



Jacob's  Ladder
an enrichment program

Year End Report
2015

Jacob's Ladder is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Our mission

At Jacob's Ladder, our mission is to aid and encourage marginalized, exceptional students to reach their full potential. We focus on and address the issues and problems brought about by poverty, home/family instability, or the lack of opportunity for intellectually gifted, at-risk children in grades 4-8.

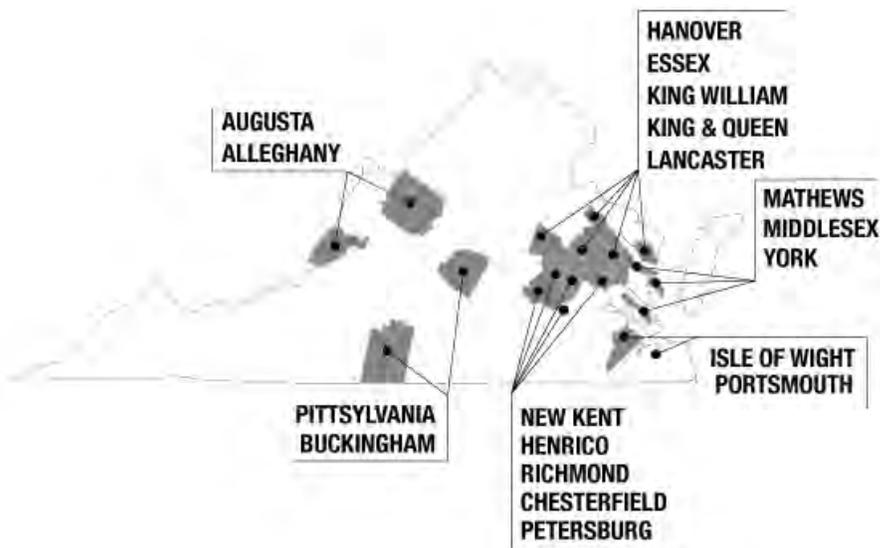
We realize our mission by:

- fostering their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development;
- providing support and information to the family unit;
- offering guidance in planning for advanced educational opportunities.

With this holistic encouragement as a background, these students – whom we call Climbers – become leaders equipped to help others in similar economic and social environs.



The summer of 2015 began with the largest group of children participating in the Jacob's Ladder Summer Residential Enrichment Camp ever! We were blessed to have a total of 60 Climbers. The incoming class of new Climbers in fourth or fifth grade totaled 23. These Climbers represented the state of Virginia, with students coming from the Blue Ridge foothill communities of Waynesboro City and Augusta County; the metro area of Richmond; the rural regions of Tidewater; and the cities of Portsmouth and Suffolk.



During the annual Climber Spring Retreat, Climbers chose to title the 2015 summer camp "Ubuntu: I am what I am because of who we all are." For the four weeks of summer camp, the community of Jacob's Ladder focused on creating "Ubuntu".

With a staff to student ratio of 1:8, the end goal of the summer camp was to enrich, enlarge, and engage the mind, body, and spirit of each Climber. We instilled the essentials of respect, curiosity, growth, courage, generosity, self-discipline, decorum, and faith.

To nurture the mind, body, and spirit we take a holistic approach with activities that allow encouragement and enrichment where the student may need it most. The rhythm of the day flows with morning classes designed for academic



“Magic, Mayhem, and Mavericks: The History of Chemistry”. Making ice cream using chemistry is delicious!



Origami was used as a tool to teach Japanese language and culture.



Kayaking and canoeing on the Rappahannock - mixing learning with fun and exercise.



“Hey, Fish Face!” Climbers created art prints from fish caught in the Rappahannock River.



Set designers paint scenes for a production of Tarzan.



Classes in storytelling, poetry, improvisation and French were also quite popular.

enrichment, afternoon activities for outdoor play, and evening to wind down. Each class, club, field trip, and activity reaches into the focus areas of mind, body, and spirit.

Not all classes were built around traditional subjects such as foreign language, science, history, or English. In fact, many courses focused on life-skills, such as the “Pros and Cons for Peacekeepers, or how to win an argument without bloodshed”, or “Interview Like a Boss”.

In the afternoons, Climbers had many opportunities to learn and perfect skills in swimming, kayaking, performing arts, dance, ukulele, and yoga. A typical day in camp would often end with club activities that included board games, baking, duct tape crafts, improv clubs, karate, talent shows, and poetry readings.

There was also time to be generous and give back to the community through participation in the Anthem LemonAid Stand, raising money for childhood cancer research. Climbers and RAs also helped the Local Children’s Community Theatre with set design and with the local



Jacob’s Ladder Climber participating in the Anthem LemonAid Stand.

Rotary Club on their Shelter Box project.

Jacob's Ladder is able to impact gifted middle school children by encouraging them to think about their future and their potential possibilities. We are able to move impulsive fourth and fifth grade students having no direction or vision to becoming a teen who sees high school not as an end of their education but a springboard to the possibilities of college and beyond. The need for our type of program is made evident by the increase in our numbers and a growing waiting list.

The retention rate for Climbers in Jacob's Ladder is 97%.

The Path to Sustainability

As we enter the 25th year of Jacob's Ladder, the organization is poised to continue the enrichment and encouragement offered to intellectually gifted, at-risk students. The retention rate for Climbers in the four to five year program commitment for Jacob's Ladder is 97%. In short, only 3% of our total Climbers in the last 24 years have not completed the program. Our growing waiting list indicates that Jacob's Ladder is needed both today and in the future. The working relationship between Jacob's Ladder and public school counselors in Virginia continues to grow and the success stories of Climbers navigating their respective schools and communities follow them into college.

The longitudinal success of Jacob's Ladder is echoed by the **Advocacy/Follow-up** portion of the program. This supportive arm follows students all year long and through their high school years. With this support, current Climbers are provided enrichment opportunities to attend professional holiday concerts, a Climber Spring Retreat, and allow Jacob's Ladder to foster purposeful communication with guidance counselors and family. Perhaps the best indication that Jacob's Ladder changes lives is voiced by a mother of a Climber returning to participate in an outreach art day sponsored by St. Margaret's School. She said, "When we made the turn and could see St. Margaret's School, my son gave a hearty sigh and said, 'Boy, it feels good to be back here'."



The Advocacy portion of the program also arranges for graduate Climbers to participate as a group in service projects. This year, with the Society of St. Andrew's Harvest of Hope, a faith-based hunger relief mission, Jacob's Ladder alumni gleaned sweet corn from fields in the Northern Neck of Virginia.

Graduate Climbers now attending high school benefit from special speaking engagements, the possibility of attending college preparatory schools, written recommendations on college applications, general counsel, and encouragement to navigate these precarious years. Over the last 24 years, 99% of the graduates of Jacob's Ladder have graduated from high school. Of those graduates, 94% enter college with the remaining 6% entering the military or seeking other continuing education options.



Where do they go?

Jacob's Ladder graduates are attending or are graduates of:

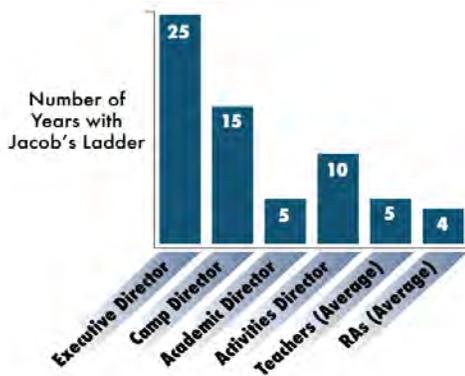
- VCU
- Duke University
- University of Texas
- Mary Washington University
- North Carolina Central
- University of Richmond
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Stanford
- Yale
- Brown
- Dartmouth
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Chicago
- Boston University
- Old Dominion University
- Georgetown University
- College of William & Mary
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
- University of Virginia
- Virginia Tech

To date over \$10 million in scholarships has been awarded to Climbers.

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Under the guidance of a prudent **executive director and board of directors**, the financial future of Jacob's Ladder is strong. The base of friends and donors is increasing, while long-term relationships with foundations continue to be nurtured. The two fund raising activities held by Jacob's Ladder, the Golf Tournament in the spring and the Oyster Tasting in the fall, continue to be steady in volunteer hours, corporate sponsors, and individual friends as contributors.

The quality of the Jacob's Ladder Enrichment Program continues to develop due to the yearly return of teachers eager to interact with gifted students. We continue to draw from the well of alumni Climbers who are dedicated to give back to the organization that deeply impacted their lives as they return to become Residential Advisors (RAs). Eleven of the sixteen RAs and on-dorm advisors for the 2015 Summer Enrichment Camp were alumni Climbers.



Years of experience of key personnel within Jacob's Ladder.

The following letters were shared by Jacob's Ladder Board of Directors.

A dominant trait that I've observed among those who complete the program of Jacob's Ladder is gratitude. This is very evident to anyone who spends a day or two at summer camp in the respectful manner in which they treat every person on the campus – from fellow students to the director to the maintenance staff. These young people genuinely appreciate the opportunity given to them and take advantage of all that it offers.

The percentage of graduates who go to college exceeds 95% and the high rate of receiving a bachelor's degree in four years far exceeds the national average. They have learned the importance of focusing on a goal – which is often challenging for highly gifted individuals because they have so many diverse interests.

As these young men and women complete their higher education and become contributing members to society, they seem driven to return a part of themselves for all they have received. Frequently this is apparent either in the professions they choose or in the way they dedicate their "after-work hours" to causes that benefit others.

Jacob's Ladder opened doors for these incredibly intelligent and talented young people; they embraced the opportunities; and it is now our turn to appreciate the roles these individuals play in contributing to our society and our world.

Peg Davis

Vice Chair, Jacob's Ladder Board of Directors



Board members, teachers, former Climbers and staff gather for a fun picture following the 2015 Oyster Tasting. Three former Climbers currently serve as board members for Jacob's Ladder.

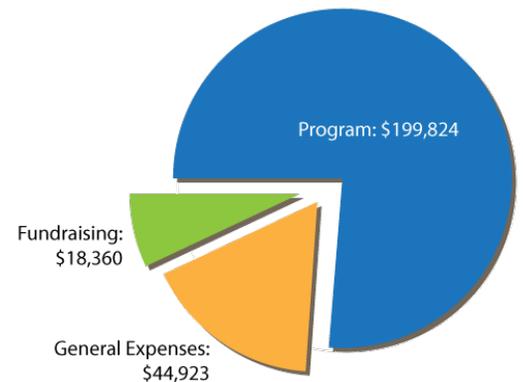
Jacob's Ladder is preparing to celebrate its 25th year of helping at-risk middle school youth succeed. I am proud to have been a board member for most of those years. I have also taught in the program for quite a few years. I have seen Jacob's Ladder grow from an idea into a successful summer enrichment program. One of the most impressive things I have witnessed with this program is how it changes not only the individual Climber but entire families. I love hearing about parents who decide to go back to school, encouraged by their children's success. I love how Jacob's Ladder exposes not only the Climbers, but entire families to cultural events which were beyond the scope of possibility before the child entered the program. I am proud of the Climbers who have overcome such bizarre obstacles in their young lives to become successful tax-paying citizens. I love how Jacob's Ladder gives these at-risk middle school children a safe, caring, encouraging, and academically challenging place to grow and feel secure in their abilities. I am most impressed with the capability of the Climbers to achieve the poise and talent to speak and perform in public. I love how the theme that "much is required from those to whom much is given" is an integral part of Jacob's Ladder. In following this premise, the Climbers not only give back to the local community while they are enrolled in the program, graduates go on mission trips as varied as gleaning fields for a local food bank, building homes in Appalachia, or painting a school in Guatemala. I am also amazed at how many of the Climbers return to Jacob's Ladder and work as Resident Advisors. These young college students are wonderful role models for the current Climbers.

During the summer enrichment camp, each evening Climbers share the positive events of the day and how the program has helped them. The bond these children make with each other and with their Resident Advisors is amazing and such a valuable empowering part of Jacob's Ladder. Each year, the Climbers write a letter explaining why they want to return the next year. The majority of the Climbers write about their new found family in the Jacob's Ladder community. To be a part of this community is an honor and blessing not only for the Climbers, but also for those of us who serve on the board or as faculty members.

Bruce Hemp
Jacob's Ladder Board of Directors, Educator



Chart indicating revenue vs expenses through 2014 reporting period.



Program and other expenses from the 2013-2014 reporting period.

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The Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge

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