

12th Annual



2025 SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

November 5, 2025 | 5:00-8:00pm
Raleigh Convention Center

WakeEd Partnership's Stars of Education Gala

Stars of Education is WakeEd Partnership's annual awards gala dinner to celebrate and honor those who have made lasting contributions to public schools in Wake County. The event is WakeEd's largest fundraiser of the year, with proceeds going to support our mission and programs.

Since our founding in 1983, WakeEd Partnership has served in a unique position in the education space. We are an independent nonprofit committed to improving public education and advocating for excellent educational opportunities for all students. Through our business and community partners, we bring the best minds and ideas to the table to focus on excellence for Wake County students.



Stars of Education Gala 2024



The Awards

★ Vernon Malone Friend of Education Award

Since its inception in 1990, this award has honored individuals who have made a profound impact on our community while exemplifying the values of the late Senator Vernon Malone. Recipients set the highest standard of dedication to public education—not just as supporters, but as true champions who use their voice and influence to drive meaningful change. They are passionate advocates for all students, inspiring others through their leadership and unwavering commitment to making a difference.

Dr. Randy Woodson

Dr. William “Randy” Woodson served as the 14th Chancellor of NC State University from 2010 to 2025, leading the university through a period of extraordinary growth and achievement. Under his leadership, NC State rose in national rankings, doubled undergraduate applications, and completed a \$2 billion fundraising campaign—placing it among a small group of elite public universities. A nationally respected plant scientist and higher education leader, Dr. Woodson also prioritized partnerships that expanded NC State’s reach and impact across North Carolina.



Throughout his tenure, Dr. Woodson was a steadfast champion for public education. He worked closely with the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) to support programs that strengthened educator preparation, STEM education, environmental learning, and student success. Initiatives like the Wake Green Schools Partnership, North Carolina Science Olympiad, and joint education advocacy efforts reflect his deep commitment to K-12 collaboration.

Dr. Woodson holds degrees from the University of Arkansas and Cornell University and previously served in leadership roles at Purdue University. Widely recognized for his approachable leadership and strategic vision, he has received honors including the Order of the Long Leaf Pine and CEO of the Year by the Triangle Business Journal.

WakeEd Partnership proudly recognizes Dr. Woodson with the Vernon Malone Friend of Education Award for his transformative leadership and enduring contributions to public education in Wake County and beyond.



★ Robert E. Bridges Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award is given to an individual who has dedicated his/her professional or personal life to the field of public education. Instead of being an obligatory annual award, the Lifetime Achievement Award is given when an individual has made several significant contributions to public education that have made a lasting impression, worthy of public tribute.

Dr. Alice J. Garrett

Dr. Alice J. Garrett is a retired educator whose remarkable 45-year career in public education has left a lasting legacy across North Carolina. She served with distinction as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, middle and high school principal, and as Chief Consultant and Section Chief at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). In her leadership role at NCDPI, Dr. Garrett oversaw statewide efforts to support low-performing schools, working to ensure every child had access to a high-quality education—regardless of zip code.



Her dedication to equity and excellence in education has earned her numerous accolades, including recognition from the United States Congress and the NAACP President's Award.

Even in retirement, Dr. Garrett continues her service to others. She is president of the Flood Group and the Bobby F. Garrett Cancer Benefit, Inc., and serves as Church School Superintendent for the Western District of the Western North Carolina Conference of the AME Church.

Dr. Garrett holds a B.A. in Social Science from Allen University, a Master of Teaching from Fordham University, and a Doctor of Education Leadership from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

WakeEd Partnership is proud to honor Dr. Alice J. Garrett with the 2025 Robert E. Bridges Lifetime Achievement Award for her decades of leadership, mentorship, and unwavering commitment to students, educators, and communities throughout Wake County and across the state.



★ Wake County Public School System Hall of Fame

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) Hall of Fame honors outstanding educators, alumni and community leaders who through their lives have either deeply impacted the Wake County Public School System or, as an alumnus, dramatically added to the quality of life in our city, state or nation. Each year honorees are inducted in the following categories: Arts, Athletics, Business, Community Service, Education, and Entrepreneurship.

ARTS | Byron "Bo" Reece

With over 30 years of experience as an educator and advocate, Byron "Bo" Reece is a champion for arts integration as a transformative tool for student engagement and school improvement. Bo holds bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Appalachian State University, where his belief in the power of music as a foundation for creativity and connection began.



A systems-level leader, Bo has served as the Coordinating Teacher of Arts Education for Wake County Public Schools, supporting more than 650 arts educators across North Carolina's largest district and advancing access and equity in arts education. He is a Fellow with A+ Schools of North Carolina, helping schools use the arts as a central strategy to enhance learning for all students.

Bo currently works with the United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County, where he is helping launch the Incubator Artists Program—an innovative initiative embedding local artists into classrooms and communities.

Bo also conducts the "Oaks" training choir with the Raleigh Youth Choir and performs with Vox Virium, a men's ensemble committed to community and compassion through music.

At every level, Bo's work is guided by a core belief: the arts are not extracurricular—they are essential to how students learn, grow, and thrive.



ATHLETICS | Andy Fowler

Coach Andy Fowler began her Sanderson High School career in 1984 as a biology teacher and women's tennis coach. Over 25 years, she also led the men's team for 22 seasons—becoming the longest-serving tennis coach in Sanderson's history. Her teams achieved major milestones, including the school's only tennis state championship in 1991 and an undefeated men's season in 1989.



Beyond coaching, Coach Fowler immersed herself in school life. She founded the enduring "Holly Days" fundraiser, generating over \$25,000 annually to support student clubs. She advised eight classes, served on Faculty Council, and was recognized multiple times with Sanderson's Outstanding Faculty Service and Golden Apple Awards. In 2001-02, she was named Teacher of the Year and a Wake County semi-finalist.

At the state level, Coach Fowler has directed the NCHSAA 4A tennis championships for 34 years, even into retirement. Her honors include the NCHSAA Female Coach of the Year, "Eight Who Make a Difference," and the Bud Phillips Retiree Award.

Coach Fowler's legacy is one of excellence, compassion, and impact—on the court, in the classroom, and across the lives of countless students. Her guiding belief: "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

BUSINESS | Sepideh "Sepi" Saidi, P.E. (1962 - 2025)

Sepi Saidi was the founder and CEO of SEPI Engineering & Construction, a premier civil engineering firm she launched in Raleigh in 2001. An immigrant from Iran at age 15, Sepi earned dual degrees in Civil and Agricultural Engineering from NC State University, where her resilience and drive laid the foundation for a trailblazing career.



Under her leadership, SEPI grew from a one-person, home-based business to a thriving company with over 300 employees and \$40 million in annual revenue. The firm earned repeated recognition on the Inc. 5000 list, Triangle Business Journal's Fast 50, and Zweig Group's Hot Firm rankings.

Sepi was equally known for her civic leadership. She served as Chair of the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce and held board positions with the NC Chamber, WakeEd Partnership, and NC State's Institute for Emerging Issues. She was a passionate advocate for diversity in STEM and created the SEPI Leadership Scholarship at Wake Tech to support underrepresented students.

Sepi passed away on March 24, 2025, at age 62, after a courageous health battle. She leaves behind a powerful legacy of innovation, generosity, and mentorship—an enduring inspiration to all who knew her.



COMMUNITY SERVICE | Jon Powell

Attorney Jon Powell is the director of the Restorative Justice Clinic at Campbell University School of Law, where he leads innovative efforts to bring healing and accountability to victims, offenders, and communities. The clinic receives referrals from the juvenile justice system, Wake County Public Schools, and private individuals affected by trauma and crime. It also conducts Restorative Circles in prisons.



The clinic's mission centers on providing offenders with opportunities to take responsibility for their actions, giving victims a voice in the justice process, and crafting collaborative agreements to address and repair harm. Law students play a vital role, serving as trained facilitators under faculty guidance—gaining hands-on experience in restorative practices and conflict resolution.

Powell is also a national advocate for expanding restorative justice initiatives. He has helped launch similar programs modeled after the Campbell clinic and was the lead planner of the 2011 National Conference on Restorative Justice, hosted by Campbell Law.

Before joining Campbell, Jon practiced criminal defense with a focus on juvenile law in Wake and Harnett counties. He holds a J.D. from Campbell Law and a B.A. in Communication from NC State University. His work continues to shape how justice is taught, practiced, and experienced.

EDUCATION | Jacqueline Ellis

Jacqueline "Jackie" Ellis is a retired educator with more than 30 years of service in North Carolina's public schools. She concluded her career as Chief of Schools for the Wake County Public School System, following leadership roles as Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Western Area Superintendent, and Middle School Director. Before joining Wake County, Jackie held senior roles in Durham Public Schools and served as a middle and high school principal in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. She began her career as a middle school teacher in Pitt and Guilford counties.



A North Carolina Teaching Fellow, Jackie earned her bachelor's degree in Middle Grades Education from East Carolina University. She later became a North Carolina Principal Fellow and earned a Master of School Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jackie remains deeply engaged in education. She serves as an AP Accelerator facilitator for NCASLD and NCPAPA, directs large district partnerships with NC Peak Education Consultants, and sits on the NC Teaching Fellows Advisory Board.

Known for her commitment to instructional leadership and educator development, Jackie continues to champion excellence in education and mentor the next generation of school leaders across North Carolina.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP | Venus Liles

Venus Liles is the founder of Liles Law—one of the nation’s only female-owned, B-Corp certified, carbon-neutral business law firm. With a focus on transparent flat-rate services and practical guidance, she empowers entrepreneurs to build legally sound businesses with confidence.



Venus began her legal career at Smith Anderson, the Triangle’s largest business law firm, before spending over a decade as in-house counsel at SAS, a global software leader. There, she advised on licensing and implementation of complex technology solutions. She holds degrees in Law and Cognitive Psychology from Duke University, giving her a distinctive blend of legal expertise and human insight.

Driven by a desire to support startups, Venus launched Liles Law to provide early-stage founders with Fortune 500-level protection—without the overwhelm. Her entrepreneurial spirit extends beyond law: she has published a children’s book, developed a patent-pending software tool, and founded a pop-up dance series.

An active mentor, Venus supports new founders through the Founder Institute and NC State’s Entrepreneurship Clinic. She lives in Raleigh with her husband and two daughters, fluent in legal strategy, bedtime negotiations, and just enough Italian to order gelato. Venus Liles is redefining how legal services support the startup ecosystem—with innovation, empathy, and excellence.

★ Emerging Star Award

This award is presented each year to one Wake County Public School student. It is designed to recognize one high-achieving 12th grade student (as of the 2025/26 school year) from Wake County Public Schools who has exhibited strength in both academics and community leadership. A \$5,000 scholarship is part of the award.

★ Star Among Us Award

This award is presented to recognize the brilliance of one K-12 educator each year from Wake County Public Schools who has a strong presence within their school communities and their communities-at-large. The award includes a \$5,000 prize.



Sponsorship Levels

\$15,000 Level Minimum Donation _____

Presenting Sponsor (Exclusive) SOLD

- Logo incorporated into the Stars of Education brand and featured prominently in all event promotion
- Name recognition in press releases and media outreach regarding the event
- Logo featured prominently on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre-event and post-event emails
- Social media recognition as event "Presenting Sponsor" on X (Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram before, during, and after the event
- Opportunity for live podium remarks to welcome guests and recognize honorees
- Two reserved tables for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join each table

\$12,500 Level Minimum Donation _____

Emerging Star Award (Exclusive)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- \$5,000 scholarship for the recipient with the company name featured
- Social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- Opportunity for live podium remarks to introduce the Emerging Star Award recipient
- One reserved table for five; plus, five educators or special guests will join your table

Star Among Us Award (Exclusive) SOLD

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- \$5,000 prize for the recipient with the company name featured
- Social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- Opportunity for live podium remarks to introduce the Star Among Us Award recipient
- One reserved table for five; plus, five educators or special guests will join your table



\$7,500 Level Minimum Donation

Vernon Malone Friend of Education Award Sponsor (Exclusive) SOLD

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- Social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- Opportunity for live podium remarks to introduce the Friend of Education Award recipient
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table

Robert E. Bridges Lifetime Achievement Award Sponsor (Exclusive)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- Social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- Opportunity for live podium remarks to introduce the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table

\$5,000 Level Minimum Donation

Wake County Public School System Hall of Fame Sponsors (Multiple)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- Group social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- Logo included in video presentation of Hall of Fame Class of 2024
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table

Reception Sponsor (Exclusive)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- Group social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- Signage with logo throughout reception area
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table

Photobooth Sponsor (Exclusive)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre and post-event emails
- Your company logo along with WakeEd Partnership featured on all photos taken for guests that will be printed and available online for social media.
- Group social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table



\$3,000 Level Minimum Donation

Stars Among Us Sponsors (Multiple, up to six)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre-event and post-event emails
- Group social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, and X
- Logo printed on Stars Among Us stationary on each dinner table
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table

Public School Champion Sponsors (Multiple, can be listed in honor of an individual)

- Logo featured on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre-event and post-event emails
- Group social media recognition on Facebook, LinkedIn, and X
- Printed signage with company logos in reception and registration area
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table

\$1,500 Level Minimum Donation

Honor Roll Sponsors (Multiple)

- Name listed on the Stars of Education web page and printed program, as well as in pre-event and post-event emails
- One reserved table for six; plus, four educators or special guests will join your table



Sponsor Registration

Please complete and return this form to Kristen Farrell (kfarrell@wakeed.org).

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Email: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Sponsorship Level: _____

Payment Method (see instructions below): Credit Card _____ Check _____

I want to donate my table to the WakeEd community: Yes _____ No _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Submit Logo

Send organization logos and brand guidelines to Kristen Farrell (kfarrell@wakeed.org). Logo files should be high-quality, able to scale, with a transparent background. If available, please provide logos designed for both light and dark backgrounds. Brand guides or use guidelines are appreciated.

Payment

Visit <https://wakeed.kindful.com/e/2025-stars-of-education-gala-sponsorships> to register and submit your payment online using a credit or debit card. Checks can be mailed to Wake Education Partnership at 1816 Capital Boulevard, Raleigh, NC 27604.

For questions about sponsorships, please contact:

Kristen Farrell
kfarrell@wakeed.org
919-821-0364

