development Representative, Intuit

We hope to see you in the new year at an upcoming Summer Search gathering!

Save The Date!

Our 2024 Beyond Limits celebration will take place on Tuesday, March 12th at the Exploratorium in San Francisco.

Join us for a Roundtable Conversation

These virtual conversations are a great way to learn more about our program and engage directly with current Summer Searchers, alumni, and staff. Reach out to Justin Robinson, jrobinson@summersearch.org, to learn more.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

