



# THE COLLEGE BOUNDER

## FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE BOUND, INC.

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### FGCB IS THE ZOOM OF COLLEGE SUCCESS

First Generation College Bound faced several challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many organizations, our staff faced some degree of challenge in working from home; balancing home-schooling children while working, and experiencing feelings of isolation caused by the imposed limitations on gathering in the community. This time, brought to mind the quote, “Humans are at their best when disaster strikes.” We have all done our best to face and overcome the challenges the pandemic has brought.

Our communication with students and parents was disrupted. While we initially called and emailed students, we lost in-person and group meetings during, and after school. We could no longer do home visits due to COVID restrictions. Our staff recognized the need to overcome these barriers because college recruitment, application, and federal and state financial aid deadlines still had to be met.

As it has for many during the pandemic, Zoom became the primary platform for FGCB college coaches to communicate with our students. Zoom was a light in the darkness. We were excited by its capabilities and found that the software had a lot in common with our college success model.

#### Meeting Families Where They Are

It has always been our goal to meet students and parents where they are in their knowledge of the college bound process and get them to the finish line. Because many of our families have transportation challenges, before the pandemic, we did home visits to ensure that parents received the necessary information. Zoom allowed our coaching staff to continue meeting with students and parents, individually and in groups.

#### Removing Barriers

We were able to conduct “Winning Attitude College Bound Workshops,” virtually, making it even easier than our in-person workshops for students and parents to attend. Like the barriers we aim to remove for students to attend, pay for, and graduate college, Zoom eliminated the barriers in communication and engagement caused by the pandemic.

As a result, attendance at these workshops is up and we were able to offer some of these workshops to all students attending Prince George’s County high schools.

#### Making Connections

FGCB was able to sustain our partnerships with colleges and community partners so that we could also continue offering college bound workshops for our high school students.

FGCB has strived over the years to provide opportunities for our college students and alumni to speak to our high school seniors and were able

to continue to facilitate those dialogues virtually. Via Zoom, our college students and alumni were able to go into the homes of our high school seniors to share the challenges and successes they’ve experienced.

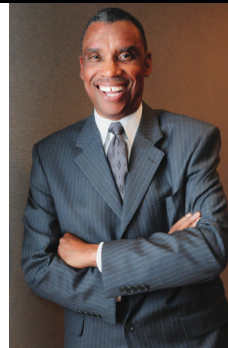
#### Overcoming Challenges & Customizing Solutions

Our program encourages students to identify their challenges and work with their coaches to create customized strategies to overcome them. The coronavirus pandemic challenged FGCB by disrupting our regular method of communication and program engagement. Through Zoom, we were able to customize solutions—from meetings to webinars; large groups and breakout sessions; annotation and more—to overcome these challenges so that we could provide advice, encouragement, and support for college success.

I close with this quote from notable author John Maxwell: “In order to achieve your dreams, you must embrace adversity and make it a regular part of your life. If you’re not failing, you’re probably not moving forward.”

Celebrate your forward progress today!

Joseph Fisher, CEO and Founder



Joseph Fisher  
CEO and Founder



### POWERFUL MESSAGES: FGCB STUDENTS & ALUMNI ADDRESS 2020 GRADUATES

Each June, FGCB holds a graduation celebration honoring our students who are graduating high school, receiving Associate’s, Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral degrees. We are honored that many of our students stay connected to our organization well beyond college graduation.

These students have beaten the odds that say many low-income students won’t graduate high school, much less to earn a bachelor’s or advanced degree. We see in our students a drive to move beyond the circumstances to which they were born. We see a resilience that is unmatched.

The graduation celebration is usually held at the University of Maryland College Park with 500 students, parents, family, friends, and educators present. Of course, in 2020, as we will also do again this year, we had to go online. But, that

didn’t stop our graduates from demonstrating just how resilient they can be – every speaker was an FGCB student or alumni, and they made us so proud.

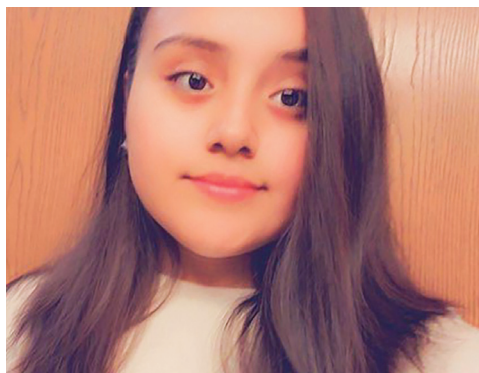
#### Setting the Stage

The online event, which honored 185 high school graduates, 18 students receiving associate degrees, and 33 students earning bachelor’s degrees, was emceed by Gavin Brown, FGCB alumni and chair of the FGCB board of directors. Gavin set a consistently upbeat tone for the evening and challenged students to “Face your fears, follow your faith and forget your failures.”

#### College Bound

Those words must have meant a lot to Emma Hill, then a High Point High School graduating senior

Powerful Messages continued on page 10



**LUZ GAYTAN**

**“It has been abnormal to say the least.” Parkdale High School sophomore, Luz Gaytan, speaks for many when she describes her high school experience.**

“With the pandemic hitting at the end of my first year in high school and then entering sophomore year on a completely virtual platform for learning, everything has been different,” says Luz, who has been part of FGCB’s Great Minds Great Futures (GMGF) program since the 2019-2020 academic year.

“However,” the sophomore says, “I’ve had a lot of great academic opportunities and have been doing great with my grades.”

GMGF prepares eligible students like Luz to take advantage of the state’s Howard P. Rawlings’ Guaranteed Access (GA) grant to attend college. Our valued partner, Career Puppy, offers workshops to our GMGF students that raise awareness about possible career paths. Luz has

especially found the Career Puppy survey she took as a freshman to be helpful.

That initial survey, Luz says, “opened me up to a world where I knew what to search.” “Now,” she says, “I know what to look for in a college when it comes to the major, and a career I now know is a fit for me.”

Being part of FGCB, she says, “has shown me the importance of goals. My immediate goals are to continue doing great in school and graduate. My long-term goals are getting a master’s or PhD in computer science and an undergraduate degree in business administration.”

Even though she’s participated in GMGF for less than two years, “with the skills I learned, my GPA has not dropped below a 4.15 and I’ve joined the International Baccalaureate program at Parkdale. Overall, I can thank FGCB for my great academic success.”



**JEFERSON TURCIOS RIVERA**

**Parkdale High School 11th grader, Jeferson Turcios Rivera, says his family has been coping well during the pandemic, although they went through a tough stretch when his dad, and only wage earner in the family, was laid off from work for two months.**

Jeferson is an outstanding student, maintaining a 4.0 GPA, but he feels learning virtually is more demanding than in-person learning. Given the heavier workload, he appreciates the extra support he received from his FGCB coach who took extra time to speak with him about managing his mental health and his schoolwork. Jeferson hopes to maintain his GPA and looks forward to working with FGCB to begin the college application process.

**Next Generation Scholars funding from the Maryland State Department of Education allows FGCB to support these students through high school graduation.**

**Private funding allows FGCB to continue to support these students through college graduation.**



**SHANNOI PEART**

**One of five children of a single mother, Shannoi Peart expects to graduate from Parkdale with the Class of 2021, but she says, “I’d be lying if I said this school year has been a breeze. The beginning of the school year was hectic, between completing my finals for IB (International Baccalaureate) and applying for colleges.”**

“Remote learning, in the beginning, wasn’t so bad, but as the workload began to pile, I started to procrastinate, lose time management, and wasn’t as productive as I’d like to be.” But she said, “I learned from Mrs. Onokoko [lead GMGF Coach] to prioritize my mental health and take things one step at a time.”

“For a long time, I knew that I wanted to go to college,” Shannoi says, “but I had no idea and no resources of how to afford it...FGCB has made it

possible and has restored hope in me even when I had my doubts. While being with FGCB, I have truly grown. I am forever grateful and will cherish the advice, experience, and support FGCB has given me.”

“My immediate goals are to finish strong and graduate,” the Shannoi says. “During the summer I’d just like to prepare myself for college, practice time management, discipline myself, and explore my interests.”

“As for the future,” Shannoi says, “I just hope by then, I know what I won’t do and take the steps to obtain what I want in life.”

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Shannoi graduated from Parkdale High School on May 26, 2021.



# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? 30 YEARS & COUNTING



October 16, 2020 was the 30th anniversary of the founding of First Generation College Bound. We intended to have a gala celebration, and invite as many of our alumni as we could locate, to commemorate this special milestone. Since many nonprofits don't make it past the 10-year mark, we consider this to be a remarkable achievement.

FGCB has stayed true to its vision that one day every Marylander will have access to an affordable college education. We're proud of what we've accomplished in our first three decades to make college affordable for low-income students. As a result, we've helped almost 2,500 students to become the first in their families to attend college, 765 have earned bachelor's or advanced degrees and 1,515 are still in college.

With a live celebration out of the question, we

still wondered what our alumni were up to. This led to our virtual Where are They Now? event. We invited alumni from each of the last three decades to tell us about their journey.

While we planned the in-person event to be a roast of Joe Fisher, FGCB's founder, the virtual event turned into a virtual thank you card from alumni with a deep appreciation for how Mr. Fisher and his wife Pat affected students' lives.



**LONNIE MOORE**

**LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 1991  
BA, MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY 1997  
LEAD TRAINING COORDINATOR,  
US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
MINISTER, NEW LIFE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Lonnie referred to Mr. Fisher as an angel, who followed him around, even when he tried to hide. Mr. Fisher was the first African American man who showed an interest in Lonnie. "He saw something in me that I didn't see in myself," he said. While Lonnie had plans to enter the workforce after high school, with the help of Mr. Fisher, he attended Potomac State College instead. After earning an associate degree, Lonnie went on to Morgan State to earn a BA in Sociology. Referring to Mr. Fisher,

Lonnie said, "He steered my ship in the right direction."

Lonnie was the first in his family to earn a four-year degree and he has inspired 20 other family members to earn Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees. He challenged participants gathered for the celebration to be the change they want to see, just as Mr. Fisher was that change for him. He asked that those gathered give Mr. and Mrs. Fisher a virtual standing ovation.



**ALONZO WASHINGTON**

**LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2002  
BA, CRIMINAL JUSTICE,  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 2007  
DELEGATE, MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY,  
22ND DISTRICT  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CASA IN ACTION**

Raised by a single mother along with his five siblings, Washington says his mother was thrilled when Mr. Fisher knocked at the door and said he wanted to help her children to go to college. He however, was initially suspicious. When the family was evicted during his junior year of high school, Mr. Fisher provided Washington with the stability he needed by moving Washington in with the Fisher family.

Washington fondly remembered how Mr. and Mrs. Fisher and the FGCB family helped him on his college journey. Mrs. Fisher edited his college essays and Mr. Fisher visited him on campus and brought him a computer, printer, and ink cartridge. Washington says an important part of the FGCB work is how they stay in touch with students during college.

Today, Washington is in the senior leadership in the Maryland General Assembly, where he

chairs the Ways and Means Committee, and is the first African American chair of the Education subcommittee, which oversees education policy. In these roles, he can pay it forward by fighting for kids, low-income people, and black and brown families to ensure that they have access to education and that there is funding to support those policies. Washington also serves as a co-chair of the Police Reform workgroup in Prince George's County to reform the police accountability system.

In December 2020, Washington was appointed as the first Executive Director of CASA in Action, an organization mobilizing immigrant and working-class voters to elect progressive leaders supporting immigrants and communities of color.

Crediting FGCB with helping him to become a state delegate and to become the leader of a nonprofit organization, Washington said, "I am so grateful for this organization; for what they've done for me and for my family." He expressed gratitude to the Fishers for the love and kindness they've shown to so many. "Thank you for getting me to where I am today."



**JASMINE KNIGHT**

**ELEANOR ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2011  
BA, MCDANIEL COLLEGE, 2016  
HR SPECIALIST, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

Demonstrating the long-term commitment that FGCB makes to the students it serves, Jasmine was introduced to FGCB when she was in kindergarten. She was disappointed that she had to wait a year to join the Homework Club, which begins with first grade. Jasmine describes herself as an enthusiast for FGCB. "This program helped me to get excited about school; get excited about the possibility of going to college." Mr. Fisher and FGCB made it possible to achieve that college

dream through persistent and consistent guidance.

Though Jasmine intended to attend Morgan State University, when Mr. Fisher suggested that she attend McDaniel College instead, she trusted his guidance and followed his recommendation. She thanked Mr. Fisher for cheering her on through college and attending her college graduation. A mom of two, Jasmine is an HR Specialist at the Department of Defense. She also started a business to help mothers like herself with self-development and is in the process of writing a book.



**CINDY HERNANDEZ**

**LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2006  
BA IN FAMILY SCIENCE & SPANISH,  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK, 2010  
LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER  
& MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTANT  
CLINICAL THERAPIST, BEHAVIORAL  
AND EDUCATIONAL SOLUTIONS**

Born in Washington, DC Cindy grew up in El Salvador, and returned to the US at age 14 with limited English. She had a drive to go to college and said her geometry teacher introduced her to FGCB. Education was important in her family, but they didn't know how to help her to achieve her college dream. FGCB took her on college tours, provided financial aid workshops, connected her with other resources, and even assisted with proofreading her college essays. She received reminders to apply for federal and state financial aid and assistance in completing the forms. She does not think she would have achieved the things she has without the program which allowed Cindy

to obtain her bachelor's and master's degrees in six years with minimal college debt. Through FGCB, she learned to advocate for herself.

"First Generation College Bound is not just any program; it is a community," Cindy said. She continues to get calls from Mr. Fisher as she did when she was in college. Today, as a licensed clinical social worker, Cindy provides mental health consultations for children, ages 0-5, in childcare centers. As one of few bilingual clinicians, she can work with children and families in English and Spanish. "I am here because First Generation College Bound made it happen for me and now, I am able to help a lot of people."





Alumni in Action, FGCB's 9th Annual College Retention and Alumni Social, highlighted alumni who are creating change and paying it forward. One way they are paying it forward is by sharing advice with the students who are coming behind them. Six FGCB alumni shared their wisdom with current FGCB college students, and for the first time, FGCB high school seniors. The panel was moderated by Bridget Akinbobola, an FGCB alumna and included Erin Keyes, Natasha Ryals, Gavin Brown, Justia Cox, Anita Johnson, and Eric Sellers.



ERIN KEYES

## FGCB IS THERE

Affiliated with FGCB since 2010 (11th grade)

**Wisdom:** FGCB has been there for every step of her journey, and she reminded students that when you need a pick me up, when you worry about where the book money will come from, and when you think things are bleak and gloomy with no hope in sight, First Generation College Bound will be there. "No matter where it looks like your path is headed, you have people in your corner to help you make the best of it. No matter what you think you can't do, and what you think your circumstances have dictated to you, you have people in your corner to help you make the best of that situation. No matter how much it may look like the world is against you and things are falling apart, you have people in your corner to help make the best of your situation and First Generation College Bound will be there."



NATASHA RYALS

## FACE THINGS TO CHANGE THINGS

Affiliated with FGCB since 2006

**Wisdom:** "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced." This quotation from African American novelist, playwright and activist, James Baldwin" has been Natasha's "north star." She reminded students that completing the FAFSA, writing essays, and applying to one more college may be tedious, but are important to getting to where you want to go. The opportunities that FGCB created for her "as it relates to leadership, as it relates to giving back and creating a better tomorrow have been life changing." In conclusion, Natasha challenged students with, "May we face things to change things."



GAVIN BROWN

## TAKE THE FIRST STEP

Affiliated with FGCB since 1990 (4th grade)

**Wisdom:** Resiliency was the title of a conference Gavin attend as a young person with FGCB. "It's a pretty fancy word for bouncing back. I believe that no matter where you go, no matter where you find yourself, there [are] always opportunities to bounce back." He's learned: "dreams and intentions without a plan is only a wish. In other words, failing to plan is planning to fail." Gavin challenged, "Are you willing to put steps in place and also willing to take the first step? When you take the first step, the second step becomes clearer." Take advantage of your opportunities he implored. "When you take the first step, great things will continue to happen for you."

Joe Fisher closed the event by expressing pride in the many FGCB students and alumni and challenged the high school and college students in attendance to graduate college and pay it forward by sharing their wisdom with the students who will come behind them. Quoting John Maxwell, Mr. Fisher shared “one is too small a number to achieve greatness.” For 30 years, he has shown nearly 2,500 students that they don’t have to do it alone, because ‘FGCB is there.’



JUSTIA COX

## ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF

Affiliated with FGCB since 2006

**Wisdom:** Justia goes back to her high school and speaks with other students about “the importance of advocating for yourself.” In college, professors or the financial aid office are not going to speak with your parents. “You have to learn how to speak up for yourself. Ask for the things that you want.” As a graduate of two predominantly white institutions (PWI), Justia stressed the importance of “not taking no for an answer” particularly as a minority and as a woman in the technology field, where women are underrepresented.

“It is critical to approach college with a strategy,” in terms of where you go to school and the cost. Reflecting on the rising cost of college and student loan debt, “you want to make sure that you are getting a return on your investment,” Justia stressed. “Set yourself up for success; set yourself up to be noticed.” Ask yourself, what am I getting out of going to a particular college, choosing a degree, participating in an internship, or working for a company? Start with the end in mind.” Justia’s career path has included work in a lot of different industries, so she reminded students, “Where you get to is really just a sum of all your experiences. Everything you do is a tool to help you in the next phase of life.”



ANITA M. JOHNSON

## TAKE THE LESSONS FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES

Affiliated with FGCB since 1992 (2nd grade)

**Wisdom:** Anita’s wisdom came from her experiences. “It doesn’t matter how long it takes you to get to where you are going,” she told students. “Never let how long it takes deter you.” She learned this lesson from being forced to leave college on her first try due to poor study skills and poor grades. She returned later to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees with internships at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and at the White House during the Obama Administration along with other jobs between both degrees. “Don’t let you being the only one in your family deter you,” she added as the only one of five siblings to graduate college. Anita encouraged participants to “Seek out mentors. Ask for help. Use every opportunity that you get. Take those lessons and keep building because you never know where you’re going to go in life.”



ERIC SELLERS

## FAITH, HARD WORK & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Affiliated with FGCB since 2003 (10th grade)

**Wisdom:** Eric credits his success to FGCB and to lessons he learned along the way. “Networking is key” Eric shared. “That’s how you get hired; that’s how you make lasting relationships.” Networking at a conference is how he ended up in his dream job at ESPN. “Work harder than your competition,” he advised, “go above and beyond.” That work ethic has paid off for Eric, who said “faith, working hard, and my support system, including First Generation College Bound” will take you far. Eric encouraged students to “never doubt yourself,” even as the first in your family to go to college. “You can be anyone. Any career [path] that you want to follow, you can achieve it.” His closing advice was “never burn bridges.” You never know who can help you in the future.

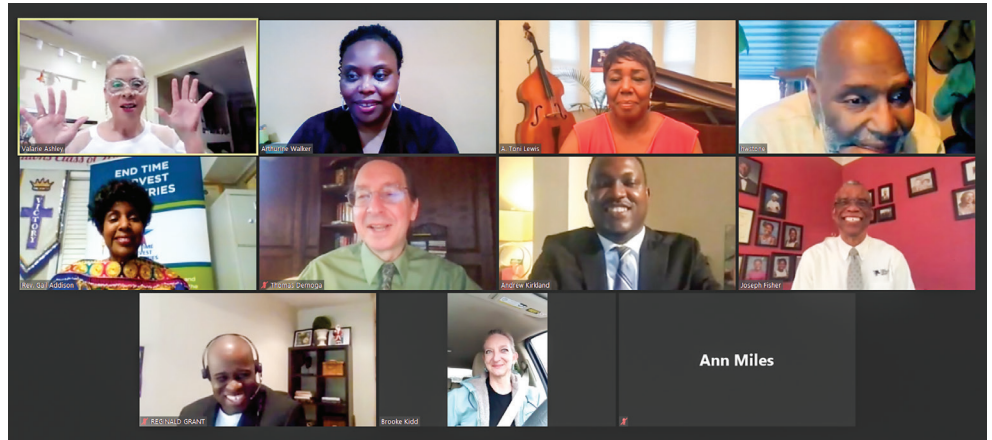
**For the past three years, Joe Fisher, has participated in the Ready for Work Nonprofit Capacity Building Program, a partnership of the Prince George's County Council and Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP) to strengthen youth-serving nonprofits across the County.**

The program culminated on March 18th, when Mr. Fisher was recognized along with three other nonprofit executives at the Prince George's Proud graduation.

Conducted virtually, the ceremony also honored Rev. Gail Addison, Executive Director of End Time Harvest Ministries; Toni Lewis, Executive Director of FAME – Foundation for the Advancement of Music and Education; and Brooke Kidd, Executive Director of Joe's Movement Emporium. The quartet formed the first cohort of the capacity building initiative, which has gone on to work with seven other nonprofit leaders in the county.

VPP also partnered with Fair Chance to deliver the capacity building services in the three-year program that emphasized fundraising and grant writing, financial management, human resource management, program design and evaluation, and developing a stronger board of directors.

In a recent Zoom interview, Fair Chance CEO Gretchen Van der Veer and Joe Fisher discussed the value of the extended collaboration. Reflecting on FGCB's history and mission, Mr. Fisher described the first cohort of 10 students that he helped to matriculate to college in 1990 as FGCB's



foundation. He went on to say that through capacity building specialist Arthurine Walker, Fair Chance provided “the resources we need to help strengthen our foundation to sustain this generation into the future. That’s the value of Fair Chance.”

Mr. Fisher mentioned human resources, staff training, financial management, and board development as some of the areas where Fair Chance and Arthurine made a positive impact.

Van der Veer described Fisher as a “force of nature” and a “force for change.” She admired the “commitment, leadership, and passion” Fisher brings to the work. And, she said, “We are proud to call you our partner.”

At the graduation, County Council Chairperson Calvin S. Hawkins II recognized the four participating organizations for the wide range of services and resources they provide to improve the lives of our children and young people. “Their completion of this program signals even greater outcomes in the years ahead, and we look forward to their continued success,” Hawkins said. “I want to thank VPP and Fair Chance for their investment in the lives of our young people.”

## FGCB'S IMPACT ON EDUCATION

**STUDENTS WHO HAVE ENTERED COLLEGE: 2,477**

**TOTAL ALUMNI: 880**

**ASSOCIATE DEGREE GRADUATES: 115**

**BACHELOR DEGREE GRADUATES: 609**

**MASTER DEGREE GRADUATES: 140**

**DOCTORATE/PHD GRADUATES: 16**

**STUDENTS CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN COLLEGE: 1,515**

**FINANCIAL AID AWARDED TO THE CLASS OF 2020: \$2.1 MILLION**

**STUDENTS FROM THE CLASS OF 2020 WHO MATRICULATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION: 162**

**ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**WE ARE SERVING DURING THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR: 417**





# FGCB AND PARTNERS SUPPORT HOMEWORK CLUB STUDENTS DURING PANDEMIC

## HOMework Club

Like other FGCB programming, the Homework Club (HWC), our academic support and enrichment program for students living in Laurel's Kimberly Gardens, transferred to a virtual learning model in the spring of 2020.

Recognizing the disparate impact the pandemic has on low-income communities, FGCB and our supporters initiated several activities to offer extra support and mitigate the economic hardships of COVID-19 on our HWC families.

As the world began shutting down in spring 2020 resulting in many people being laid off, FGCB provided a \$50 gift card for each family with a HWC child. In addition, each child in the program received a \$10 gift card.

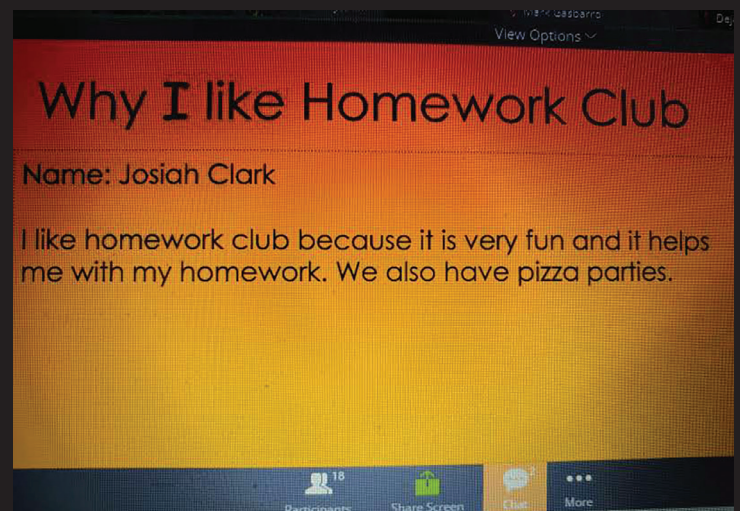
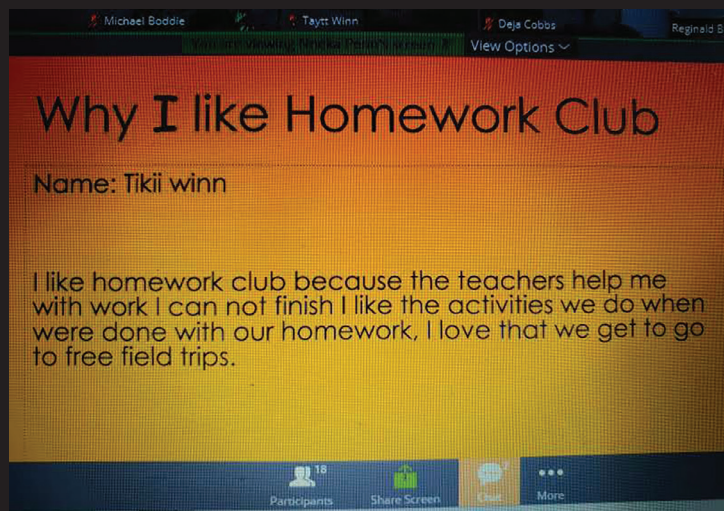
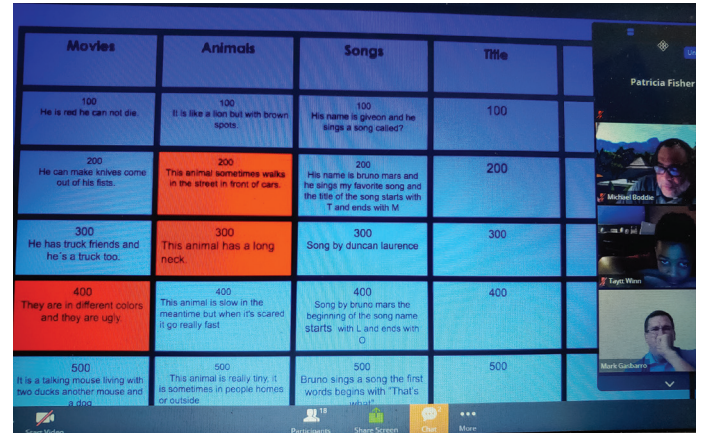
As another school year began in September 2020, members of Lifehouse Church, led by FGCB board chair Pastor Gavin Brown, donated school supplies and backpacks to the 30 HWC students.

As part of our end of year celebration for the HWC, FGCB hosted a Zoom painting session. With painting supplies provided by FGCB, the students enjoyed Mr. Bloomfield's virtual instruction. This annual painting lesson is always a highly anticipated part of our end of year celebration.

This spring, HWC families again benefitted from Lifehouse Church's generosity with the delivery of food boxes containing meat, dairy items, milk, eggs and produce.

HWC Coordinator, Nneka Penn, and teachers Alexandria Pearsall and Michael Boddie continued to engage students' minds and bodies throughout the pandemic. They helped students with homework and catching up with their missing assignments. And, using Kahoot! interactive games, teachers exercised the students' intellects and imaginations, while urging them to stay physically active.

The HWC works with students from first through twelfth grades. We promote having a winning attitude for education that encourages them to begin thinking early about college and future careers.







## FGCB PROVIDES EMOTIONAL SUPPORT DURING PANDEMIC

**The pandemic meant that students had to adjust to virtual learning, at a time in their lives when social interaction with classmates is crucial for their development.**

Some students coped with the social isolation brought on by being away from their peers while others were vying with siblings for the computer and screen time, while the county figured out how to get laptops into the hands of all students.

Recognizing the stress that our students are under, our coaches have been conducting Winning Attitude check-in meetings, twice a month, to provide students with advice, encouragement, and support. While regular check-ins with our students are part of the College Success model, we know that the phone calls, emails, texts, and Zoom meetings were particularly important while students were dealing with the stresses of the past year.

By continuing to provide students with information about SAT tests, college admission requirements, financial aid, and changes happening at prospective colleges, coaches helped to provide some normalcy and stability for our students, reduce their worries, and increase their motivation to remain focused on the college bound process.

Coaches' training in emotional intelligence equips them to help our students counteract negative mindsets by taking actions that lead to positive results.

**EACH DOLLAR YOU GIVE IS DIRECTLY CORRELATED TO THE SUCCESS OF A STUDENT IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

While no level of support is too small, your extended generosity **CHANGES LIVES.**

You can contribute by sending a check made out to "FGCB" in the provided envelope or by clicking the **DONATE** button on our website, [www.fgcb.org](http://www.fgcb.org).

## CAREER PUPPY PROMOTES A PURPOSE FILLED LIFE

**Career Puppy is an integral part of FGCB's Great Minds Great Futures program. Our 10th and 11th graders enjoy exploring future career opportunities through Career Puppy's assessment, which examines how students' interests intersect with their skill sets.**

**CAREER**  
**puppy®**

Students are encouraged to explore the career paths their assessments reveal by conducting research on these careers and presenting their findings to their peers. To delve deeper into their career path exploration, students engaged with Career Puppy's 7 L Framework: listen, love, layers, leap, land, learn and level-up.

- > **Listen encourages students to listen to their inner voice to guide them.**
- > **Love urges students to find their purpose by staying true to their values and pursuing their passions.**
- > **Layers reminds students to let go of what may be holding them back.**
- > **Leap urges students to find out what they want to leap toward to create the life they want.**
- > **Land reminds students to take stock and be grateful to live in the moment.**
- > **Learn challenges students to apply life lessons as they move forward.**
- > **Level-up encourages students to take the steps to pursue what comes next.**

Over eight sessions, GMGF students were encouraged "to live life on their terms" and think beyond career to conceive the kind of life they want to live based on their values, passion, and purpose. Connecting with these things help students to shape their vision for happy and purpose filled lives.

## POWERFUL MESSAGES continued from page 1

and today a Bowie State University freshman, who addressed her fellow graduates.

After the death of her biological mother at age 11, Emma was adopted by a single mother, with whom she never felt connected. She was not able to share her hopes and dreams with her new mother. When the two became estranged, Emma was forced out on her own. But she came to believe, as friends reminded her, “God chose this path for me because he knew my strength.”

Since she enrolled in FGCB’s College Success program, her college coaches “had my back” she said. Emma described the program and coaches as being “beyond an extreme help along with a personal resource to me” and willing to “break it

down for me” when she hit speed bumps with the college bound process.

“You have your own story, and you can change it or improve it if you want,” Emma said. “We are passionate, we are determined, we are driven.” Finally, the future pharmacist implored, “[you may] start at the bottom, but you choose whether or not you make it to the top.”

### College Graduate

Recent University of Maryland graduate, Daisy Velasco, also addressed the group gathered for the celebration. Daisy always wanted to go to college, but “my parents didn’t know how to help me.” Referring to FGCB, Daisy said when she “felt lost in the middle of unknown territory, I found a guide.” During a particularly rough stretch during her freshman year of college, FGCB was “my

support system when I felt things were going south.” Daisy shared that “All it took was one phone call from Mr. Fisher to get me on track.”

Daisy encouraged her fellow graduates to pay it forward. “Just as [FGCB] motivated us,” she said, “it’s time for us to motivate those who are coming after us.” Her final message to her fellow graduates was “FGCB has invested 30 years into spreading the winning attitude and it’s our job to spread it to many more.”

### Keynote Speaker

Delegate Alonzo Washington, of Maryland’s 22nd legislative district, was the evening’s keynote speaker. Washington is a 2002 Laurel High School Graduate and an FGCB alumnus. In his 9th year serving his constituency, Washington is vice chair of the Ways and Means Committee and chairperson of the Education Sub-Committee.

Delegate Washington opened by praising FGCB for its “thoughtful and effective leadership,” and for the “courage to enter into communities that others have left behind for far too long.” Washington addressed the other pandemic “which is ripping the country apart—racism.” He spoke of the many black and brown men who’ve lost their lives, ironically due to the injustices of our criminal justice system. “These men serve as symbols of hope, as hurtful reminders of why we all must speak up, take a seat at the table, and make the changes that are needed in our communities.”

Washington spoke about systemic racism, the school to prison pipeline, and the economic disadvantages that support these systems and land too many men of color in prison. Disparities in education, health, and wealth make black and brown communities more likely to experience negative outcomes.

“Your shoulders are heavy now,” he said, before expressing his faith in the graduates, as FGCB once placed their faith in him. “It is your civic duty to end the generational cycle of hatred, inequity and injustice that has plagued our country for generations. We have once in a lifetime leaders in this program ready for the challenges in our society today.”

In concluding, Washington praised Joe and Pat Fisher for their 30 years of “reversing generational poverty.” “Because of you,” he said, “I am who I am today.”

Mr. Fisher closed out the program encouraging students to keep their lights turned on and maintain their winning attitude for education.

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## FGCB ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**DATE: SATURDAY, OCT 30, 2021**

**TIME: 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM**

**LOCATION: MARTIN'S CROSSWINDS  
GREENBELT, MD 20770**

Join us at our 2021 anniversary event to celebrate  
30+ years of making kids' college dreams come true.