

Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Program (RSYEP)

ANNUAL REPORT SEPT 2024 - AUG 2025

Rebekah Dixon, Youth Employment Program Manager

raleighnc.gov

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Executive Summary

The 2024–2025 Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Program (RSYEP) was a season of growth, innovation, and meaningful impact. For 42 years, RSYEP has been a cornerstone of the City of Raleigh, empowering young people through handson work experiences and skill development. More than a summer job, the program offers youth the chance to uncover their strengths, expand their potential, and envision new possibilities for their future.

Participants gained valuable experience across City departments, community partners, and six new worksite placements, while developing essential professional and soft skills that will carry them into adulthood. They strengthened their confidence, embraced teamwork, and demonstrated—once again—that Raleigh's youth are ready to lead.

The 2024–2025 program was further enriched through new partnerships with the Economic Awareness Council from Chicago and Accenture, alongside expanded program initiatives designed to provide innovative learning opportunities.

These collaborations, combined with the dedication of our career coaches, created safe and supportive spaces for youth to learn, reflect, and grow. Career coaches served as mentors and cheerleaders, guiding participants through challenges and celebrating their achievements.

We are equally grateful to our City staff, business and nonprofit partners, and families who entrusted us with their young people. Together, we fostered growth, celebrated accomplishments, and laid a strong foundation for future success.

As we reflect on this year, one thing is clear: RSYEP remains a vital bridge between education and career, possibility and achievement, and youth and the future of our city. We are grateful to every young person who showed up ready to learn and lead, and to every partner and supporter who believed in them.

Together, we are not just preparing young people for jobs—we are preparing them to change the world.

Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Program Team

2024-2025



Rebekah Dixon, Youth Employment Program Manager



Monica Pugh,
Business and Finance
Career Coach



Zoe Brannon, RSYEP Program Administrator, Healthcare Pathway Career Coach



Vanta Rogers, Sports and Entertainment Marketing Career Coach



Melonie Carlton, Entreprenurship Career Coach



Joshua Wright, Human Resources, Event Management, and Junior Counselo Career Coach



Hollis "Jay" Creecy,
Child Development
& Junior Counselor
Career Coach



RSYEP Impact Snapshot – Summer 2025

Recruitment and Hiring Demographics

- **175** youth successfully completed the program.
- Interview options: Applicants could choose the format that best fit their needs:
 - Virtual Interviews: Conducted through SparkHire, where youth recorded responses to 8 pre-set questions prepared by the Youth Employment Program Manager. This option was available throughout the entire six-week application period.
 - In-Person Interviews: Youth selected from two scheduled sessions, supported by volunteers from the Foster Grandparents Program and the Raleigh Police Department, alongside RSYEP Career Coaches.
- Community Outreach: The Program
 Manager and Career Coaches
 participated in 21 Wake County high
 school job fairs during the recruitment
 season.







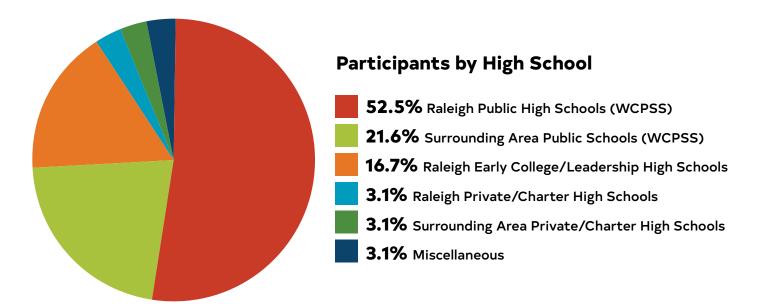


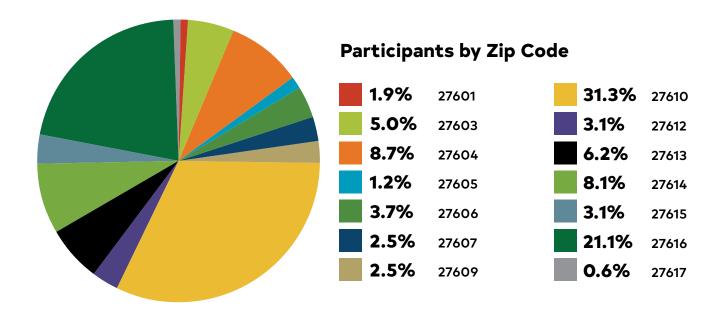
RSYEP Reach & Results











Raleigh Public High Schools

Enloe

Athens Drive

Millbrook

Southeast Raleigh Magnet

Sanderson

Needham B. Broughton

Leesville Road

East Wake

Wakefield

Surrounding Area Public High Schools

Rolesville

Garner Magnet

South Garner

Knightdale

Heritage

Middle Creek

Apex Friendship

Green Hope

Willow Springs High School

Raleigh Early College/ Leadership High Schools

Vernon Malone Career and College Academy

Wake Young Women's Leadership Academy

North Wake College & Career Academy

Wake Young Men's Leadership Academy

Wake Early College of Health & Sciences

Wake Early College of Information &

Biotechnology

Wake STEM Early College High School

Raleigh Private/ Charter High Schools

Faith Christian Academy

Friendship Christian School

Saint Mary's School

Wake Preparatory Academy

North Raleigh Christian Academy

Surrounding Areas Private/ Charter High Schools

North Carolina Cyber Academy (NCCA)

Research Triangle High School

Raleigh Charter High School

Thales Academy-Rolesville

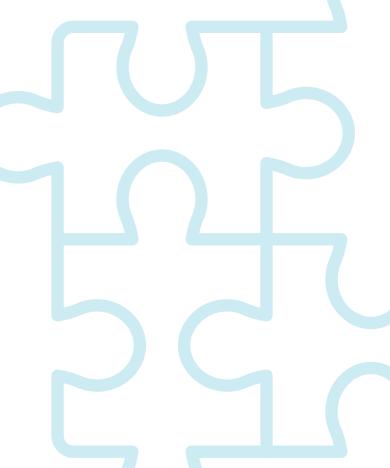
Miscellaneous

Cary Academy

Franklin Academy

Home School-White Hawk Academy

Home School (No Name Provided)



Summer Pathways in Motion

Each summer, RSYEP connects youth with meaningful work experiences that match their interests and career goals. Placements are designed to build transferable skills, introduce participants to professional environments, and provide exposure to industries across the Raleigh community and beyond. These opportunities not only help youth explore potential career paths, but also strengthen their confidence, networks, and readiness for the future.

When applying, participants select their top three career pathways to guide placement.

Options include:

- Business and Finance
- Child Development
- Entrepreneurship
- Healthcare (including Public Health and Mental Health)
- Law
- Marketing
- · Recreation Programming
- Skilled Trades

Placements are offered in-person, hybrid, or virtual formats to ensure flexibility and accessibility. The following pages highlight the diverse worksites—both local and virtual—that partnered with RSYEP to make these experiences possible.

In-Person Worksites:

City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources (18 Community Centers & Parks Maintenance)

Raleigh Police Department
(Youth and Family Services Unit)

City of Raleigh Human Resources

Wanda's Little Hands

The Alice Aycock Poe Center

Raleigh Tennis Association

York Properties (Raleigh Union Station)

Garner Road Community Center

Participant Takeaways:

"I liked working with the kids and getting to know them where they are always looking for me and building that bond with them."

















Hybrid Worksites

At The Collaborative, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to providing North Carolinians with access to quality financial education and asset-building tools, RSYEP youth gained hands-on experience as social media and technology specialists. Participants created engaging content across platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn, developed posting schedules, designed graphics, and produced short-form videos. They also tracked engagement metrics, responded to audience interactions, and contributed to team meetings, gaining practical skills in digital marketing, content creation, and technology management while supporting The Collaborative's mission to advance financial literacy across the state.



Remote Worksites

RSYEP partnered with the mental health nonprofit Darkness Rising to engage youth in meaningful community work. Participants played an active role in planning and promoting mental health initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and providing support to underserved populations. They also conducted research on local mental health needs, offering valuable insights to guide Darkness Rising's programs and outreach efforts. Through these experiences, youth enhanced their abilities in research, communication, and event coordination while making a tangible impact on public health and mental wellness in marginalized communities.







Virtual Job Project Placement

RSYEP's Virtual Work-Based Learning pathway continues to prepare youth for future careers by providing flexible, real-world experience. This year marked the fifth year RSYEP offered a virtual component, allowing participants to gain valuable, resume-building skills while working remotely on projects that address community needs. Youth tackled innovative challenges by designing apps tailored to different career pathways, ultimately presenting their solutions to City of Raleigh staff, families, and community members.

Participants focused on one of the following challenges:

- Healthcare Teen Wellness & Health Advocacy App: Design an app that helps Raleigh teens manage their physical, emotional, and social health while teaching self-advocacy and informed decision-making in school, at home, or at the doctor's office.
- **Business and Finance:** Build an app to support Raleigh youth in planning and saving for long-term financial goals.
- Sports & Entertainment Marketing (SE&M): Create a campaign for the WNBA that enhances brand visibility and engagement with Gen Z, emphasizing inclusivity and cultural relevance.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Develop an original app concept that strengthens or innovates a business of your choice.

The virtual model also included Industry Thursdays, where participants connected with professionals from diverse backgrounds within their career pathways, gaining insights and guidance directly from experienced mentors. By the end of the program, 91.5% of participants reported feeling more prepared for their careers,

highlighting the pathway's effectiveness in bridging the gap between high school and professional life.

1. Business and Finance

- Introduction to Business and Finance pathway: Kenyetta Hall, CEO/Founder, The Katalyst HQ
- Industry Thursday Guests:
 - William Fisher, Community Impact Manager, Coastal Credit Union
 - Laine Bradley, Founder/Consultant, Vraiment Financial
 - Dionne Blanks, Financial Educator/ Founder, Economic Empowerment Circle, LLC
 - Brian Seymour, Investment Advisor and Founder, Prosperitage Wealth
 - Rolanda Hernandez, Founder, Advance Wake



Participant Takeaways:

"The sessions opened my mind to how important it is to take control of your finances early."

"RSYEP has helped us in many ways since the beginning of the program. We have learned how to research and analyze data, how to break down a problem into steps, and how to create and present a solution."

2. Entrepreneurship

- Introduction to Entrepreneurship:
 Melissa Watson, Consultant/Founder,
 Principle Lead Solutions
- Industry Thursday Guests:
 - Charles Clark, Founder, The Clark Agency
 - LaShawnda Rogers, Founder/ Owner, Rodgers Global Leadership Consortium
 - Mikki Paradis, CEO, PDI Drywall, Inc
 - Jasmine Johnson, Owner/Operator, theshatterspace
 - Melody Harkness Mobile, CEO/ Founder, Harkness Consulting Solutions, LLC

3. Healthcare

- Introduction to Healthcare: Dr. Edwin Burkett, Medical Director, Alliance Medical Ministry
- Industry Thursday Guests:
 - James Hauck, Project Planner, Office of Physician, Duke University
 - Haminant Oladipo, Clinical Nurse Informaticist, Vizient Inc.
 - Maisha Rudison Bryant, Executive Director of the US Leadership Program, Novartis
 - Dr. B. Joi McGraw, Oncologist, Dr. Joiful, LLC and PM Pediatrics
 - Dr. Jonathan Mosley, DDS, Dentist, Affordable Dentures and Implants



Participant Takeaways:

"RSYEP pushed me to think outside the box, take initiative, and really trust my ideas – it gave me purpose and confidence."

"This program has had a positive impact on me, and it has motivated me to keep growing and believing in myself."



Participant Takeaways:

"RSYEP has made me more of a leader, made me more vocals, helped to build my professional skills in better job habits. It also helped me navigate social settings whether that be online or in person."

"RSYEP is more than just a program, it is a launchpad for success."

4. Sports and Entertainment Marketing

- Introduction to Sports and Entertainment Marketing: Nichelle Levy, Vide President, Deputy General & Head of Privacy, NASCAR
- Industry Thursday Guests:
 - Deandra Duggans, Senior Vice President of Branding and Marketing, Las Vegas Aces (WNBA)
 - Lily Rosenberg, Coordinator of NIL Partnerships and Operations, UNC-Chapel Hill Athletics
 - Mandy Smith, Sports and Entertainment's Director, Charlotte Hornets
 - Cato Catalado, Senior Creative Director, Carolina Hurricanes
 - Rochelle Mann, Brand Director, Mann Made Productions & Full Court Women (NFL, NBA, & WNBA)



Participant Takeaways:

"Throughout RSYEP I was constantly absorbing information – if you learn one thing from this program you will keep it for life."

"RSYEP has been an instrumental experience that has not only prepared me for life but for future jobs. At RSYEP there is so many places to grow."



Tools for Tomorrow: RSYEP Professional Development

In addition to their summer work placements, RSYEP youth participated in a wide range of professional development sessions designed to build practical skills and broaden their perspectives. These opportunities were organized into key focus areas — such as mental health, financial education, and career exploration — and delivered through workshops, interactive discussions, and Lunch & Learns with community professionals. The titles below highlight some of the engaging sessions offered throughout the summer.

Mental Health & Well-Being

- Building Self Sessions
 (Weekly on Mondays)
 Facilitated by Step Up Ministry Raleigh
- Screentime and Mental Health
 Facilitated by Kierra Bennett,
 Peace of Mind Psychological Services,
 PLLC
- Inner Compass: Developing Self-Awareness
 Facilitated by Gene Hoskins,
 Peace of Mind Psychological Services,
 PLLC
- Finding Peace in Your Pieces
 Facilitated by Gene Hoskins,
 Peace of Mind Psychological Services,
 PLLC
- Mindfulness
 Facilitated by Chanel Ratliff,
 Ratliff Business Consulting
- "I Want to Please Everybody!!"
 (People Pleasing)
 Facilitated by Dr. Shanita Brown,
 Transformative Counseling and
 Consulting, PLLC

Financial Education

- Better Money Habits (Weekly on Tuesday)
 Facilitated by Bank of America
- Financial Health
 Facilitated by William Fisher,
 Coastal Credit Union
- Future Finance Ready Series: Focus on Credit & Investing (Weekly on Wednesdays)
 Facilitated by RSYEP Career Coaches Curriculum Provided by:

Economic Awareness Council

- Credit Ready: Building your Financial Future
 Facilitated by Morgan Spears, Working Credit, 501c3
- Getting Started with Investing Facilitated by Christopher Taylor, Third Point, LLC

Career Tools & Training

- Collaborating in Groups
 Facilitated by RSYEP Career Coach
- Al Toolkit
 Facilitated by RSYEP Career Coach
- College and Career Readiness
 Workshops (Bi-weekly)
 Facilitated by RSYEP Career Coach
- Digital Footprint: Building One's Online Image
 Facilitated by Chanel Ratliff,
 Ratliff Business Consulting

Clifton Strengths Assessment and How to Apply Results

Facilitated by Jennifer Cordova, City of Raleigh Learning & Development (Human Resources)

Professional Headshots

Facilitated by Anaia Brewster, Brewster Creative Co.

Resume and LinkedIn

Facilitated by Chanel Ratliff, Ratliff Business Consulting

• Communication Series

(Weekly on Wednesdays) Facilitated by Accenture

• How to Present and Pitch Your Idea

Facilitated by Charles Clark, The Clark Agency

Art of Networking

Facilitated by Chanel Ratliff, Ratliff Business Consulting

Digital Editing

Facilitated by Anaia Brewster, Brewster Creative Co

Handling Workplace Criticism & Feedback

Facilitated by Chanel Ratliff, Ratliff Business Consulting

• College Application Week Training

Facilitated by RSYEP Career Coach

How to Complete FAFSA

Facilitated by RSYEP Career Coach & Coastal Credit Union

Lead & Inspire Moments

How to Use Your Skills and Talents to Propel Your Next Level

Facilitated by James Montague, F7 Development International

Lunch & Learns

Career exploration sessions hosted by leading businesses and organizations gave youth the opportunity to learn directly from professionals about workplace expectations, leadership, and diverse career pathways.

Lunch with Nutanix Facilitated by Desiree Devonish

Lunch with Lawyers

Facilitated by Meghan Knight, Campbell School of Law, Judge Ashleigh Parker, Judge Damion McCullers, and State Crime Lab

Lunch with Accenture Facilitated by Caitlin Barbier

Lunch with Raleigh Police Department
 Facilitated by April Morris-Adams,
 Chief Rico Boyce, and numerous units
 within Raleigh Police Department













Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Ambassadors

Who They Are

RSYEP Ambassadors are program participants who apply during summer programming to serve in leadership roles. Selected through a competitive application process, they are chosen for their professionalism, teamwork, and commitment. In this prestigious role, Ambassadors provide peer support, assist with program events, and represent RSYEP as youth leaders and advocates in the community.

Ambassadors ensure that youth voices remain central to RSYEP. Their leadership not only strengthens the program but also demonstrates the impact of peer-to-peer support in building confidence, professionalism, and future success.

2024-2025 RSYEP Ambassadors

- Janah Afifi
- Sadie Egharevba
- Bryson Ezefili
- Myra Grace-Green
- Emery Hamilton
- Zoe Mosley
- Nataki Moffett
- Chelsea Okpara
- Jaden Pugh
- Melia Ragan
- Kaiya Thompson
- Phoebe Wakama
- Sanaii Bunn

Advisors: Zoe Brannon, Monica Pugh, Vanta Rogers, and Joshua Wright





2025 Highlights

Supported RSYEP Orientation as Registration/ check in assistants

Hosted GORaleigh Ride Along Event where Southeast Raleigh participants rode the bus to learn Southeast Raleigh bus stops

An Ambassador represented RSYEP as the youth voice at Zebulon's Town Hall, sharing perspectives on youth employment programs and their community impact.

Host/Hostesses at the Foster Grandparent Program Annual Banquet

Event Support at Courtney T. Johnson Community Center's annual Easter Egg Hunt

Participated in leadership development for Carowinds Youth Leadership Day

Completed project presentations and presented to Ms. Rebekah









RSYEP Signature Moments

RSYEP Signature Moments celebrates the standout experiences that define the summer program. From showcasing innovative ideas in the Shark Tank Challenge to honoring accomplishments at the Finale Celebration, these events highlight the creativity, leadership, and impact of our youth employees. Each moment reflects the energy, talent, and dedication that make RSYEP an unforgettable experience.

Shark Tank: RSYEP Edition

RSYEP participants took part in the Shark Tank Challenge, a hands-on entrepreneurial experience designed to develop business and presentation skills. Before pitching their ideas, youth employees participated in a comprehensive boot camp, covering business proposals, brand development,

SHARK TANK
RSYEP Edition

May 4,000 to Patrician
Faleigh Summer You'rd Employment Program

Raleigh

marketing strategies, and sales techniques. Equipped with these skills, they crafted innovative business ideas and confidently presented their pitches to a panel of judges, showcasing creativity, teamwork, and professional growth.

Participants and Business Ideas Pitched:

Janah Afifi, Resource Bridge

Bao Dang, Smart Shopper

Sadie Egharevba, Harmony Haven

Bryson Ezefili, X-Spense

Aditya Venkat Iyer, Path2lvy

Melia Ragan, Rosas by Melia

Phoebe Wakama, Mindful Matters

Justin Wilson, JW Auto Shop

Winner: Melia Ragan for their business Rosas by Melia awarded a cash prize, and their business name was officially trademarked by The Creators Law Firm.





Judges:

- Mary-Ann Baldwin,
 Cooper Charitable Foundation
- Professor Lisa Chang, NC State University
- William Fisher,
 Coastal Credit Union
- Gabriella Scaritt,
 City of Raleigh-Office of Strategy and Innovation
- Dr. Torri Staton,
 Greater Raleigh Chamber
- Commissioner Shinica Thomas,
 Wake County Board of Commissioners

Boot Camp Workshops & Mentors:

- Business Proposal and Development Facilitated by Crystal McClean, Money Box Academy
- Brand and Marketing
 Facilitated by Adriane Clark,
 The Clark Agency
- Presentation and Pitch
 Facilitated by Charles Clark,
 The Clark Agency

Event Sponsors:

We would like to thank our generous sponsors for making this experience possible: Coastal Credit Union, The Creator's Law Firm, and Nutanix and all who supported the Shark Tank Challenge. Your contributions helped provide an unforgettable opportunity for our youth employees.



Finale: Family Fun Day Edition

The Finale Celebration is a special day that brings together youth participants, supervisors, City leadership, program staff, and families to celebrate eight weeks of hard work and growth. During this event, we highlight the program's successes, recognize outstanding youth employees, and honor the contributions of supervisors who support our participants. The celebration also features a warm welcome from Creighton Blackwell and Coastal Credit Union, and an inspiring keynote address from Dr. Robert Taylor, Wake County Schools Superintendent, who served as our Lead and Inspire speaker. The Finale is a culminating experience that honors achievement, fosters community, and showcases the remarkable accomplishments of the summer.







What do Participants and Parents Say?

RSYEP values the voices of youth participants and their parents in measuring the program's impact. Feedback highlights the skills gained, confidence built, and successes achieved over the summer, providing insight to celebrate accomplishments and guide future improvements.

Each question below was based on the rating scale 1-5.

(1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree). Below is the average rating for each question.

RSYEP Participants:

1.	You learned something that you can share with others?	57
2.	Do you feel more confident in your ability to work independently and with others?	58
3.	You will take the skills you learned from RSYEP 2025 into your future work or academic spaces?	8
4.	You are more aware of opportunities and future fields?4	.5
5.	Please indicate your agreement to the following statement with 10 being the highest level of agreement: I would recommend this program to a friend	.11
6.	. Which professional skills do you feel you improved the most (choose out of 8 options) Top 5: Communication, Problem Solving, Public Speaking, Teamwork, and (tied) Adaptability/Professional Etiquette	

Participant Take Aways:

- "During my time in RSYEP, I learned that I'm more capable than I thought when it comes to stepping outside of my comfort zone."
- "I learned that I love to lead, and working with others to solve a problem is something I truly enjoy because It challenges you but in a productive way."
- "I definitely learned that I'm more of a hands-on and team-oriented person! I enjoy
 working with others and feel like I do my best when I'm actively involved in the process."

Parent/Guardian of Participants:

(1-Very Unsatisfied 2-Unsatisfied 3-Neutral 4-Satisfied 5-Very Satisfied)

- 1. How satisfied are you with your child's overall experience in the RSYEP?4.8
- 2. How much do you feel your child improved in the following areas? (Significant Improvement, Some Improvement, No Change, Not Sure) The average response is below for each skill:

a. Communication Skills	Some Improvement
b. Time Management	Significant Improvement
c. Professional Behavior	Significant Improvement
d. Career Readiness	Significant Improvement

Parent Takeaways:

- "RSYEP was very impactful in helping my son learn effective communication, increased confidence in pursuing his future goals and teamwork. He understands the importance of time management, collaboration and being a problem solver."
- "She has some understanding of how to be independent. She is excited for college and I
 am extremely happy she was given this opportunity."
- "RSYEP has impacted my child to be more independent and motivated to work. He has
 learned how to navigate his finances, complete forms pertaining to employment and
 was very eager to go to work everyday. He has expressed interest to apply again for
 RSYEP. This experience gave him insight on what to expect in the future."

Thank You!

Friends of Raleigh Summer Youth Employment Program

RSYEP is deeply grateful for the incredible support of our community partners, sponsors, and friends. Their dedication, resources, and mentorship help make the program a transformative experience for youth each summer. This page honors the organizations and individuals whose generosity and commitment inspire, empower, and create lasting opportunities for our participants.

Accenture

America Saves for Young Workers

Bank of America

Bank On North Carolina

Brewster Creative Co

Campbell School of Law

Capital Smilez Photo Booth

City Manager's Office (City of Raleigh)

Coastal Credit Union

College For North Carolina (CFNC)

Commute Smart Raleigh

Darkness Rising

DJ Club Rheub

Dr. Shanita Brown, Transformative

Counseling & Consulting, PLLC

Economic Awareness Council

Embassy Suites at Crabtree

Empower App (One Absolute)

F7 Development International

Foster Grandparent Program

(City of Raleigh)

Garner Road Community Center

GoRaleigh

Human Resources (City of Raleigh)

Judge Ashleigh Parker

Judge Damion McCullers

Learning & Development-Human Resources

(City of Raleigh)

Money Box Academy

NC State McKimmon Center

Nutanix

Peace of Mind Psychological Services, PLLC

Poe Center

Raleigh Parks, Recreation, and Cultural

Resources (City of Raleigh)

Raleigh Police Department

Raleigh Union Station

Ratliff Business Consulting

Roll On Up Gaming

S&K Funnel Cakes

Southeast Raleigh YMCA

State Crime Lab at North Carolina

Department of Justice

Step Up Ministry of Wake County

Summer Job Connect/CITI Foundation

Tastes by Troy Catering

The Clark Agency

The Collaborative

The Creator's Law Firm

Third Point, LLC

Wake County Bar Association

Wake County Public Schools

Wanda's Little Hands

Working Credit



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