



# THORNHILL RITES OF PASSAGE FOUNDATION

*Every Boy Needs a Rites of Passage*

## On our minds...in our hearts: Message from CEO/Co-Founder

Fall is one of my favorite seasons, not only because it is my wife's birthday and she declares it a national holiday, but because you can see the manifestation of change through the seasons. A caterpillar looked up and saw a butterfly soaring high and declared, "you will never get me up there." The butterfly perceived his dilemma and flew to the caterpillar and declared, "your season will come." Seasons change; leaves change color; processes change; we too must change.



The Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation is focused on training young men of color — it's our responsibility, it's the right thing to do, and the results are real! I am often reminded of a Biblical passage, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." During a recent college visit with my eldest son, I saw myself, my harvest, and my expectations while witnessing him continuing to grow into manhood. As I said to a parent recently when asked about his child not living up to his potential, keep planting your seeds. Without seedtime, there can be no harvest and without thorns, there can be no roses! The genius of the rose is focusing upon the rose petals, not the thorns.

As we welcomed 10 young men into the 2021-2022 cohort of the HūMan Rites of Passage Program, this change of season also provided us an opportunity to refine our focus, concentrate on our calling, and drill down on developing 7th and 8th grade boys of color. This continuum of experiences starts in 7th Grade with a year-long rites of passage and progresses with leadership development, mentorship, internships and college preparedness resources, to name a few. Most importantly, HūROP alums have a brotherhood of men as peers and mentors.

The "only thing constant is change," and thus we must continue to stay relevant and not be afraid to change to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the young men entrusted to us. Therefore, we continue our work to ensure that "every boy has a rites of passage."

In His Service,

Wayne L. Thornhill

## HūROP Highlight: 2021-2022 HūMan Rites of Passage Cohort

We welcomed 10 young men into the fourth cohort of our HūMan Rites of Passage Program (HūROP). To the naked eye, this is a group of Black boys, but this group is representative of the diversity within the Black community. These young men are from Charlotte, surrounding areas and Virginia; from independent, public, charter and homeschools; from diverse

socio-economic backgrounds. Yet, they are united by a shared interest of finding a brotherhood through a culturally relevant experience.

The fact is that the Black/African American community is not a monolithic group. The diversity of backgrounds, socio-economics, and experiences is what makes us stronger. Above all, it is the sense of belonging and cultural identity that this brotherhood will provide the young men as they navigate this journey called “life.”



(Left to right - front row) Desmond Walker, II, David Williams, J'Ericson Newby, Trenton Loggins, Jaxon Boss, Sy'Ire Jones, Mason Burton, and Malachi Matthews (Back row) Wayne L. Thornhill (Founder/CEO, Jaxon Haynes, and Braxton Spencer

## Rewind: A look back at what we've done

In August, we kicked off the year-long *HūMan Rites of Passage Program*. Ten young men and their families are ready for the challenge as these young men transform before our eyes.

### FUELING YOUR BODY

This year we decided to hold our orientation and first session together, which provided an opportunity for the young men and their families to “experience” HūROP. We were able to host our families in-person, and the time together was welcomed by all. We also supported a local, black-owned business by purchasing popcorn from owner Julie Logan's Popcorn Heaven - Steele Creek.

Our long-term partner Xenia Hospitality welcomed us back at [Emerald Lake Golf Club](#), providing not only a beautiful venue but a delicious lunch.

The young men and their families engaged in an icebreaker, heard from alumni and our Board Chair about their experience with the program, and began to see that TROPF is a family. As the young men were whisked away for their session, the parents were engaged by HūROP alum parents, Floyd and LaTonja Harris. There was lots of laughter and questions asked as parents reluctantly began to release their sons into manhood.

HūROP Alumni Kwasi Thornhill (2019), Jayden Jefferson (2019) and Malachi Harris (2021) facilitated the Fueling Your Body session, allowing time for the new cohort to get to know each other and test out their golf skills on the driving range.





## Rewind: A look back at what we've done *(continued)*

### STRATEGIC THINKING & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



What a way to start! Our “strategic thinking and emotional intelligence” session was engaging, energizing and empowering for the HūROP young men. Facilitated by mentors, Dr. Al Benthall (Benthall Test Prep) and Valerie Williams (SELFsoul), the young men learned the power of combining test taking strategies with owning their emotional intelligence to guarantee better results on tests and better management of their emotions.

The young men finished the day on the Rock Climbing Wall and Obstacle Course at the U.S. National WhiteWater Center. Each HūROP participant conquered the rock climbing through strategic climbing to get to the top. We climbed up the rough side, because staying down is not an option — therefore, we keep climbing!



### MONEY MATTERS

It's all about the Benjamins!

God bless the child that's got its own — our Money Matters session highlighted the wisdom, worth and wealth that we are building with our young men. We have to think about economic empowerment now! A favorite session of each cohort, mentor Troy Keen (financial guru and Wells Fargo executive) never minimizes or marginalizes money. The young men left with a solid financial footing about wealth, not only riches. In short, they have financial goals!

They topped off the day at Blackstone Stables & Quarter Horses in Gastonia, North Carolina, feeding and riding horses — and yet another lesson on money matters. Thanks to owner Ryan Black and Cowboy Rob for hosting us!



## Rewind: A look back at what we've done *(continued)*

### SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

Where are your manners?!

Unquestionably, the most delicious and delightful session! A seven-course meal fit for a king...rather 10 princes. From the Amuse-Bouche, Stuffed Grape Leaves, Chicken Lemon Soup, Beet Salad, Chicken Lemonata, and Grilled Marinated Lamb Chops to the Loukoumades and Baklava, Xenia Hospitality and Illios Noche owner, Stratos Lambos, spared nothing. Unapologetically, this was a five-star, par excellence meal!

The young men learned about dressing for success from Kohl's Waxhaw Store Manager, Ben Cruise, before being immersed into a culinary experience that included being taught the importance of social etiquette and fine dining by Destynee Lovelace. After such a wonderful experience at Illios Noche, the young men were ready to "rev up their engines" as we headed to Ki Speed for indoor karting. Congratulations to Jaxon Haynes for his 1st place medal, Braxton Spencer for his 2nd place medal, and Mason Burton for his 3rd place medal!



### Support Your Child's Mental Health By LaTaisha Hendricks, MSW

As a mom of a middle school son, I am learning that being a teenage boy can be difficult. Common stressors include: a desire to be liked by others, desiring to perform at their highest potential in school, trying to become the best athlete and maintaining positive relationships with family and friends. As a parent, we must prioritize maintaining mental health the same as we do physical health.

It's important for your child to develop social and emotional habits to support their mental well-being. You should encourage:

- Healthy sleeping patterns
- Routine exercise
- Problem-solving techniques
- Interpersonal skills
- Effective ways to identify and manage emotions using tools like the Feeling Wheel *(see right)*
- Open and regular dialogue at home
- Therapy as a norm

It is also very important to provide your child an opportunity to make independent decisions and take healthy risks.

The Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation recognizes that middle school is a critical juncture in a young man's life. Because of this, we work to ensure that our young men have a brotherhood that will support them on this life journey. The sense of belonging and promoting resilience are both skills that help our young men navigate obstacles or challenges.

Calme The Feelings Wheel





## HūROP Alumni Highlight: Blake Johnson (2017 HūROP Alum)

Interviewed By: Cameron Williams, 2021 HūROP Alum



*What did you learn from being in HūROP and how have you applied the skills you learned?*

I learned many things while I was in HūROP, but one thing stands out the most — it is very simple but means a lot — the elevator speech. It taught me that first impressions are very important in this world, and I apply it everywhere I go when I have to introduce myself.

*What are your plans after high school?*

After high school, I plan to attend a four-year university and major in cyber security. I chose cyber security because the world is turning into a technology-based economy.

*What is one piece of advice you would give your fellow HūROPers?*

My advice to younger HūROP members is to absorb as much information as possible. HūROP teaches what you do not learn

in school; it teaches you life lessons to guide you to become a successful man in the future.

*What was your favorite session and why?*

My favorite session was having lunch with Charlotte Latin's Former Head of School Arch McIntosh. He gave us a lot of useful information, not only about college and our futures, but also about money and management as well. It was very informative.

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## TROPF Shout Out: Acknowledging our Team

The Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation has primarily been operated by a volunteer team who are skilled and passionate about the mission and work of the foundation. As a result of being selected as one of the grantees for the SAFE Charlotte B.U.I.L.D. grant, we are building our organizational capacity. We are excited to officially welcome Natia Walker (Program Consultant) and LaTonja Harris (Parent & School Outreach Coordinator) to the TROPF team! A special thanks to our dedicated volunteers, Wanda Ramirez (Activities Coordinator), LaTaisha Hendricks (Social Media) and Tori Belle-Miller (Graphic Designer).

Our interns, Nigel Denny (Technology Intern) and Emma Piscitelli (Marketing Intern) have continued to provide support to TROPF as their schedules have allowed. We recently submitted job descriptions to UNC Charlotte and Johnson C. Smith University in hopes of recruiting two college interns to support our internal and external communications efforts.

Kwasi Thornhill (HūROP Alum 2019), Malachi Harris (HūROP Alum 2021) and Andrew Walker (HūROP Alum 2019) were selected as Peer Mentors for this program year. They provide onsite support for the sessions and ensure that the young men in the program stay connected.



## The Village: Support needed and volunteer opportunities

It really does take a village; we cannot do this alone. We are continuing to solicit support to ensure our vision doesn't exceed our actual capacity to grow and expand our reach — which is to ultimately ensure every boy of color has a rites of passage.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in volunteering to support our fundraising, recruiting, communications, marketing, and/or is interested in becoming a male mentor, you can complete our volunteer application at our website at [www.tropf.org/volunteerapplication](http://www.tropf.org/volunteerapplication).

## #GOALS: Funding goals and updates

The Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation continues to solicit donations and apply for grants that align with the mission of our organization. Thanks to our collaboration with the National Cares Mentoring Movement, we were nominated and selected for the Sephora Community Impact Program. Sephora store employees voted and selected us as a part of the 57 organizations nationwide to receive funding.

### GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday (November 30) is an opportunity for people around the world to use their individual power of generosity to remain connected and support their communities. TROPF will participate with a goal to raise **\$50,000** to equip Black men with the essential tools for success in life through the Core 4 – Character, Competence, Competitiveness and Citizenship. These funds will provide scholarships to young men who would benefit from our programs but may not have the financial resources to do so.

#### Exercise your power to make a positive change by:

1. Donating today at [www.TROPF.org](http://www.TROPF.org)
2. Sharing your TROPF experience on social media. Follow and tag us on Instagram (@humanritesofpassage) and LinkedIn (@Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation)
3. Exercising matching gift benefits through your employer, where applicable

**GIVING  
TUESDAY**

There is no other organization doing it quite like us. Each dollar goes to prepare young men of color through workshops in Strategic Thinking, Leadership Skills, Social Etiquette, Legal Awareness, Money Management, and Pitching a Small Business, as well as a college tour and more. Visit [www.TROPF.org](http://www.TROPF.org) to take action and donate today!

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Home2 Suites by Hilton Charlotte Piper Glen has been a partner of the Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation since the Fall of 2020, providing discounted hotel rates for families participating in the HūMan Rites of Passage Program. That partnership has continued as the management and team have learned more about our organization and attended the culminating ceremony. We appreciate that they always greet our guests as if they were at home.



Home 2 Suites Piper Glen  
5110 Piper Station Dr, Charlotte, NC 28277

Established in 2011, the first Home 2 Suites opened in Fayetteville, NC, and they now have 500 hotels as of September 9, 2021! They pride themselves on providing the best service to their guests. Extended stays — along with their lifestyle-focused amenities, like expanded community spaces, combined laundry and fitness areas, and outdoor walking trails — and overall guest experience will always be the signature of Home 2 Suites. Everything is offered at a budget friendly price, which allows guests to maintain a comfortable lifestyle while on the road.

Consider Home 2 Suites when planning your next adventure and tell them the Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation (Mrs. LaTonja Harris) sent you!

## Onward: A look ahead

We are excited about what's ahead in the next few months:

- Legal Awareness session (December 17) in partnership with the Mecklenburg County Courthouse Office of the Public Defender and mock trial (December 18).
- Annual Kwanzaa Dinner (January 9) will be held at The View@ Emerald Lakes Golf Club. This potluck dinner is a celebration of the Black experience and cultural heritage.
- CEO Panel & Small Business Pitch Competition (January 15) will be open to a limited public audience and prospective families to witness our program participants pitch their business ideas.
- Applications for the 2022-2023 HūMan Rites of Passage Program will be due on April 1, 2022.



For more information, visit us at [www.tropf.org](http://www.tropf.org)

Follow us on LinkedIn @Thornhill Rites of Passage Foundation and Instagram @humanritesofpassage