

# Community Vision



## Honoring Tom Cousins (1931 - 2025)

Our beloved founder, Tom Cousins, passed away on July 29th at the age of 93.

Tom, a property developer and philanthropist, was a visionary leader who dedicated his life to transforming communities and creating opportunities for children and their families to prosper. He believed with all his heart in the potential of the children growing up in East Lake and that they deserved the same opportunities he had as a child and young adult.

With the help of many, including Eva Davis, Renee Lewis Glover, and Shirley Franklin, he cultivated a resident-centered community revitalization approach in East Lake



that remains the cornerstone of our work today.

In 1995, he established the East Lake Foundation, followed by Charles R. Drew Charter School and Purpose Built Communities, which uses the East Lake

model to inspire neighborhoods across the country to create pathways to prosperity. He dedicated his last 30 years to continuing to create opportunities for children and families. Tom led with his heart, and today we demonstrate his values and his commitment to the families living in The



Villages of East Lake and children attending Drew and our early learning centers by ensuring they have access to the tools and resources needed to succeed.

His legacy is one of profound impact, measured not only by the buildings and programs he helped create but, most importantly, by the countless lives he touched. His unwavering commitment to our mission and his deep belief in the potential of others served as an example to everyone that transformative change can only happen if you lead with integrity, professionalism and compassion.

"We are deeply saddened to share the passing of our founder, Tom Cousins," said Ilham Askia, President and CEO of the East Lake Foundation. "Throughout his life, Mr. Cousins remained focused on improving communities around him, and East Lake is a testament to his dedication. Without his vision to ignite change from the inside out, we would not be where we are

today as the East Lake Foundation or the East Lake neighborhood as a whole. We extend our sincere condolences to the entire Cousins family, and together, we will carry on his legacy to continue creating purposeful, innovative change in our community."

We are profoundly grateful for Tom's leadership, generosity and friendship. The East Lake Foundation and the greater Atlanta community have lost a true champion whose legacy lives on through his children and grandchildren's dedication to service and the countless lives he has touched. We will honor his memory by continuing to work tirelessly to fulfill his dream of a world where every person has the resources and opportunities needed to thrive. ■



# Spotlighting 30 Voices, MARKING 30 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION

Over 30 years ago, a network of passionate advocates ignited a movement to re-imagine East Lake. The East Lake Foundation was established to ensure that their mission continues for future generations. Place-based disruptive change required fresh, innovative thinking, policy shifts, and the creation of new standards for the future. This year, we honor the legacies of those who expanded on a model and created a community where everyone has equitable access to the resources, tools and support needed to thrive.

In celebration of three decades of transformation, the 30 Voices project shares the stories of individuals who have shaped, strengthened and sustained East Lake.

From legacy residents to dedicated partners, each voice reveals the power of community and what's possible when we grow together.

Join us this year as we Illuminate. Innovate. Ignite. **Visit our [30 Voices page](#) to hear these changemakers' stories.** ■



# Youth Golf Gets a Fresh Start in East Lake

The newly reimagined East Lake Junior Golf Academy is officially up and running!

A partnership between East Lake Golf Club, the East Lake Foundation, Drew Charter School, and the Charlie Yates Golf Course, the program is designed to empower, inspire, and equip young athletes with advanced training, mentorship, and resources to thrive both on and off the golf course.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Catherine Woodling, the Academy emphasizes the development of strong technical skills and competitive excellence using the PGA of America's American Development Model (ADM) for Golf.

"We're thrilled to launch the reimagined East Lake Junior Golf Academy," said Woodling. "Building on East Lake's storied legacy of exceptional junior and amateur golf, this next chapter deepens our commitment to developing young golfers, on and off the course, by expanding access, opportunity, and support for every student we serve."

This past season, the Junior Golf Academy partnered with Golf House Academy and Short Game Resources to support Drew's golf teams, leading to a successful season. The Boys' Varsity Team tied for 8th in the state, and senior Ja'Mya Duckworth finished 15th out of 53 individual girls golfers.

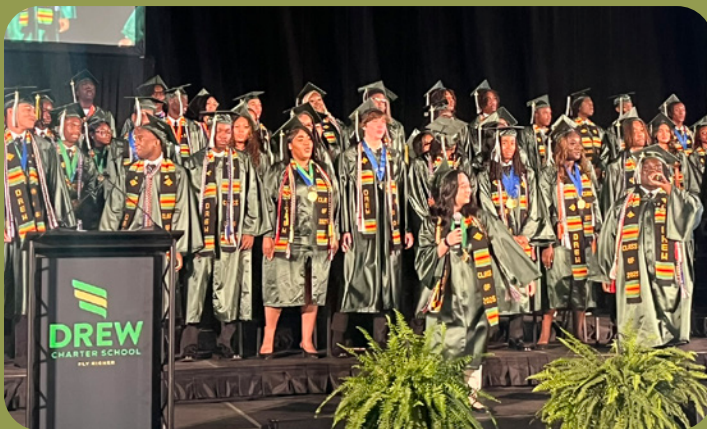


Looking ahead, plans for the upcoming school year include reintroducing golf into Drew's Elementary Academy for 3rd–5th grade students, as well as launching structured pre-season and in-season training programs for the boys and girls golf teams.

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We can't wait to see how our East Lake golfers continue to soar. ■

## HATS OFF to Drew Charter School's Class of 2025!



Simmons, and more than 25 East Lake Foundation scholarships.

Congratulations to this talented group for their incredible achievements! ■

In May, 108 seniors graduated from Charles R. Drew Charter School. The Class of 2025 included a record-setting 63 "Drew babies" who began their Drew journey in Pre-K or Kindergarten. 100% of college applicants were accepted into 148 colleges and universities. The Class of 2025 was awarded over \$11 million in college scholarships, including one Gates, three 5Strong, four Posse, three inaugural Leap of Faith Scholarships in memory of Drew Class of 2017 alumnus Solomon



# East Lake Foundation Welcomes Mark Eppert, William Wesley to its Board of Directors



The East Lake Foundation is honored to share the appointments of Mark Eppert and William Wesley to its Board of Directors.

Mark Eppert, Chief Financial and Supply Chain Officer at

Coca-Cola North America, is an insightful and strategic finance executive with significant expertise in supply chain and operations. In his current role, he delivers strategic financial management and operational leadership for a \$18B P&L. He is starting year 5 of an extremely successful 5-year roadmap to achieve "Olympian Performance" by accelerating top-line growth, expanding margins, doubling operating income, and winning share.

Mark's deep history of board service includes Coca-Cola Beverages, Africa as a member of the Audit and Risk Committee as well as the Social, Ethics and Sustainability Committee, several years on the board of fairlife LLC, and several years on the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation Board. He is a First Tee Trustee and served four years on the executive committee of The Ohio State University Alumni Board, including serving as Finance Chair and Board Chair.



As Senior Community Development Representative for Delta Community Credit Union, William Wesley manages the organization's community investment strategies and a portfolio of schools and nonprofits partners committed

to improving the physical and financial well-being of young people and families. He has over 15 years of experience in financial services and entrepreneurship.

William has been a part of the East Lake community for some time as a Drew Charter School parent, East Lake Foundation scholarship recipient, and resident of The Villages of East Lake for more than 5 years. He continues to give back by facilitating financial education workshops for residents, directing funds to support local partners, and volunteering as a member of the "Trashy Dads" community clean-up crew.

He also serves as an executive and advisory board member for organizations including the Georgia Council of Economic Education, Inspiredu, Atlanta Public Schools CTAE, Drew STEAM Advisory, and the East Lake Neighborhood Community Association. ■



## Wealth Builds Atlanta Launches

The East Lake Foundation is proud to announce the launch of its Wealth Builds Atlanta pilot.

Wealth Builds is a transformative initiative aimed at closing the wealth gap through programming structured around key pillars that span the cradle-to-college and career continuum. This initiative provides youth with asset boosts, financial knowledge, and the necessary tools to support intergenerational wealth creation. In partnership with Harlem Children's Zone and the William Julius Wilson Institute, the Foundation is implementing Wealth Builds Atlanta, a localized program. Wealth Builds Atlanta

combines the Foundation's holistic pathway of cradle-to-college and career services with financial education and capital investments in scholars at every stage of their lives.

Led by Program Manager Dr. Karis Williams, programming targets students and families enrolled in Drew Charter School and residing at The Villages of East Lake, our 650-unit mixed-income housing development. 166 College Savings Accounts have already been seeded and claimed by families, with plans to begin financial literacy programming and additional supports in the 2025-2026 school year. ■

# Community Garden Party Continues for Second Year

The East Lake Foundation's Resident and Community Support Program collaborated with the East Lake Women's Alliance to host our second annual Community Garden Party in the community garden at Gardenside at The Villages of East Lake.

The event brought residents and volunteers together to enjoy a garden tour, cooking demonstration, kid-friendly activities for families, and even the opportunity to harvest fresh-grown vegetables to take home. We are thrilled to have this resource for families to build community, promote sustainability and healthy eating, and encourage time outdoors.

***If you are interested in learning more about the East Lake Women's Alliance, a group of committed Atlanta women who support the East Lake Foundation's programs through philanthropy and volunteerism, please email Kivatah Castilla at [kcastilla@eastlakefoundation.org](mailto:kcastilla@eastlakefoundation.org).*** ■



## Save The Date for Party on the Green Off Course Edition

Mark your calendar for Saturday, November 1, 2025 for Party on the Green Off Course Edition, the East Lake Foundation's annual signature fundraiser. Proceeds support East Lake's cradle-to-college and career education continuum to help children reach their full potential.

In celebration of its 30th anniversary, this year the Foundation is bringing the same electric party, dialed up a notch, to a new venue. Join us at The Eastern, where you will enjoy live musical performances, indoor golf experiences, mingling over delicious food and beverages, and more.

We look forward to paying tribute to the life and legacy of Tom Cousins. We will also honor the late

***Honorees Josie and Julian Robertson and the Robertson Family***



Josie and Julian Robertson and the Robertson Family for their philanthropic leadership and steadfast commitment to the families of East Lake and the Drew Charter School community.

***Please visit the Foundation's [website](http://www.eastlakefoundation.org) or contact Kivatah Castilla at [kcastilla@eastlakefoundation.org](mailto:kcastilla@eastlakefoundation.org) for more information or for sponsorship opportunities.*** ■



## Bank of America *STUDENT LEADERS SHINE*



**The Bank of America Student Leaders**

For the 13th year, the East Lake Foundation hosted summer interns through the Bank of America Student Leaders program. The program supports rising high school seniors and college freshmen making a difference within their communities over the course of an eight-week paid internship. Selected from a pool of over 600 applicants, the Student Leaders spent their time working with several East Lake partners, including the garden at Gardenside at The Villages of East Lake and at the Sheltering Arms East Lake Center.

**Hannah Carvajal** - Hannah recently graduated from South Cobb High School and is a rising freshman at the University of Georgia. She is passionate about educational equity, healthcare access, and youth empowerment. She has helped donate over 800 books annually and led service initiatives, fundraising events, and mental health advocacy with groups like the 988 Hotline. Hannah has used digital platforms to connect communities with educational resources, boosting engagement by over 50%, and reaching thousands.

**Stephanie Ezenne** - Stephanie is a rising senior at Jonesboro High School and cares deeply about environmental issues and equal opportunities in education. She has been involved in advocating for a myriad of relevant issues through legal language in Mock Trial, and in championing youth voices in organizations and products as part of the

nonprofit In Tandem. She also enjoys working in biochemical labs and conducting research related to water quality.

**Julia Promoff** - Julia is a rising senior at North Atlanta High School. Her entrepreneurial spirit led her to pursue environmental justice, journalism, and community-based initiatives. She started an environmental education organization that impacts thousands of students, a sports/extracurriculars mentorship program, school news channel, and magazine. She's a green T-shirt volunteer with Trees Atlanta and Creating Connected Communities board member. In the community, she serves as her youth group's president and as a unit head at Camp Jenny. In school, she's co-president of Future Business Leaders of America and the environmental club, and varsity lacrosse captain.

**Rumana Shash** - Rumana is a rising senior at The Westminster Schools. Her passion is promoting quality education globally through initiatives such as Ink for Hope, through which she provided over 100 books to students affected by the civil war in Ethiopia. Within the Atlanta community, she leads two clubs, Educacion Para Todos and Civic Engagement Fellows, that have provided over 200 pencil packages and over 20 volunteers supporting nonprofits in her community. With over 400 volunteer hours at youth afterschool programming in underserved communities, she dedicates herself to giving back to her community. ■



# Back-to-School Celebration Kicks Off the School Year



On July 25th, the East Lake Foundation brought families together for fellowship and fun during our annual Back-to-School Jam and Community Day at The Villages of East Lake. Families enjoyed food, dancing, outdoor games, and even an ice cream truck sponsored by our friends at RSM.



Students selected backpacks stuffed with school supplies to ensure that they were prepared for a successful start to the school year. Special thanks to For the Kid in All of Us, BlackRock, TOUR Championship, Poised Peaches, and RSUI for donating supplies to support our students, along with our steadfast volunteers and community partners who made the event possible.

To learn more about opportunities to volunteer and give back through our community programs, reach out to Jennifer McCrary at [jmccrary@eastlakefoundation.org](mailto:jmccrary@eastlakefoundation.org). ■



## Start:ME Graduates 11th Cohort; Seeks Applications for 2026 Cohort



In May, 18 local ventures successfully graduated from the Start:ME East Lake 2025 cohort. Taking place in partnership with Emory University's Goizueta Business School, the free 14-week program provides access to business knowledge, supportive membership, and grant capital. The graduation ceremony featured grant award recognition and a surprise announcement from the TOUR Championship sharing their philanthropic support of the East Lake community and other Atlanta-based nonprofits.

78% of businesses in the cohort were led by women and 100% by people of color, with \$16.5k in grants and awards distributed.



For the first time, an East Lake Foundation staff member participated in the program. Join us in congratulating Wigasi Brant, our Community Engagement Coordinator, who received a grant supporting his small business, Con/Artists Talent, a talent agency creating opportunities for formerly incarcerated and recovering actors.

Since the start of the program, more than 175 East Lake businesses have been served, and more than 375 jobs have been created or retained.

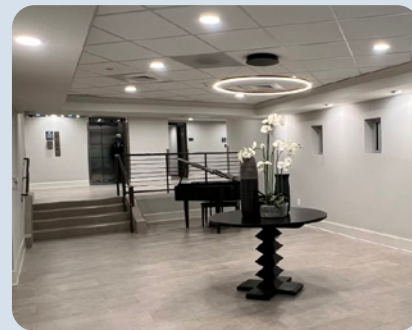
**Applications for the 2026 program will open on September 1, 2025. If you are interested in participating in this small business accelerator, visit the [Start:ME website](#) to learn more. ■**

# Legacy at East Lake *Reopens*

Legacy at East Lake, formerly known as East Lake Senior Highrise, has reopened after completing extensive renovations.

An eight-story building consisting of 149 affordable apartments for seniors and people with disabilities, the 52-year-old Columbia Residential property received updates including structural and aesthetic improvements, revamped balconies, updated kitchens and bathrooms, the creation of common spaces, the addition of closet space in each unit, and the creation of a new movie theater and updated, accessible community garden.

We are glad to welcome 72 original senior residents back to the property. Their knowledge, contributions, and strong connections are a key part of East Lake's DNA. ■



## Leave a Legacy Through Planned Giving

Ensure your legacy lives on with a planned gift benefiting the East Lake Foundation!

Naming the Foundation in your will, trust or estate plan is one of the easiest and most flexible ways to leave a gift helping secure bright futures for East Lake residents, while also potentially gaining estate tax benefits.

Visit the Foundation's [website](#) for details on ways you can plan your legacy gift today.

**For more information on planned giving, please contact Kivatah Castilla, our Director of Development, at [kcastilla@eastlakefoundation.org](mailto:kcastilla@eastlakefoundation.org).** ■

The East Lake Foundation is the originator of a holistic approach to community revitalization that focuses on four pillars: **cradle-to-college education**, **mixed-income housing**, **community wellness** and **economic vitality**. The Foundation serves as the lead organization working closely with its partners to benefit our youth and their families. To make a donation visit [eastlakefoundation.org](http://eastlakefoundation.org).