The American Experience Foundation (AEF) enriches the lives of students through inspirational travel experiences and educational opportunities to cultivate the next generation of hospitality industry professionals. AEF invests in young people in our community, supporting their college and career readiness.
“One of my favorite aspects of my job is working with students. We’ve been fortunate to be able to provide an introduction to the industry despite battling a global pandemic.”

ELLIOTT L. FERGUSON, II
President & CEO, Destination DC

**2020 BY THE NUMBERS**

384
Total student engagements

60
Students on Washington, DC field trips

72
Summer Career Ready interns

8
Scholarships awarded

230
Students participating in educational programs

**SINCE 2015**

$75,000
Awarded in scholarships
As we close 2020 and travel experiences feel distant, we reflect on a year of turmoil and the pandemic’s impacts on students, professionals and our country overall.

The hospitality and tourism industry, one of the largest in Washington, DC, normally employs more than 76,000 people and contributes over $850 million in tax revenue. COVID-19 has decimated the industry, not only closing restaurants, attractions and hotels, but forcing major events and conventions to cancel, putting thousands of people out of work and reducing tax revenues to a tiny fraction of what was anticipated. We are unsure when tourists and conventions will return to the city and what that full recovery will look like.

Simultaneously, we’ve heard the call to action of Black Lives Matter and know it is not exclusively about accountability for cities and police departments, but a demand for equitable opportunity in all facets of American life.

We are called to reimagine what our industry could look like as we rebuild after COVID-19.

How can we:

★ Ensure equal opportunity and diverse leadership?
★ Make Washington, DC a welcoming and safe city for everyone to live in and travel to?
★ Honor and promote DC’s rich Black history and culture to tourists from all over the world?

It is imperative that we include young people in these conversations and empower them to be the future of our industry. Despite challenges they face, they remain curious, enthusiastic and ready to help rebuild our city and our industry. Thank you for being a part of this story.
Each year, hundreds of thousands of students travel to the nation’s capital to deepen their knowledge of history and culture. AEF’s field trips help deserving students across the country and here in Washington, DC.

**BACKYARD BOUND**

In October 2019, AEF hosted 20 members of Raising a Village’s Driven 2 Succeed program at DC’s H.D. Woodson High School for a day of exploring. Students toured the monuments with Old Town Trolley, posed with presidents and celebrities at Madame Tussauds, had lunch at Le Pain Quotidien, attended a special performance of August Wilson’s Fences at the historic Ford’s Theatre and visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

“It’s important to know the city you live in and understand the complexities of our community. Students had read and performed Fences at school, so getting to see that play performed at historic Ford’s Theatre by professional actors was an especially meaningful part of the day.”

Jaleesa Hall
Founder & CEO, Raising a Village
ACADEMIES FIELD TRIP

In January, AEF hosted 40 students from DC’s Academies of Hospitality and Tourism on a Backyard Bound field trip.

The group explored attractions, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the International Spy Museum and the recently reopened Washington Monument. Students slept in style at the Marriott Marquis Washington, DC and received a behind-the-scenes tour of the hotel.

Hyatt Place National Mall hosted them for a professional networking luncheon where they learned all about dining etiquette from the Etiquette Institute of Washington.

“There are so many people living in DC, but they don’t ever take the time to explore around or meet people from other parts of the city. There are a lot of opportunities that people should go out and seek.”

BREONA MENIEFIELD
Class of 2020, NAF Academy of Hospitality and Tourism
Maya Angelou Public Charter School
AEF and Destination DC have unique access to dedicated professionals who create remarkable experiences.

NYC TRIP

AEF’s annual Times Square Hotel Tour brought 30 students to the Big Apple in November 2019 for a behind-the-scenes tour of the New York Marriott Marquis and W New York - Times Square. Students were also treated to a VIP private night tour with Big Bus NYC, an escape room team-building experience at Clue Chase and dinner at Virgil’s Real BBQ.

Special thanks to Marquis General Manager Dan Nadeau and W Hotel Director of Operations Thomas Sturniolo for their hospitality, and to the Hotel Association of Washington, D.C. for their generous financial support of this field trip.

WASHINGTON AUTO SHOW

In January, the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association, a long-standing AEF partner, welcomed 30 students to its annual Media Day to kick off the 2020 Washington Auto Show. Students watched press conferences and interacted with representatives from the world’s largest auto makers. Ryan Alexander of the Calpro Group, which handles show production, took students behind the scenes.

ENCHANT CHRISTMAS

Last year, students heard from the Enchant Christmas producers about the time, effort and people needed to transform Nationals Park into a December winter wonderland. Decorators, electricians and sales teams informed students of their duties. The students then explored the light maze and ice rink.
NATIONAL JOB SHADOW DAY

Many know Feb. 2 as the day groundhogs see their shadow, but it is also a day when local hospitality professionals get a shadow of a different kind. Across the city, AEF helped place 65 students at 35 hospitality and tourism businesses for Job Shadow Day experiences.

Destination DC welcomed six students. In addition to learning all about working at a destination marketing organization, students got a firsthand look at how they work with partner businesses through tours of the Conrad Hotel and ARTECHOUSE.

Michelin-starred chef Nick Stefanelli and his team at Masseria welcomed two students from Ballou High School’s Academy of Culinary Arts to cook side-by-side with sous chef Ryan Smith.

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) welcomed 25 students to National Airport for a behind-the-scenes look at the thousands of career opportunities at the airport. Special thanks to Tanisha Lewis and the entire MWAA and National Airport teams.
The COVID-19 pandemic all but eliminated summer internship opportunities for students in DC’s Academies of Hospitality and Tourism, Academies of Mass Media and Career Bridge Program.

In the true spirit of hospitality, Destination DC and the American Experience Foundation worked with the Career Ready Internships program to offer 72 high school students a virtual summer internship.

While learning all about the hospitality and tourism industry, interns were asked to imagine how the industry can recover from the devastation of COVID-19 while working to make it more equitable.

These student interns were supported with nearly 50 guest speakers and 30 project judges for weekly presentations.

SPECIAL THANKS TO INTERNSHIP PARTNERS

You ran the best virtual hospitality internship program in the country!”

ALEX WILSON
Director of Academy of Hospitality & Tourism, Wilson High School
I enjoyed listening to [Destination DC Sports Sales Manager] Chris Thompson and [Washington Nationals Vice President of Corporate Strategy] Emily Dunham because sports is something that I am interested in doing as a career someday. I wasn’t aware that it could be such a big thing in the hospitality industry.”

[Destination DC President & CEO Elliott Ferguson and Visit Baltimore President & CEO Al Hutchinson] inspired me because they were both very outspoken and welcoming. I could relate to their stories and the things they said really stuck with me. They are very inspiring with the obstacles that they had overcome and the respect they have earned from others. It’s inspiring to see two Black men at the top.”

Dr. Erinn Tucker [Georgetown professor and co-founder of DMV Black Restaurant Week] and Bakari Ibrahim [Co-Founder of Caandor Labs] really showed us why it’s important to work together and support Black-owned businesses across our city.”
## Student Interns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Academic Programme</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaya Tyndle</td>
<td>Student Interns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darren Buchanan*</td>
<td>Student Interns</td>
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<tr>
<td>De'Anna Williams*</td>
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<td>Durell Ford</td>
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<td>Eryka Kornegay**</td>
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<td>Herbert Banks</td>
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<td>I'shawnna White*</td>
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<td>Jaden Randolph-Schoneck**</td>
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<td>Janae Lewis-Price**</td>
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<td>Jasmine Taylor</td>
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<td>Jazzmen Morant**</td>
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<td>Johnathan Jennings*</td>
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<td>Kahlil Slater*</td>
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<td>Layla Green**</td>
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<td>Le'Asyah Mays*</td>
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<td>Lesly Reyes**</td>
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<td>Luke Forcier**</td>
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<td>Kashmere Lewis**</td>
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<td>Kayla Watson*</td>
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<td>Kayla Cantarero-Flores*</td>
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<td>Kelly McCollum*</td>
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<td>Kyndal Barber**</td>
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<td>Mia Heyward**</td>
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<td>Monaia Swinson</td>
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<td>Mya Kelly</td>
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<td>Nakia Thomas**</td>
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<td>Nar'dya Sloan</td>
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<td>Racquel Jones*</td>
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<td>Ryan Howard*</td>
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<td>Sabrina Bouaichi*</td>
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<td>Sapriyah Hancock</td>
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<td>Sarah Etinoff</td>
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<td>Sascha Cannon*</td>
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<td>Stephen James**</td>
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<td>Sydni Lewis**</td>
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<td>Taiyler Henderson-Thorpe*</td>
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<td>Taria Short**</td>
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<td>Tori Barnett</td>
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<td>Vanessa Romero-Gutierrez**</td>
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<td>Yazmyne Dixon*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yesheatuwef Mulugeta**</td>
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*Completed all 6 weeks of the internship
**Completed all 6 weeks plus 2-week extension

Interns were from the DC Public Schools Academies of Hospitality & Tourism, Mass Media and Culinary Arts, and from the Career Bridge program for recent graduates.

Students came from eight DC public high schools: Anacostia, Ballou, Columbia Heights Educational Campus, Cardozo, Dunbar, Coolidge, Roosevelt and Wilson.

---

### How Can You Help?

Host a behind-the-scenes look at your company either during a field trip or a summer internship.
INTERNSHIP SPEAKERS & JUDGES

PRISCILLA ALVAREZ  
International Sales Coordinator, Destination DC

RICO ASHAB  
Executive Assistant to the President & CEO, Destination DC

NALELI ASKEW  
Events Operations Manager, District Experience

BRIGITTE BÉLANGER-WARNER  
Canadian Media & Marketing Specialist, Virginia Tourism Corporation

THERESA BELPULSI  
Vice President of Tourism, Sports & Visitor Services, Destination DC

RAY BENNETT  
Chief Global Officer of Global Operations, Marriott International

MICHAEL BORRIS  
National Account Manager, PSAV

RON BRACCO  
Vice President of Events, Hargrove

CLAIRE CARLIN  
Vice President of Partnerships & Alliances, Destination DC

TYLER CARROL  
International Marketing Manager, Virginia Tourism Corporation

REGINALD CHARLOT  
Managing Director of Tourism Development, NYC & Company & Chair, IGLTA Foundation

TORRI CHRISTIAN  
Associate Director of Marketing, Destination DC

JEROME DAVIS  
Executive Vice President & Chief Revenue Officer, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

DANIELLE DAVIS  
Director of Communications, Destination DC

EMILY DUNHAM  
Vice President of Corporate Strategy, Washington Nationals

ELLIOTT L. FERGUSON  
President & CEO, Destination DC

ALEX GNAFAKIS  
Creative Director, Destination DC

AUSTIN GRAFF  
Manager of Acquisition & Branding, The Washington Post

CARA HEDGEPETH  
Senior Social Media Community Advisor, AARP

DAWN HOLDEN  
Former Vice President of Membership Engagement, Destinations International

AL HUTCHINSON  
President & CEO, Visit Baltimore

BAKARI IBRAHIM  
Co-Founder, Caandor Labs

LILLIAN IVERSEN  
Vice President, National Cherry Blossom Festival

BRITT JULIOUS  
Columnist, Chicago Tribune & Freelance Writer

ERIC KINCAID  
National Account Director, Destination DC

DR. SELENI MATUS  
Executive Director, George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies
ROBIN MCCLAIN
Senior Vice President of Marketing & Communications, Destination DC

TARA MILLER
International Account Sales Director, Destination DC

THOMAS PENNY
President, Donohoe Hospitality

JEAN RILEY
Senior Event Manager, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

MELISSA RILEY
Vice President of Sales & Services, Destination DC

JENNIFER RODRIGUES
National Account Sales Director, Destination DC

GAURI SARIN
Director of Events & Activations, Streetsense

LETIZIA SIRTORI
Director of Tourism Sales, Destination DC

STACY EACHO SMITH
General Manager, Hyatt Place National Mall & Chair, Destination DC Board of Directors

BRUNO SCHWARTZ
Director of Membership, Destination DC

CHRIS THOMPSON
Sports Sales Manager, Destination DC

DR. ERINN TUCKER
Director of the Global Hospitality Leadership Program, Georgetown University & Co-Founder, DMV Black Restaurant Week

MELISSA RILEY
Vice President of Sales & Services, Destination DC

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CHRIS THOMPSON
Sports Sales Manager, Destination DC

DR. ERINN TUCKER
Director of the Global Hospitality Leadership Program, Georgetown University & Co-Founder, DMV Black Restaurant Week

PONNEH VARHO
Managing Partner, Isaacson, Miller Washington, DC

EMILY VECCHIONI
Member Events Manager, Destination DC

DIANNA WALDROUP
Director of Convention Services, Destination DC

PROJECT JUDGES

ANA MARTINEZ CHAMORRO
Ana Isabel Photography

ANDREA HOSTETLER
National Cherry Blossom Festival

CAROLINE CAMPBELL
U.S. Travel Association

CRISTINA GOSPODIN
Sofitel Lafayette Square

DIANA MAYHEW
National Cherry Blossom Festival

ELIZABETH JACQUES
Liz Stewart Photography

ERIN ALIAJ
Booking Holdings

FELICIA RUFFINO
Brasserie Liberté / Ottoman Taverna / Al Dente / Mirabelle

KATE BURNS
Leading Authorities, Inc.

KATHLEEN NELSON
Skylark Creative Group

KATHRYN KEANE
National Geographic Museum

LEE CALLICUTT
Visit Montgomery

MARI RODELA
DC Brau Brewing

MARTIN HAMBURGER
Hamburger Gibson Creative

NAN MARCHAND BEAUVOIS
U.S. Travel Association

NORA THOMAS
U.S. Travel Association

PATRICK REVORD
The Wharf

RANDY HERRON
Herron Printing & Graphics

RAUF SHAKIR
USA Guided Tours

RENE MCCOY
Hersha Hospitality West End Hotel Collection

SARA MALLOY
The Mayflower Hotel

SOCRATES CALA
CalPro Group

STEFAN MIREVSKI
The Capital Hilton

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
Share your expertise by serving as a judge, guest speaker or host employer.

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“I wanted to intern with AEF because I want to major in hospitality and tourism. I really enjoyed [the internship] because I learned so much about how a destination marketing organization works. My dream job is to be an event coordinator because I love to organize, be creative and multitask. I also love to work with kids and help people.”

“Not only have I gained valuable insight into the function and recovery of the hospitality industry, but I have also had the opportunity to network with industry professionals I otherwise may not have had access to. The experience has strengthened my interest in pursuing this career field. I look forward to being a part of the change that will help recover and sustain our industry.”

Maria Sharmin interned with AEF all year, through a partnership with Urban Alliance. Maria graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in June 2020 and attends Temple University. Among her many internship accomplishments, Maria authored and designed our monthly newsletter.

Zoe Roberts is a three-time winner of the AEF Scholarship. Before COVID-19 disrupted the industry, she was a front office lead for the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in addition to taking on a full course load at George Mason University. During her summer internship with AEF, Zoe helped create and manage the Career Ready Internships program.
“After getting an opportunity to join Destination DC and AEF on National Job Shadow Day, I was eager to become an intern with them over the summer. The internship helped me make connections with leaders, taught me new skills, and made me more professional.”

“One thing I loved about interning at DDC and AEF was how involved they were with teenagers like me. Seeing the previous students who interned with them continue to be supported by them even after the internship was over, showed me how important the youth are to the company as a whole. I was immediately welcomed, with no judgement I might add, and it helped me work on skills that will help me in the future. I am aware that students are the future and DDC helped mold me into my full potential and every student deserves that opportunity.”

Anura Sharma, a 2022 student in the Academy at Columbia Heights Educational Campus brought curiosity and a global perspective to her Career Ready Internship. She turned her final internship project focused on a DC traveler safety kit into a full submission to the UNWTO Hospitality Challenge.

Makayla Cruz, a 2020 graduate of the Academy at Columbia Heights Educational Campus was an AEF and Destination DC Career Ready Intern in 2019 and is a current freshman at North Carolina A&T State University. She testified at the Destination DC 2020 Performance Oversight Hearing for the DC City Council, on what the American Experience Foundation means to high school students like her.
SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

GREGORY MCCARTHY
LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP

Makayla Cruz
North Carolina A&T State University
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus)

David Iselein Award for Community Service

Adame Temesgen
University of Rochester
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus)

AEF Scholarship

Jermaine Evans
Fayetteville State University
(Woodrow Wilson Senior High School)

AEF Alumni Scholarship

Deranique Graydon
University of the District of Columbia
(Frank Ballou Senior High School)

AEF Alumni Honorariums

Lauren Brown
Howard University
(Woodrow Wilson Senior High School)

Jose Martinez
Marymount University
(Columbia Heights Educational Campus)

Amya McKoy
Bowie State University
(Frank Ballou Senior High School)

Zoe Roberts
George Mason University
(Frank Ballou Senior High School)

How can you help?
Your gift of $2,500 will fund an AEF scholarship. Make your donation, in any amount, by visiting AmericanExperienceFoundation.org/Donate
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Regional Account Manager
PSAV

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President & CEO
Destination DC

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Teacher
McLean School

**JAMES MACGREGOR**
VP, Local Markets
American City Business Journals, Inc

**GREGORY MCCARTHY**
VP, Community Engagement
Washington Nationals

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Director, Events + Activations
Streetsense

**STACY EACHO SMITH**
General Manager
Hyatt Place National Mall

**GAIL SMITH-HOWARD**
General Manager
Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill

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**LISA WALDSCHMITT**
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American Experience Foundation
202-789-7065
lisa@americanexperiencefoundation.org
How can you help?

Share your time, expertise or business with students. You have resources and access to help young people.

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Your gift of $100 directly supports work-based learning opportunities for a future hospitality and tourism leader. Make your donation by visiting AmericanExperienceFoundation.org/Donate

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Elliott Ferguson & Telesa Via

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Randy Herron
Deborah Streater

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Ray Bialek
Brock Carroll

SUPPORTERS
Kimberly Araya
Terrell Calloway
Danielle Campana
Katelyn Campbell
Jared Carroll
Meg Caulk
Taylor Dabney
Henry De Leon
Macy Dolton

Rebecca Doser
Josh Feldman
Carla Glynn
Caroline Graves
Dana Hansen
Shelby Luzzi
Kirsten Lyman
Brandon Murray
Carly Norosky

Monica Orr
Ross Pattison
Lucas Queiroz Pires
Sheila Robinson
Talita Schwartz
Suzanne Shogren
Bethann Siegel
Hope Smith

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Martin Hamburger
Lisa Hill
Mathew Jahromi
Lajuana Jones
Ryan & Chelsea Kaiser
Dennis Koster
Josie Schiavone
Hari Seldon
Robert Vizza

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Richard Carlin
John Kim
Beatriz Lopez
Robin McClain
Jennifer Rodrigues
Melissa Riley
Bruno Schwartz
David Touhey
Katarina Vercelli

Ray Bialek
Brock Carroll

Vanessa Ryan
Merike Henneman
Tara Miller
Bruno Schwartz

Katarina Vercelli

Tara Miller
Bruno Schwartz

Hope Smith

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The American Experience Foundation is the 501(c)(3) charity affiliated with Destination DC, the official destination marketing organization for the nation’s capital. Through this affiliation with Destination DC and its 1,000+ member businesses, AEF is uniquely positioned to open doors for students, filling a need for career exposure and paths to success with inspirational travel opportunities and real-life educational experiences.

This work is made possible through the generosity of more than 60 local hospitality, meetings and tourism businesses and organizations with leaders who choose to partner with AEF and invest in the future of Washington, DC.

AMERICANEXPERIENCEFOUNDATION.ORG