



The Reset Experience
Executive Director
Cynthia Lewis

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — Maya Angelou

“What do you want your legacy to be at the end of your term?”
- President Nicole Robinson

As the 2024-2026 Executive Director I leave a legacy that has moved the foundation forward standing on the principles that was set back in 2008. My role was not to dismantle the great work that had been done before me by previous Executive Directors but to enhance and “reset”. My “reset” was to renew like a breath of fresh air and take the risk of change.

In May 2024, the new administration moved swiftly into action, coining the next two years as “The Reset Experience.” Together, we collaborated to develop a bold and challenging strategic plan. With a clear vision of what we aimed to achieve, it required the dedication and leadership of every board and committee member to move the Foundation forward! On Saturday, August 23rd, 2025, the BOD and Committee members came together once again during our retreat to ensure we were on target to meet these goals. This retreat renewed our passion, and we clearly understood the assignment and the work that needed to be done.

The strategic plan is set, “The Reset Experience” time to go to work!

To help set the tone for professionalism and visibility, a custom Pearls of the Ivy Foundation letterhead was created, allowing sponsors and community leaders to easily identify the Board of Directors and Committee Members while strengthening the Foundation’s branding and organizational presence. To improve efficiency and collaboration, Google folders were implemented to provide board and committee members with an organized and accessible method for uploading monthly and quarterly reports for review and recordkeeping. Improving community visibility the first-ever customized Pearls of the Ivy Foundation shirt was created — all in an effort to move the Foundation forward.

The Foundation’s social media presence also increased significantly, with a strategic focus on encouraging members and Friends of the Foundation to engage more frequently by viewing highlights from signature events, scholars destined to soar, and community engagement initiatives. Extra, Extra read all “**About Us**” our website that showcase our historical timeline. To show that we were committed to taking a risk during the 2026 Day at the Races (DAR) planning process, the chairman took a strategic risk by literally “flipping things around” to create a refreshed experience to one of our oldest signature fundraisers that was favorably received and well accepted.

History was made for the foundation by establishing a \$5,000 endowment through AKA EAF, securing the life-line for our Pearls of Knowledge Scholarship. The Pearls of the Ivy Foundations will end this term financially strongly with securing 3 community engagement events with Pfizer and receiving \$21,000 in 2026.



The success of these efforts demonstrates that effective leadership requires a team willing to think outside the box, raise standards, update our governing documents, and embrace innovation.

The "Reset" Team
2024-2026
Board of Directors
and
Committee Members



President
Nicole Robinson



Executive Director
Cynthia Lewis



Secretary
Carla Crittendon



Assistant Secretary
Sheneeka Sanders



Treasurer
Barbretta Robinson



Assistant Treasurer
Tiffany Waters



Financial Secretary
Penny Levy King



Assistant Financial Secretary
Shanna Hines



Parliamentarian
Shronda Whitfield



Funding Development Manager
Michelle Carter-Pope



Compliance Officer
Monica Talley-Essex



Curator
Tracy Wesley-Perry



Community Partnership
Angie Pilcher



Endowment Chairman
Regina Levine



Scholarship Chairman
Afi George



Risk Management
Chiniqua Varner Busby



Nominating Chairman
Kameisha Choice



Nominating Co-Chairman
Sarena Chism



Technology Chairman
Ryleigh McCarty



Technology Co-Chairman
La Ta'via Pearl



The Bylaws Committee lead by Parliamentarian: Shronda Whitfield

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Bylaws Committee established a goal to review and update the current 2023 edition of the Bylaws based on recommendations from the membership.

This goal was successfully accomplished in 2025 through revisions that included the addition of the vital Curator role to the Board of Directors structure. This important role helps ensure that funds spent on items such as decorations and event materials are properly documented, while reducing the risk of lost or misplaced inventory through improved tracking and accountability.

Per the bylaws the Purpose of the Foundation is to

- o Fund programs and activities identified as community service needs, Upsilon Lambda Omega Chapter programs and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated International programs.
- o Provide volunteer work and assistance to other non-profit organizations.

This goal continues to be successfully accomplished, and the strong partnership between Upsilon Lambda Omega Chapter and the Pearls of the Ivy Foundation was further strengthened with the update of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in February 2026.

The Scholarship Committee lead by Scholarship Chairman: Afi George

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Scholarship Committee established goals to create a scholarship manual that included a scholarship and fundraising timeline, continue to highlight our scholars destined to soar on social media platforms, support other nonprofit organizations in their scholarship initiatives, and award \$85,000 in scholarships during the 2024–2026 administration.

In November 2025, the Scholarship Manual was officially approved, providing structure and guidance for future scholarship operations and fundraising efforts. The committee also supported community scholarship initiatives by participating in the DeSoto Concerned Citizens “Bowling for Scholars” events in 2025 and 2026. In February 2025, 29 Destined to Soar Scholars were recognized during Black History Month across the Foundation’s social media platforms. Additionally, the Foundation continued its commitment to celebrating student achievement by hosting in-person scholarship receptions and presenting scholarships during senior awards programs. Adhering to the recommendation of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. of extracting scholars’ names from the scholarship application, this was implemented in the 2026 scholarship application process to ensure fairness among all applicants. The committee also implemented a proposed tier scoring and payout amount.

While the Foundation did not meet the \$85,000 stretch goal for the three years, it achieved a significant milestone by awarding \$20,000 or more in scholarships annually for the past three consecutive years, the historical payouts has been updated on our website under Scholarship Impact. We have set a standard and we are not going back. Our commitment to providing competitive scholarships remains strong, with average scholarship awards ranging between \$1,000 and \$1,500.

The Endowment Committee lead by Endowment Chairman: Regina Levine

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Endowment Committee set out to establish a \$5,000 endowment through AKA EAF, collaborate with ULO EAF on fundraising efforts, and host the “Reset” Skating for Scholars fundraiser.

With a steady pace the committee was able to effectively skate into these accomplishments starting in April 2025, the “Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Endowed Scholarship Fund” was officially established through AKA EAF with an initial contribution of \$5,000 making history for the foundation. Additionally, the ULO EAF/PIF Polo Shirt Fundraiser generated more than \$400 in support of the endowed scholarship initiative. Continuing its commitment to scholarship and community partnerships, the Foundation also successfully hosted the “Reset” Skating for Scholars event in May 2026 in collaboration with Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Gamma Upsilon Lambda Chapter.



The Funding Development Committee lead by Funding Development Manager: Michelle Carter Pope

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Funding Development Committee goal was to maximize and leverage our nonprofit status by establishing tax-exempt status with retailers, registering on nonprofit platforms, increasing opportunities to secure grants, educating members on how to seek grant support through their employers, and standardizing sponsorship packages across all signature events.

The thought of raising money and saving money should be FUN right! The foundation has secured tax exempt status with retailers like Amazon where we have purchased décor items for our signature events, Sams where we purchase items for programs like CHIPP. We can now be found on non-profit giving platforms like Benevity and GuideStar. We received our first donation through Benevity in December 2025. To ensure cohesiveness among our signature fundraiser the sponsorship packages were standardized with names that reflect our mission and character from Distinguished Diamond to Illuminating Ivy.

Grants secured in 2024-2026

- July 2024 - Walmart "Sparkle Good Local Grant" for \$3,000
- February 2026 - Armanino Foundation "Dollars for Doers": \$3,500

In 2026 this committee created a sub-committee PIF Grant Strategy Focus Group to seek out other grant opportunities and is diligently seeking grant opportunity starting with a grant to fund the update to our website and daily operations.

The Financial Review Committee lead by Compliance Office: Monica Talley-Essex

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Financial Review Committee carefully considered recommendations submitted by members in response to the recurring question: "Why can't the Foundation have a debit card for large purchases?" The Committee acknowledged concerns raised regarding the financial burden placed on members who, in certain leadership roles, are expected to make organizational purchases using personal funds first and then receive reimbursement. Members expressed that this requirement has, at times, discouraged participation in key positions due to the out-of-pocket responsibility such a luxury designer handbag purchase or major program-related purchases like the CHIPP initiative.

In addition, the Committee noted that the Financial Standard Operating Procedures Manual had not been comprehensively updated since its original development in 2017. This gap underscored the need for a review and the modernization of financial policies to better reflect current operational needs, improve accountability, and support sustainable financial practices moving forward.

We are moving the foundation forward the Financial Standard Operating Procedures (FSO) Manual was favorably voted on and approved during the 2025 September General Membership Meeting. Approval of the Pearls of the Ivy Foundation debit card policy marked a significant step forward in strengthening the Foundation's financial operations and reducing the financial burden previously placed on members. We re-established and strengthened the Foundation's relationship with Ryland Tax & Financial Services was like a breath of fresh air. We are now using the services of Ryland Tax & Financial Services to monitor our monthly and annual QuickBooks this will enhance accountability, transparency, and financial oversight.

The Finance Committee lead by Treasurer Barbretta Baker and Financial Secretary Penny Levy King

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Finance Committee established goals focused on improving financial efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Key objectives included identifying a public payment platform to replace Eventbrite, resetting and aligning the budget-to-actual reporting process with monthly financial reporting in partnership with Ryland Tax & Financial Services, and continuing to provide quarterly statements to scholarship donors to maintain transparency and strengthen donor engagement.



In December 2025, the Zeffy platform officially launched, providing the Foundation with a cost-effective and user-friendly public payment solution. The platform was successfully utilized for #GivingTuesday campaign, silent auction transactions, and scholarship payments. Additionally, the treasurer implemented enhanced budget-to-actual reporting that included actual donor contributions, improving the accuracy and transparency of financial reporting. Budget-to-actual reporting was also expanded to include the debit card account. To further support sound financial governance, approval processes for debit card transactions were implemented eliminating potential financial risk. The Financial Secretary continues to provide donor statements quarterly ensuring consistent communication and stewardship with scholarship donors.

The Technology Committee lead by Chairman Ryleigh McCarty and Co-Chairmen La Ta'via Pearl

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Technology Committee successfully achieved its goals of updating the website to support scholarship applications and ensuring all virtual Zoom meetings, including Board of Directors and General Membership Meetings, were conducted successfully during the 2024–2026 administration. This allowed quorum requirements to be met and Foundation business and voting processes to continue without delay. This transition demonstrated that organizational business could be managed efficiently from the comfort of members' home offices while maintaining productivity, engagement, and operational continuity. The flexible virtual format also promoted a healthy work-life-volunteer balance and allowed additional Pearls of the Ivy Foundation members to participate in meetings at their leisure or as needed.

The Risk Management Committee lead by Chairman Chiniqua Varner Busby

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Risk Management Committee reviewed the latest 2023 version of the manual and determined that no changes were necessary at this time, but will review upon updates following the 2026 Boule. The committee will continue to ensure that the Foundation remains aligned with current policies and procedures.

The Community Partnership Committee lead by Chairman Angela Pitcher

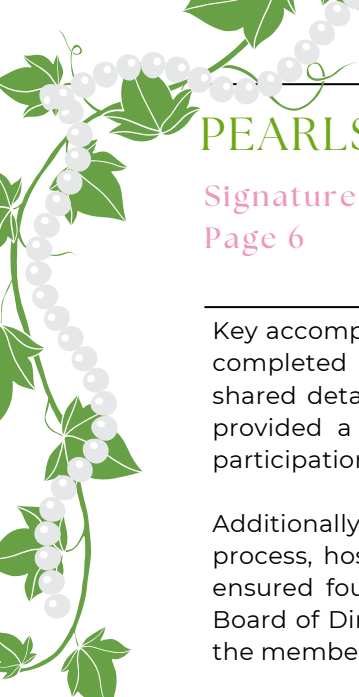
The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Community Partnership Committee focused on increasing visibility and leveraging outreach efforts to establish the Pearls of the Ivy Foundation as a household name across its service areas. Accomplishments included strengthening nonprofit and foundation collaborations through events such as Skating for Scholars, increasing engagement with mayors and city leaders through signature event invitations, expanding social media outreach, highlighting award recipients and scholars online, recognizing sponsors on the website, and promoting fundraising events. Collaborating and partnering with companies such as Pfizer for community engagement events helped set the tone for future partnerships, expanded community impact, and strengthened opportunities for long-term financial sustainability.

The Curator lead by Tracy Wesley Perry

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Curator, newly added to the Board of Directors, quickly implemented a digital inventory tracking system and introduced procedures to strengthen asset management, including a checkout form for item usage. The committee also focused on educating members about retaining and purchasing reusable items for signature events while limiting the co-mingling of Pearls of the Ivy Foundation and Chapter decorative items to improve overall asset control. The digital inventory system allows members to efficiently track added, missing, or misplaced items from year to year, strengthening long-term inventory management and accountability.

The Nominating Committee lead by Chairman Kameisha Choyce and Co-Chairmen Sarena Chism

The Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Nominating Committee primary objective was to inform, educate and hold a mini training for members on the “elected” and “non-elected” positions. The Nominating Committee elevated transparency and engagement throughout the nomination process by establishing a clear and structured framework for members.



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Signature Fundraising Event - North Texas Giving Day - Page 6



Key accomplishments included strengthening the nomination process and ensuring all potential candidates completed mandatory Pearls of the Ivy Foundation Board training prior to elections. The committee also shared details of the 2026 self-nominating form, outlined Board of Directors roles and responsibilities, and provided a comprehensive nominating and election timeline to support clarity, fairness, and informed participation.

Additionally, the committee provided a concise "What You Need to Know" guide outlining the nomination process, hosted two Officer Information Sessions via Zoom breakout rooms on March 2 and March 4, and ensured foundation members had access to candidate photos and statements of intent to serve on the Board of Directors. This 2026 election process also provided each candidate with the opportunity to address the membership and share how they would serve if elected.

North Texas Giving Day is an annual online giving event, hosted by Communities Foundation of Texas, that encourages residents to support local nonprofits in the North Texas region. It is the largest community-wide giving event in the nation, raising millions of dollars for various charitable organizations. The event typically takes place in September, with online donations accepted for a period of time before the official "day"

2 Year Goal: \$6,000
Actual: \$5,315 / 88%

Committee:

Cynthia Lewis, Chairman

Performance:

- Posted social media flyers
 - 2024 - 4 social media post
 - 2025 - 8 social media post
- Target "Friends of the Foundation"
- Individual scholarship solicitation
- 2025 participated in #GivingTuesday via Zeffy

2024 - Thursday, September 19, 2024

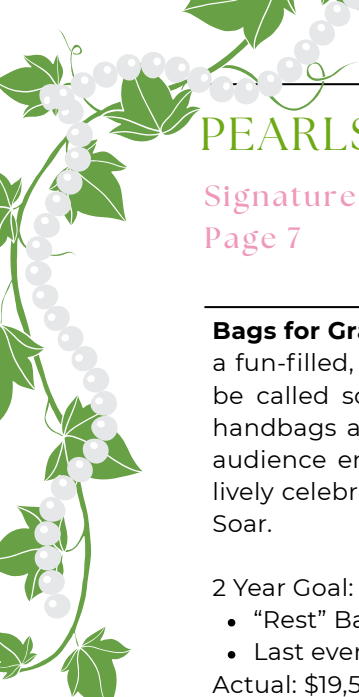
- NTX Giving: \$2,657

2025 - Thursday, September 18, 2025

- NTX Giving: \$1,745

2025 - Tuesday, December 2, 2025

- #GivingTuesday: \$913



Signature Fundraising Event - Bags for Grads

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Bags for Grads is a signature fall fundraising event that brings bingo players and handbag lovers together for a fun-filled, high-energy experience. Guests sit on the edge of their seats, eagerly awaiting their numbers to be called so they can shout “BINGO!” and win a coveted signature handbag. Adding to the excitement, handbags are showcased by models who light up the runway with their unique personalities, keeping the audience entertained and anticipating every new round. Bags for Grad is more than a game night—it’s a lively celebration that supports the Foundation’s scholarship initiatives ensuring our Scholars are Destined to Soar.

2 Year Goal: \$22,000

- “Rest” Bags For Grads
- Last event held 2019 (5 years)

Actual: \$19,573 / 88%

2024 Committee:

Michelle Carter-Pope, Chairman
 Penny Levy King, Co-Chairmen
 Jocelyn Lewis, Co-Chairmen

Performance:

Sunday, October 13, 2024

- Raised: \$11,846

2025 Committee:

Marquitta Thomas, Chairman
 Michelle Carter-Pope, Co-Chairmen
 Penny Levy King, Co-Chairmen

Performance:

Sunday, October 12, 2025

- Raised: \$ 7,727
 - \$5,000 sponsorship was not awarded

Event Highlights:

- Entry tickets on sale via Eventbrite
- LV raffle tickets
- Pink Box gift card pull
- Deseri handbag donation
- Social media to promote the event
- Sponsorship/Table packages
- Facebook event page
- Handbag models





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Signature Fundraising Event- Day at the Races

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Day at the Races is a signature spring fundraising event that delivers an unforgettable Derby-style celebration. The event captures the spirit of a classic day at the races with fashionable attire, live horse racing, and an elegant social atmosphere. Guests enjoy an upscale experience filled with engaging fundraising activities, including the Hat and Total Package Contest, all while supporting the Foundation's scholarship and community initiatives. Day at the Races is more than an annual event, it is a gathering of Friends of the Foundation united by a shared commitment to uplifting our community and investing in the future of our Scholars.

2 Year Goal: \$20,000
Actual: \$25,000+ estimated

2025 Committee:

LaAndra Peterson, Chairman
Carrma Morgan, Co-Chairmen
Tiffany Waters, Co-Chairmen

Event Highlights:

- Sunday, May 18th, 2025
- Raised: \$10,616 / 220 Tickets
- Multiple date changes "regionals"
- Tickets/Sponsorship via/Eventbrite
- Total package contest "trophies"
- Run of show on monitors



2026 Committee:

Chiniqua Varner-Busby, Chairman
Ashley Goodwin, Co-Chairmem
Carrie Steptoe, Co-Chairmen

Event Highlights:

- Sunday, May 3, 2026
- Raised: \$15,XXX / 230 Tickets
- Tickets/Sponsorship via/Zeffy
- Silent auction items via/Zeffy
- Winners circle table \$1,300
- Social hour experience - Soloist
- Flip the room lay-out





PEARLS OF THE IVY FOUNDATION, INC.®

Signature Fundraising Event - Skating For Scholars

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Skating for Scholars is a signature event where the Foundation raises awareness about higher education and connects Scholars Destined to Soar with scholarship opportunities. This community event educates, inspires, and empowers high school scholars, while inviting participants of all ages to “skate” around, network, and connect with individuals pursuing similar educational and career paths.

Goal:

“Reset” Skating For Scholars Fundraiser

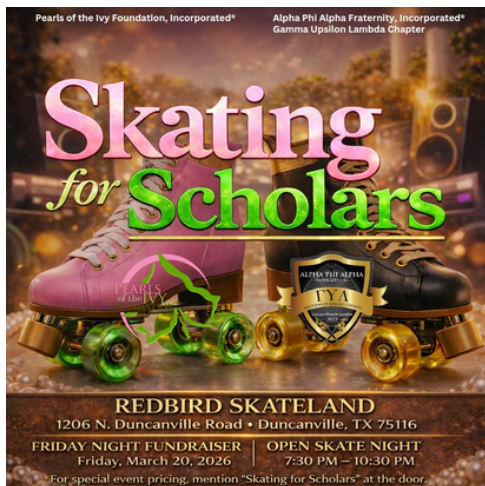
2026 Committee:

Regina Levine, Endowment Chairman

La Ta'via Pearl, Event Co-Chair

Event Highlights:

The “Skating For Scholars” fundraiser was successfully held on Friday, March 20, 2026, in partnership with Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. - Gamma Upsilon Lambda Chapter. The collaborative event raised a total of \$284, with each organization receiving \$142. Funds raised by the Pearls of the Ivy Foundation were designated directly to the PIF Endowment. In addition, one high school senior was awarded a laptop in support of educational success and student achievement.



Thank You PIF Members that lead behind the the scenes!

Angela Butler Lewis
Angela L. Davis Henry
Anjanette Ricks
Barbara Bell Davis
C'Net Davis
Carneisha Lee
Chasity Armstead
Chasity Buckley

Chauntaye Mooring Melton
Cori Mooring Simpson
Demetrius Means
Donna Allen
Donna Whitehead
Elma Goodwin
Evelyn Canady
Felecia Davis

Gwendella Robinson
Jenine McClaney
Jonya Watts
Jocelyn Shannon-Harmon
Lashon Williams
Randi McCarty
Saundra Burleson
Twyla Brown

Carrie Gordon
Chelsea Bates
Denise Austin
Shanee Charles
Torie Alexander DeGraffe
Tiffany Nicole - Brown

*Thank You
President Nicole Robinson
for your leadership!*