

THE
NEWARK
MUSEUM
OF
ART

EXPLORERS
PROGRAM



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

THE EXPLORERS PROGRAM AT
THE NEWARK MUSEUM OF ART



Teen Explorers: Our Eyes are on the 21st-Century Museum

There can be no doubt that our enthusiasm for The Newark Museum of Art's Explorers Program is matched tenfold by our Explorers themselves. We have mentored and supported these future leaders in college and career success in STEAM fields since 1995. In turn they have filled our galleries and new virtual realms with their passion and purpose.

It is an inspiration to see how our teens thrive with year-round exposure to art and science and go on to shape our world. Over four years of STEAM career mentoring and college preparation, the Explorers activate our Museum with fresh perspectives on the visitor experience.

The curiosity and work ethics of our Explorers are rewarded with one-of-a-kind, real-world mentoring by our experienced and dedicated staff, who support them as they tackle all aspects of the museum field. As individuals and as part of a cohesive team of peers, the Explorers propel us forward.

More than our national awards and recognition from leading funders in the industry, and more than the 100% college acceptance rate for graduating seniors for the past 15 years, it is the personal journeys of our Explorers that are the true measure of our impact. Their own words best express the challenges they have overcome and successes they have achieved for themselves and for their communities.



Shirley Thomas Ward
Deputy Director
Learning and Engagement



Jessica Nuñez
Director
Education

Seniors
Class of 2024

Jannah Alfed	5
Omotola Akinsiku	6
Kobi Ezeokoli	7
Stacy Folas	8
Rabby Islam	9
Zakai Lassiter	10
Evelyn Mitchell	11
Justin Murray	12
Sidratul Muntaha Nuruddeen-Alli	13
MofiyinfoLuwa Andrew Onaiyekan	14
Emma Raughley	15
Jeilenz Saint-Sulne	16
Camila Torres	17
Anderson Umanzor	18

Juniors
Class of 2025

Nmesomachukwu Aghaji	20
Aashi Bhandari	21
Monica Cruz	22
Dariion Daniels	23
Deborah Emile	24
Moboluwaduro Fola-Akintola	25
Nasir Glover	26
Ayliana Hernandez	27
Kamill Hicks	28
Maurice Houston	29
Kayrelin Liranzo	30
Temidayo Ogundare	31
Sumayah Orphelia	32
Ronald Palmer	33
Kassy Patino	34
Janiya Wimberly	35
Zaña Wooten	36
Kamora Young	37

Sophomores
Class 2026

Miskul-Khitaam Nurudeen Alli	39
Kavalli Booker	40
Nicholas Bustamante	41
Farley Chaves-Linares	42
Iyona Amoura Gaddie	43
Penelope Herra	44
Katherine Kolawole	45
Vanessa Mendez	46
Justin Noe Contreras	47
Bryan Oko	48
Naisha Saint-Sulne	49
Suadeek Simms	50
Diego SoaresKassy	51

Freshmen
Class of 2027

Evani Ebinim	53
Thandiwe Hintze	54
Jelani Lambert	55



CLASS OF
2024





JAHNAH ALFRED

CLASS OF 2024

Being part of this program has brought me so much joy and proven to be highly beneficial for my transition into the world of young adults and responsibilities.

This program holds much importance for me as it has facilitated my learning and development. I feel much more prepared for the challenges that life may throw at me. Through various activities, we have worked towards overcoming obstacles and gaining valuable life skills, such as public speaking, interacting with people in the workplace, and professionalism in every department.

The Explorers Program has had a huge impact on my work and college life. Among the various skills it offers, networking stands out as the one I value most! The program's diversity encourages Explorers of all grades to step out of their comfort zones and connect with, if not fellow Explorers, the staff in the building. I have had the opportunity to share my interests with many individuals and gain feedback and insights in return. The conversations I have engaged in through this program have been extremely beneficial. Being able to converse with such a wide range of people really expands your mind. I have even been able to gain knowledge on ideas and interests that I previously had no idea about; and that's where I feel I have grown. I had always been open-minded, but being in the program has allowed me to further my knowledge, and that's what I'm most grateful for. Being an Explorer to me means being a part of a larger community of people entering a new stage in life. "Explorer" is the perfect title. Exploring new heights in life, people, stages, opportunities, and obstacles. The Explorers Program is a step into the future.

OMATOLA AKINSIKU

CLASS OF 2024

To me, being an Explorer means being able to work with others and stepping out of your comfort zone. It means learning from those around you and being able to put your best foot forward in order to grow. The Explorers Program has allowed me to create a well-planned schedule that I apply to my day-to-day life.

I am grateful for the opportunity I have had to be able to cultivate my organization and time management skills. The Program has given me a plethora of knowledge that has shaped my perspective on the world and given me the opportunity to immerse myself in the history of Asia and Africa. Before the program, I was someone who limited myself, someone who avoided stepping out of my comfort zone and avoided confrontation. Since joining, I have discovered my voice, and I have gained interpersonal skills that have helped me communicate with people from a multitude of backgrounds. The Explorers Program has provided me with a solid foundation for my future journeys, whether it be in college, career planning, or through my interactions with others. Within the Museum, I have been helped by the other seniors – those who have shown me what it means to work in a team and learn from each other. I am grateful for the opportunity the Museum has given me to develop my current skills and discover new ones, because I know that I will be able to apply them beyond the Program. My favorite part of the Explorers Program was going on trips and learning about new places. I am extremely grateful for the time I have spent in the Program and would recommend others to join if they hope to gain the same experience as me and reap the benefits offered to other New Jersey students.





KOBI EZEOKOLI

CLASS OF 2024

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the incredible influence the Explorers Program has had on me since I enrolled in 2022. As a member, I have grown enormously and have found new interests that have influenced my goals for my studies and future.

My perspectives have been expanded and my interest about the world around me has been nourished thanks in large part to the Explorers Program. I have built critical thinking abilities that go beyond the classroom and have gained a deeper understanding of numerous subjects through immersive experiences, such as the various workshops we've had ranging from financial literacy to self-defense classes. My enthusiasm for inquiry and discovery has been sparked by the program's chance to interact with experts and take part in practical projects, which is one of my favorite features (tours and internships).

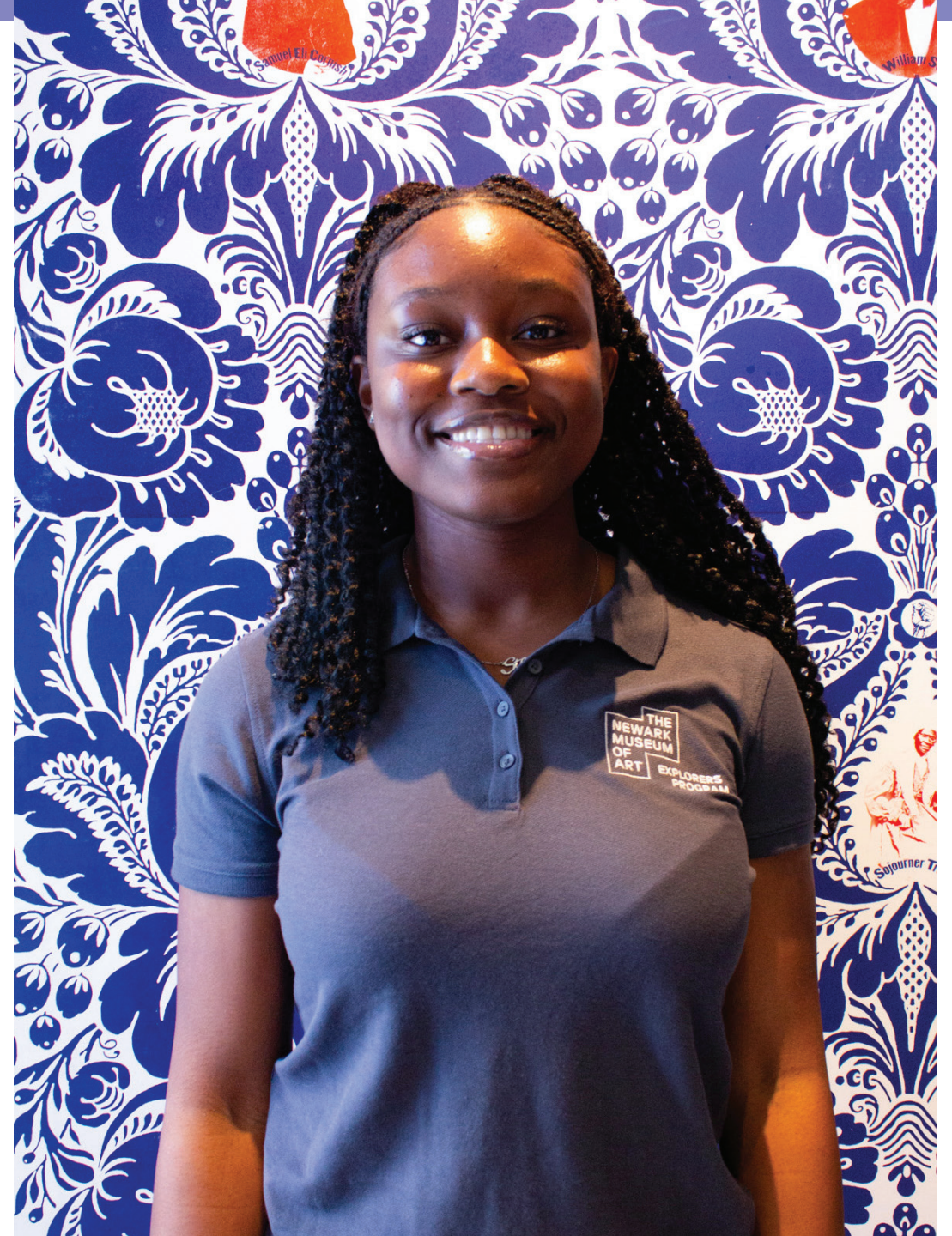
In addition, the Explorers Program has improved other facets of my life in addition to my academic endeavors. It has given me a sense of self-assurance and perseverance that has been helpful in overcoming obstacles in my academic and personal pursuits. Furthermore, the direction and encouragement I've received from mentors at the Museum have played a significant role in my development and in helping me feel like a part of the community. Overall, the chances and experiences I have had thanks to the Explorers Program in The Newark Museum of Art are something I am incredibly appreciative of. The experience has been genuinely life-changing, and I can't wait to keep improving the world.

STACY FOLAS

CLASS OF 2024

This program is important to me because of the countless lessons it has taught me and the many ways it's helped me to grow. Some of these lessons include time management, professionalism, and team building. Showing up to work on time is a responsibility I take a lot of pride in even when I have other obligations to take care of. I also improved a lot on professional communication by letting Ms. Jess know when I am not available, when I'm going to be late or coming early, and with other scheduling issues. This also affected our team projects because I communicate with my group members as well about the work we need to get done. Working in teams in this program has helped me tremendously with communicating ideas with others, being a leader, and ensuring that everyone's ideas are heard. This has impacted my social life in a positive way because I get to interact with teenagers of so many different backgrounds that I would have never met if not for this program.

I'm also grateful for being an Explorer because I will be able to graduate high school with a significant amount of work experience in a professional environment under my belt. One thing about being an Explorer that really surprised me is how comfortable I have gotten with my peers and mentors here. When I first joined the program, I was very shy and mainly kept to myself, but now I have grown fond of the community of people here. I always look forward to coming to this environment where I can work with like-minded people to serve the amazing community of Newark and there truly is no other program like The Explorers Program.





RABBY ISLAM

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program has taken me on an eventful journey filled with newly attained knowledge, skills, and personal growth. Ever since the first community service day that I worked on, I have grown into a more resourceful person. Being a part of a team with my fellow Explorers has helped me grow out of my shell. I have built strong bonds with my fellow Explorers to the point where they feel like family instead of just coworkers. My favorite part of the program is definitely the Teen Night Events. The Teen Night Events are always a blast because we put in a lot of effort to provide our visitors with delicious food, catchy music, vibrant scenery that matches the theme, and an overall welcoming environment. Although it had its challenges, the experience was rewarding. The event was a huge success and I left with real world experience in business and finance management.

The Explorers Program is important to me because it provides me with work experience and allows me to help the community, which I am very passionate about. Before the program, I was a shy and timid. A year and a half since I've been a part of the program, my confidence, leadership skills, and public speaking abilities have improved tremendously. I owe it all to the workshops, trips, and assigned projects by my supervisor, Ms. Jess.

ZAKAI LASSITER

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is important to me because I have learned multiple life skills that have helped me in my current life and school so far. It has helped me get out of my comfort zone for my own benefits, in school, home, with my friends, college selection, and work. I say school because most people in my school were scared to present, but not me because at the Museum I speak to large audiences. Also, when I am required to speak in front of audiences outside of school and work it is much easier because my confidence has improved. At home, I educate my family members on the galleries and the Museum, so they are more informed. My social life has been impacted because I have made a whole lot more friends and met different kinds of people throughout this program. Also, my college selection process was a piece of cake because the Museum helped me plan out my career and major through different websites and classes.

Before the program, I was shy and introverted. As I went through the program and met new people with the help of the confidence and public speaking courses we took, I've become a confident humble person. I can proudly say I have grown when it comes to social and public skills. I am grateful that I am an Explorer because I have obtained life skills, academic skills outside of school, and different social skills. The trips that we took gave me a better understanding of different places in the world. My favorite part of the Explorers Program is that I feel like we are a family and it's not just like a school or camp.





EVELYN MITCHELL

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is important to me because it is a way for me to socialize. Sometimes as a homeschooler, it's hard to get yourself in social situations. The Explorers Program has made me get out of my comfort zone. Things like being in large groups, and public speaking used to stress me out but since being in the program I've gotten so much better. The person I'm most grateful for in the Museum is the group of friends I have created. I have come into work many times upset, but the minute I come in and start hanging out I feel ten times better. I've been helped most by my fellow seniors and Ms. Jessica Nuñez. While working on our senior projects the seniors have helped me build and all together make my life easier. Ms. Jess is always here when I need her. She's always very understanding whether it's needing an internship or just needing a personal day. The thing that surprised me most about working at the Museum was probably getting so close to my fellow Explorers and how much everyone here wants you to succeed. I've never worked at a place that has given me SAT prep, public speaking lessons, or personal essay writing. These have all helped me so much in my college application process. My favorite part of the Explorers Program is probably the trips. Before the Museum I hadn't been to the zoo in years but since joining I've been to the Bronx Zoo, the Intrepid Museum, and my personal favorite The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

JUSTIN MURRAY

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is important to me because it taught me life skills to prepare me for the challenges the world would throw at me. Without the Explorers Program, I would have struggled with time management, public speaking, and having to balance academics and extracurriculars. At home, I was able to apply the hard work and responsibility of being an Explorer when helping around the house. Socially, I met adventurous and wonderful people who've shared their backgrounds with me and influenced me to do better in life. Through this program, I learned to dream bigger and pursue anything I put my mind to.

Before the Explorers Program, I used to work in Jersey City; luckily, I found the Explorers Program whose goal is to build strong work minded individuals while focusing on the person as a whole rather than primarily academic or work. I am grateful for being an Explorer because I got to create so many memories and have an experience that not many people my age or background usually get. Looking back, I see myself as a humble and motivated individual who always loves to learn.

Something that surprised me while being an Explorer was the number of friendships I have made through this program. I've met people from all sorts of different backgrounds, schools, and areas within New Jersey. My favorite part about being an Explorer is the community you get to build. It's like one big welcoming family.





SIDRATULMUNTAHA NURUDEEN-ALLI

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is important to me because it brought me out of my comfort zone and gave me a glimpse of what it will be like in the real world. The Explorers Program has impacted my social life because it allowed me to network with talented individuals from different schools. Before the program, I could barely even interact with people, even just saying 'hi' was a challenge. Even though I still struggle a little I have grown to be much more than before. When deciding to join The Explorers Program, I was looking for an extracurricular activity that I could do outside of sports. I would say that everyone has helped me from the Explorers to the staff educators. After joining the program, I was nervous because I didn't know many people and joined late, so I felt a bit out of place. But as I continued in the program, I realized how of much a community this program is. It offers internships in different parts of the Museum that allow me to explore different aspects of the Museum that I did not know existed. It forced me to communicate with people, which made me more verbal. My favorite part of the program is probably the trips because I get to go to different places that I have not been to and it's overall just a nice experience.

MOFIYINFOLUWA ANDREW ONAIYEKAN

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program and The Newark Museum of Art is important to me because of the valuable skills it has taught me and how much it has helped me grow as a person, and as someone in the workforce. I can confidently say the program has impacted all aspect of my life positively. In school, I'm able to communicate with peers and even staff in a more professional manner and have learned many skills regarding leadership and working in a team. Before the program I wasn't the best at being able to speak in a public setting around peers or adults, the Explorers Program aided me tremendously in building my confidence and being able to speak on a dime.

I'm grateful for the Explorers Program because without it, I wouldn't be as self-assured as I am now regarding my secondary education options. The Museum has helped me prepare for life in college and is helping me in choosing my college of choice. Someone I can always count on in the Museum is Ms. Jess. She is one of the most helpful and loving people I know, and she answers any questions I have about work, life, college, etc. My favorite part about the Explorers Program is the college trips, going into my junior year, I felt so behind about colleges and most of the things that come with it, I could barely name any colleges in the state, but the Museum and Ms. Jess were incredibly helpful to me. Picking up information about the college that will be suited for me and going on college trips really helped with that.





EMMA RAUGHLEY

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is important to me because it provides me with a safe space to learn and grow into a better person. Not only have the people here been extremely welcoming, but they have also pushed me to be more confident in myself. The School Programs Educators have helped me the most. They have been so patient and kind to me while teaching me about all the moving parts it takes to run a Museum. I am so thankful for everyone who has helped me mature and become a better worker. The aspect of my life that this program has had the biggest positive impact has been how I viewed my future and professional career. Working here has taught me that if I want to pursue an art career, I will have to work very hard to get to where I want to go.

This program has given me the tools to dare to be bold in any new setting I come across in my college and professional life to come. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be an Explorer because this Program has allowed me to: Strengthen my own values; Take part in new experiences that I wouldn't have otherwise been able to enjoy; Grow my understanding of what it means to be professional. The thing that surprised me the most about this program was how close the staff are with each other. The entire time I have been here I have felt a tremendous amount of community within the Museum. Because of this, my favorite part about the Explorers Program is the relationships I've made here. This Program has set me up for greatness, and although I'm looking forward to my exciting future, I will be sad to leave this Museum that has been so kind to me on my journey.

JEILENZ SAINT-SULNE

CLASS OF 2024

I joined the Explorers Program in October of 2021 and since then I've grown in more ways than one. The Explorers Program has helped me expand my knowledge about applying for jobs, handing tasks on time, etc. I love our team building exercises and think it's the best thing about the program. The community within the Explorers Program is vastly diverse and infused with creativity. I've gotten to know many different people, form some bonds, and create a safe place away from home.

My favorite duties as an Explorer are to aid in hosting teen events. I love spreading joy and getting people up and dancing. A workshop that has been helpful to me was the one on self-defense. I learned that the best option in a potentially violent situation is to take the high road because it might save your life. Another workshop that has been helpful to me was Financial Literacy. I got some tips on how to manage and save my money, as well as how to spend it wisely. To me, to be an Explorer is to be optimistic and be able to adapt to situations in a short amount of time. To be able to see things for not just what they are, but what they could be. I think this experience has helped shape my future a great deal and improve skills I once struggled with in the past.





CAMILA TORRES

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is to me what psychologist Abraham Maslow called “self-actualization”. Making friends with peers, exploring historical sites, networking with Museum Staff, and developing projects with my team all create a fulfilling experience. I love all the people in the Explorers Program. The Museum staff and fellow Explorers are here with a drive to work together and contribute to the broader Newark community. I enjoy Teen Nights and Community Days because all the guests are kind and willing to partake in the activities the Explorers and Museum Staff develop and foster. Therefore, the Explorers Program is important to me because it allows meaningful third spaces in Newark to flourish, adding social happiness to my work.

The Explorers Program has impacted my whole teenage life. On Saturdays, I wake up and work on the Senior Project, Tuesdays and Thursdays are full of workshops and internships like Accounting and Family Drop-Ins. Working part-time as an Explorer takes time (10 hours a week during the school year) and requires sacrifice and the balancing of school, work, and personal life, which develops maturity. Another aspect of my life the Explorers Program enriches is my knowledge of financial literacy, higher education, and workplace social etiquette. The workshops ensure I leave with a heavier brain!

Before the Explorers Program, I was a clueless, non-socially competent youth with no broader understanding of the adult world. Talking to people made me nervous. Now, I know what a respectful, nurturing workplace is like. It’s wonderful and I’m thankful for being in a program that provides a space of care so I can grow.

My favorite part of the Explorers Program is my coworkers. I love my fellow co-workers- they are all personalities and characters full of charm that make me fulfilled and happy.

ANDERSON UMANZOR

CLASS OF 2024

The Explorers Program is very important to me because of the influence it has had on my life. I was shy and quiet before and the two years I've spent with the Explorers Program have completely changed me. The financial literacy workshops make me feel more confident about the future, while the self-defense classes gave me confidence in myself. Preparing to guide tours as an intern and practicing in the mirror to talk to people and answer questions made me more outspoken, and it made me feel prepared for what I would face. I've received help from Ms. Jess. Be it advice or a lesson, she's always there to help me whenever I face an obstacle. Ms. Shirley always manages to pull through and helps the Museum feel like a home and a sanctuary. Ms. Fran makes working with people phenomenal and she always manages to help lighten up the mood. All the people of the Museum have helped me in one way or another, and I am so thankful for them. I am extremely grateful for the help other Explorers give me, such as finding a specific function on the computer or helping me clean up after a meeting. Overall, I am extremely happy and thankful for being part of such a close-knit community.

My favorite part of being an Explorer, aside from all the relationships I've managed to build, is the experiences the Program gives me. As a teenager I've always dreamed of seeing the world and the Program has allowed that for me through college visits, Museum tours, and other outings. Everything I do in the Program is extremely valuable and I will carry these experiences with me for many years to come.





CLASS OF
2025





NMESOMACHUKWU AGHAJI

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program is important to me because it creates a space where young people can become professionals, gain necessary skills, and grow to become responsible adults. To me, the Explorers Program is more than just my “first job,” it’s a place where I learn to express myself, make important friendships and discover what I want to do after high school. It also provides many resources to ensure that we’re prepared for college like immersive college tours, SAT prep, as well as resume building and practice public speaking workshops. Having these things available has helped me in my academic career.

Before entering this program, I didn’t know how to operate in a professional workspace, but after being in the program for almost 4 years I can say that my social skills have improved. Being an Explorer has made me blossom into someone who is confident, professional, and a team player. An amazing aspect of working at the NMOA is that you get to see lively, beautiful, and reflective art in various forms. However, it also means that you become a part of a vibrant and caring team of staff. As an Explorer I’m very grateful to be working under Ms. Jess and Ms. Shirley because they are empowering and assertive. They work tirelessly to make sure that all Explorers are getting the most out of the program.

As an Explorer I’ve been able to do a variety of things in different departments of the Museum. However, my favorite part of the program is getting to work as an assistant teacher during summer camp. There I get to see the education side of the Museum and be an active part of it. I enjoy summer camp because it requires me to be adaptive, flexible, prepared, patient, and creative.

AASHI BHANDARI

CLASS OF 2025

My name is Aashi Bhandari and this is my second year as an Explorer at the Newark Museum of Art. Over the past two years, the Explorers Program has become an important outlet for me, whether that be after a long school day or during our Saturday meetings. Our recurrent events and weekly workshops are oftentimes something I look forward to because it gives me the opportunity to work alongside fellow teenagers and expand my skill set. The Explorers Program has impacted my social life because I've learned to interact with students and adults from all around town, allowing me to develop communication and management skills. Moreover, the program has allowed me to prepare myself for my post-high school career as I prepare for college and understand what working in a professional environment entails.

Before the Museum, I found myself to be more reserved. Working at the Museum has allowed me to become sociable and gain a sense of independence. The program also fostered my success in new and uncomfortable situations by emphasizing the importance of adaptability. I am grateful for being an Explorer because it has allowed me to understand aspects of myself and expand my skill set before I enter college. Specifically, our resume building, and financial literacy workshops have been crucial in our development as young adults because we not only learn these skills but get to experience them in a real-world setting. Essentially, my favorite part of the Program is our office and access to various meeting spaces because they prompt all Explorers to work and grow together with the support of all our peers.





MONICA CRUZ

CLASS OF 2025

I first heard about the program through my sister, Leah Cruz. She joined the program as a sophomore as well and graduated in 2022. I was very excited to get accepted into the program because I've heard such wonderful things from Leah. The Explorers Program is very important to me because it gives me work experience and allows me to build great connections and friendships. It gave me the opportunity to work with other teenagers, which builds on the amazing experience. I've learned how to manage my time better and how to be punctual. The Explorers Program has impacted my school, work and home life because it has made me more responsible and have the ability to take on tasks that may sound difficult at first. I've learned to put my responsibilities first rather than the things that I want to do. Before The Explorers Program, I didn't think I was capable of managing my time and dedicate myself to working part time as a full-time student. Now I see that I manage my time well and learned how to communicate when I cannot meet the requirements.

I'd say that my fellow co-workers have helped me abundantly in my time here at the Museum. They have pushed me and helped me whether that was one I was having a mentally or physically challenging day. I am beyond grateful for the program because it has taught me many life skills like financial literacy, how to work in a team, and public speaking. I wouldn't say there was anything that surprised me about The Explorers Program. It's an honor to be a part of this program.

DARIION DANIELS

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program is important to me because it allows me to be able to do something after school other than go home, which looks better on my college résumé. The Explorers Program has not really changed other aspects of my life, but is still a way I can have access to other opportunities I would not normally have access to. Ms. Jess has helped me during my time at the Museum because anytime there is a problem, she is the one I ask about it, so she serves as a beacon of support. Also Ms. Shirley helps us by being able to help us with anything Ms. Jess is unable to. I am grateful for being an Explorer because it allows me to be able to be exposed to certain other programs or people when they come in to teach us things. This support is appreciated greatly by me because some of these opportunities can change my life. The thing that surprised me most about being an Explorer was the ability to talk to other people in high school that are from other high schools. My favorite part of the Explorers Program is the fact that I can use the resources here like the MacBooks to access information I normally would not be able to.





DEBORAH EMILE

CLASS OF 2025

I am so grateful for this opportunity to join The Explorers Program. In the past few months, The Explorers Program has enhanced my academic world and professional worlds. I have been able to work with new people. I have also learned time management between school and the program. This program has impacted my entire life, it's helped me become a more thoughtful person, and it has helped me think outside the box when it comes to creativity. This program has also been a way for me to better my leadership skills and learn the difference between being a leader and a proper team player.

Before I entered the program, I was someone who did not care for others. I also did not have a proper attitude towards anything in life. I walked around with an attitude of not caring because I had no hope that I could do things and be something. However, despite all of that, I am now a person who is more extroverted and have full confidence that I can grow even more into a more well-rounded person. I am also more respectful of my counterparts and fully responsible and accountable for my doings. Museum staff and educators have all helped me break my old bad habits. I also know the time and place for everything now. My favorite part of the Museum is the people, everyone is so welcoming and friendly, and I can 100% say this is now my new additional family, which made me aware of how to adapt into new surroundings. This program is a hidden gem.

MOBOLUWADURO FOLA-AKINTOLA

CLASS OF 2025

Growing up, the closest connection I ever had to a museum was the show Jurassic Park. Now I know ample amounts of information about many pieces of art in the collection. The Explorers Program is important to me because it's a third place. In this program, I feel cared for, and I get to make a difference. The Explorers Program has taught me about balancing life and has pushed me to interact with other students from through community days and teen events. Our college trips have given me hands-on experience beyond college, and I have been taught about crucial life skills such as financial literacy, martial arts, professionalism, and etiquette. The Explorers Program and God have contributed to me seeing myself now as a member of a community who has responsibilities to the community but also to myself.

The educators and Museum staff have been very kind, accepting, and patient with us, helping us to get accustomed to everything. Beyond them, you, our supporters have helped me because it's your funding and your care that makes this program possible in the first place. I am grateful to be an Explorer because having my own income has been instrumental in developing my current sense of independence and agency. I am also grateful for the summer camp and the chance to care for other children because I've personally always wished I had more siblings and for that month and two weeks, it feels like I do! Consequently, this program has shaped a lot of my day-to-day values and activities. No matter where life takes me, or what happens, I will always be grateful to this program, to Ms. Jess and Ms. Shirley, to my fellow Explorers, and to you all, for being integral in my high school and life journey. Thank you.





NASIR GLOVER

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program holds a special place in my heart because of the experiences I get by participating in the program. The program offers numerous trip opportunities and finds a good balance between work experience and fun. The Explorers Program has helped me work on my time management, improving my schoolwork, and, in turn, helping me get better grades.

Before joining the Explorers Program I was very reclusive, and I tended to be very quiet. The program got me out of my shell, and I'm a more outgoing person now. Here at the Museum, I work with a lot of different people. One of these people being the Director of Education who has taught me the fundamentals of being a responsible young adult. The Museum provides me with such a wonderful opportunity to gain work experience in an enjoyable and friendly environment. The one thing that surprised me about the Museum was the amount of people also involved in the program. I thought it would be a relatively small program. My favorite part of the Museum would be the sense of community it has.

AYLIANA HERNANDEZ

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program has done a multitude of great things to prepare me for the future. For starters, workshops have taught me about self-defense, public speaking, financial literacy, resume building and so much more! The Explorers Program has impacted my school life by helping me be more confident in my speaking with the public speaking workshops and with my writing with the reflections we write after every trip. The program has impacted my work life by teaching me how to be professional and how to speak to and account for a variety of different ages while also teaching me how to budget and plan events. The Explorers Program has also impacted my career plans by supporting all my endeavors and never letting me sell myself short, pushing me to be my best and never allowing me to give up on anything that I am doing.

Before the Explorers Program I was not a very social person, I didn't know much about finances, and I used a lot of filler words while speaking. And while being a part of this program, I have learned so much about finances, I've minimized the amount of filler words I use, and I now can walk up to someone and have a conversation very easily if I needed to. Ms. Jess and Ms. Shirley are the two people that plan all the workshops and trips that the Explorers Program goes on and push us to be the best that we can be and to never lose faith in our abilities. I am so grateful for this experience because without the Explorers Program I do not know where I would be today, the Explorers Program has helped me flourish to become the individual I am today.





KAMILL HICKS

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program is a 4-year program in which teens help during events, create projects, and even create events of their own. I've grown a lot as a person over these 3 years. When I first came, I was afraid to speak to people I didn't know and was very uncomfortable in public. But as the years went by, I learned how to be less awkward. The summer camp we have here really helped to make me more outspoken. Working with campers forces you to speak. I even planned multiple teen events. I gained a lot of confidence from being a part of this program. The Explorers Program helped me find how important it is to be sociable. It also showed me how to be patient and work with those my age and younger. My favorite thing about the Explorers Program has to be summer camp. I was able to create a bond with the campers and learn how to relate to them. I helped them create projects and had a lot of fun with them. The Explorers Program is important to me as I learned a lot about the adult world. The Explorers Program got me ready for adulthood. I gained a lot of skills that I will use for the rest of my life.

MAURICE HOUSTON

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program is so important to me as it has been my dream to be a part of it since I was a child in camp. Furthermore, The Explorers Program has helped me develop my communication and public speaking skills, allowing me to be more comfortable in a professional work environment. The Explorers Program has impacted multiple parts of my life; however, the most significant was the fact that the program is like a second home to me. I look forward to our meetings, as the program offers a comfortable space where I feel welcomed and invited. Before the program, I would say that I was in a “shell.” I spoke a lot less, and when I did, I often found myself nervous and overthinking what I said.

Now, I see myself as a lot more sociable and outgoing, which can be attributed to my participation in the program. My boss, Ms. Jess has helped me a lot at the program, due to a multitude of reasons. Her constructive criticism, positive and helpful attitude, and strong leadership has had a significant impact on my time and adjustment to the program. I’m grateful for being an Explorer as it is an extremely beneficial program, not only for it developing me as an individual, but also for putting me in a very diverse and talented community of people in my age group. One thing that surprised me about the program was the college trips, as I did not expect post-secondary planning to be an integral part of the program. My favorite part of the Explorers Program are the community days as they allows me to develop skills with the public and be more involved in my community/city, which I am very proud to do.





KAYRELIN LIRANZO

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program is crucial for the development and improvement of our community. It gives me the chance to be exposed to a variety of situations that improve my comprehension and ability to be a well-rounded individual. I am glad that I can say that the Museum has had a positive influence on me in a variety of ways and has supported me during my time in high school. The Explorers Program has helped me to plan for my career in the future. Before the program I was unsure of the things I could do, but this program has helped me discover my skills and the ones that can potentially help me in my future, from planning events to communicating well with others and being able to work collaboratively most of the time.

There are many staff members at the Museum, but Ms. Jessica has had the biggest influence on me. She has supported me in ways that no one else has, has helped me find networking opportunities, and has advised me on what to do and what not to do in the future. I am grateful for the chances and experiences that being an Explorer has provided me with because I would not have been able to participate in this program otherwise. In addition to getting to know incredible people, I've improved my skills and learned how to function in a professional setting. This program has been my favorite part of my high school experience because it has helped me communicate more effectively, and the experience I've earned here has given me the confidence to apply to other programs.

TEMIDAYO OGUNDARE

CLASS OF 2025

In my time as an Explorer at The Newark Museum of Art, I've learned a great deal about myself and the people around me. This program is important to me, as it has become a space where I can be involved with free expression, which I am unable to experience at home and at school. It has not only prepared me for the future ahead, such as with SAT prep and college readiness, but it has also given me many new connections that I will take with me well after my graduation from the program. Before, I was someone that didn't really care about art and the fundamentals of day-to-day living, someone that would rather stay home than to go to a Museum; now I can confidently say I am now someone that pays attention to the creative world around me rather than live a bleak life.

If I had to point out a specific entity that has helped me, it would have to be my fellow Explorers. They have made working here and at events a joy rather than just a "job" that I must complete for the next 8 hours. I am so grateful for the people I have met and the new things I have learned. During my time at the Museum, I would say what has surprised me most is the work we do. Honestly speaking, I did not think the types of projects that each grade completes would be as extensive as they are. All in all, my favorite part of the Explorers Program would have to be the inclusivity and regard for all the peers that surround me.





SUMAYAH ORPHELIA

CLASS OF 2025

This program has greatly impacted my career plans, providing me with a clearer understanding of the type of work and environment I desire. Through this program, I've identified my strengths, weaknesses, and interests. While my work ethic was similar before joining, the experience has significantly boosted my confidence in myself and my abilities. Throughout the program, my bosses have been instrumental, offering guidance on college and life readiness. They are open, understanding, and always willing to provide advice and resources. The Museum environment has taught me to advocate for my needs and equipped me with the skills to effectively communicate with both peers and superiors.

Although I attend a STEM school, my passion lies in the arts, and I hope to attend an art school in the future. However, opportunities for art-centered programs are limited in my school and local area. This program holds immense importance for me as one of the few avenues to explore and nurture my interest in the arts. I was surprised by the welcoming atmosphere of the program. Although initially apprehensive, I quickly became comfortable with my colleagues and higher ups. This contrasts with common teenage experiences in the workplace, and I was greatly shocked by the supportive environment. One of the highlights of the program for me is the Museum building itself. Its ever-changing exhibits are stunning, drawing me in and making me eager to be there. The Explorers Program will continue to shape my journey through life, from the invaluable life skills workshops to the networking opportunities it provides.

RONALD PALMER

CLASS OF 2025

I am writing to express my profound gratitude for the impactful journey I've had as a participant in The Explorers Program. The program has been instrumental in shaping my personal and academic growth. One of my favorite features of the Explorers Program is its emphasis on public speaking and college readiness. The opportunity to engage directly with exhibits and participate in workshops has not only expanded my knowledge, but also cultivated critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Moreover, the supportive community within the program has fostered lasting friendships and a sense of belonging that I deeply cherish. The Explorers Program has significantly impacted various aspects of my life, particularly in shaping my educational and career aspirations. Additionally, the mentorship provided by Museum staff has been invaluable in helping me navigate important decisions regarding resume building, college selection, and career planning.

Before joining the program, I was nervous when I had to speak in front of a group of people and had little to no knowledge of what my next steps would be in college and after graduating college. Now, I see myself as a confident and ambitious individual with a clear vision for my future. I attribute much of this transformation to the enriching experiences and support I've received through the Explorers Program. I am immensely grateful to everyone involved in making the Explorers Program possible. From the dedicated staff who organize events to the volunteers who share their expertise, everyone has played a crucial role in shaping my journey of exploration and learning. Thank you once again for the opportunity to be part of this incredible program.





KASSY PATINO

CLASS OF 2025

The Explorers Program has had a profound impact on my life. Beginning as a sophomore, the program found me at the right time and nurtured me to gain the confidence that I needed to succeed. At the Museum, I have felt myself being pushed out of my comfort zone more times than I could count, and it has made me socialize and become much more open to others than before. Interacting with my community has allowed me to feel more connected to my city, and I have learned networking skills that are essential for being a museum worker. This has been especially true this year through the junior event projects. They are my favorite events at the Museum and have made me use all of my gained skills to produce an event that will benefit and bring joy to the Newark community.

In addition, the Explorers Program has an endless number of opportunities to learn more about not just a work life, but also a life in college and in our future careers. With workshops, guest lectures, and mentors, the Explorers and I have been prepared for college applications, career goals, and financial literacy which will shape the way I succeed in the future. All in all, I am truly grateful for the opportunities that the Museum has offered me thus far, as it has allowed me to gain so many different experiences that I will remember for the rest of my life. Thanks to this Program, I am positive that I will succeed in life and achieve my goal of going to medical school in the future.

JANIYA WIMBERLY

CLASS OF 2025

When I first became a part of the Explorers Program, I was very independent and was not good at socializing with people. As time went on, I realized the benefits of doing things as a team. My favorite feature about the program is that it provides a safe and supportive environment where I could explore my interests in art and history without feeling overwhelmed. Through hands-on activities, workshops, and interactions with fellow Explorers, I have gained confidence in myself and my abilities. Before joining the program, I often struggled with social interactions and felt isolated in school and other social settings. However, the Explorers Program has helped me break out of my shell and connect with others who share similar passions and interests. It has also improved my communication skills and made me more comfortable interacting with people from diverse backgrounds.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Explorers Program and for the friendships, skills, and memories it will give me. One of the most surprising things about the program was how much I enjoyed collaborating with my fellow Explorers on group projects. Despite my initial reservations, I found that working together with others not only enhanced my learning experience, but also helped me forge meaningful connections. My favorite part of the Explorers Program is getting to explore the Museum behind the scenes and learn from experts in their field. It has sparked a passion for lifelong learning and inspired me to pursue a career as an architect and animator. Thank you once again for this incredible opportunity and for believing in me, even when I doubted myself. The Explorers Program has truly changed my life for the better, and I will always be grateful for the impact it has had on me.





ZAÑA WOOTEN

CLASS OF 2025

The Newark Museum of Art Explorers Program is important to me because it teaches me valuable life lessons. Moreover, the activities we do in the programs also help me boost my skills. For example, public speaking, proper manners, and work etiquette. This program really had a large impact on my life! Mainly my social life, the teen's night we host helps me get a larger group of people to meet and talk to without being under pressure! Not only teen nights, but the Explorers are also very accepting people to be around.

Before this program, I had no idea what I was going to do outside of high school and forward in life. This program has changed me. It helped me get out of bed and gave me things to do. It motivates me to be a better person and try new things every day, something I never wanted to do before the program. My fellow Explorers have always given me good energy to motivate me to smile and work harder than before. I'm so grateful for being an Explorer because it is an experience that will help me with my life choices. It gives me many privileges and experiences that I know I wouldn't get in other places. Honestly, I thought it would just be another boring school experience, however, it's a home away from home! I wasn't expecting to feel this comfortable and able to be myself in the workspace I am in, but surprisingly I do. This is where I can work and feel safe in my skin.

KAMORA YOUNG

CLASS OF 2025

I have been a part of this program for a little under 8 months but joining it has been an amazing experience. I was given the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people and befriend many people who share some of the same interests as me. I have grown in many ways, such as speaking aloud, and being comfortable with being the new kid in the room. During my time here I have learned time management and have become more responsible and engaging. The Explorers Program has given me an overall great and positive experience. The program has impacted my life in many aspects. Applying myself to the program has given me the mental strength to do it in my classrooms as well. Knowing I can juggle two things at once and put my best foot forward has opened my eyes to the real world.

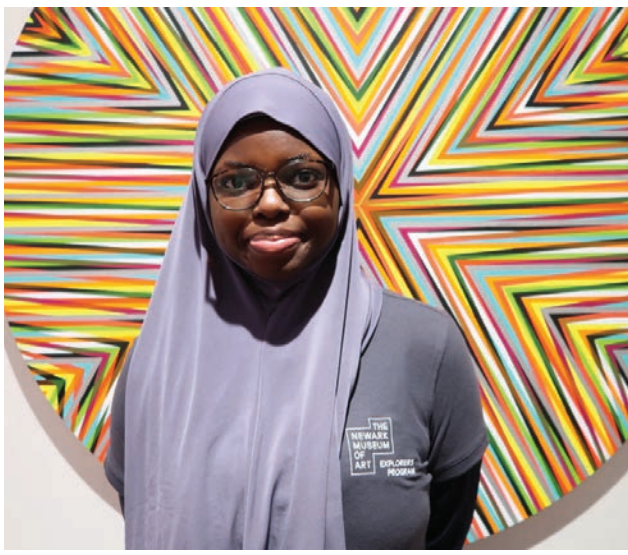
Before the program I was a quiet individual who learned to stay to myself due to Covid quarantine. Over time, I gradually started to come out of my shell. Joining this program has forced me to speak in uncomfortable environments and get used to being in the spotlight. Though I am still a bit of an introvert, I can command a space when needed.

My favorite part of the Explorers Program so far has been the community days and the teen nights. Bringing joy to many of the Newark residents has made me feel better about myself. Seeing that I can give people who aren't as fortunate as me a better winter holiday experience was the best feeling I could ever imagine.





CLASS OF
2026



MISKUL-KHITAAM NURUDEEN ALLI

CLASS OF 2026

At first, I joined the Explorers Program for money, but as I progressed, I realized the Program's real worth. I'm a confused teen, like many others, and besides parents, we need someone to guide us into adulthood. One of the main things I struggle with is confidence and public speaking. Those two qualities are crucial for life and at school there are a lot of presentations where we need to show confidence and leadership to excel. As a person who cares a lot about my grades, I am thankful that Museum was able to push me out of my comfort zone. I have been feeling less nervous and performing better in presentations.

I'm the same person from when I started the program till now, but my outlook on life is different. I feel more responsible, I am now able to manage my time between school, the Museum, and other extracurriculars. Everyone has helped me, might have been indirectly or directly intentional or unintentional, but they have helped me. I'm grateful for being an Explorer for many reasons, but the main reason is that it is such a perfect job for teens. It's after school and the environment is clean, and they take into consideration a lot of things regular jobs don't care about. My favorite part is being able to socialize at work and the snacks. I had one job experience before that, and they left me alone at the store and the time would go by very slowly because I was alone. That bad experience allowed me to appreciate a working environment where I can interact with people, people my age. Food is amazing, it is how our body is full and to do good work you need good energy. I love my job.





KAVALLI BOOKER

CLASS OF 2026

Being in The Explorers Program has taught me many things. So far, I have enjoyed my time here and all the memories I've created with the people I have worked with. I also learned things that I can use later in life, such as professionalism. One way that The Explorers Program has impacted my schooling is through college counseling. I also think that this program positively helps Explorers work ethics because then they'll have some experience in the work field professionally. Before becoming an Explorer at the Museum, I was a social person and I got along well with others. Being here now has only expanded that trait and has shown me the many different personalities of others.

Since I only joined the program this year, I am still adjusting to it. One person who has helped me a ton was my friend, who introduced me to the program. She has shown me things that we can and cannot do as Explorers and how to get around the building easily. Another person who I'm extremely grateful for who has also help me is my boss. Her guidance and advice have simply helped me feel more comfortable within the Museum. I am very grateful to be an Explorer because I'm able to obtain more information that I wouldn't be able to have gotten outside of the program. Something that surprised me about being an Explorer was the exciting trips that we're able to attend. My favorite part about being an Explorer has to be being able to go and work at different events that the Museum hosts. Overall, I look forward to coming to this program and improving more and more each year.

NICHOLAS BUSTAMANTE

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program has allowed me to grow socially. The people I met here are wonderful, both my peers and my supervisors, and I am genuinely grateful that I was able to meet them all. The Explorers Program has impacted many different aspects of my life, from my day-to-day conversations with teachers in school to the performance and quality of work I submit for my homework. Lessons and workshops such as public speaking and resume building help me develop my life skills in a more professional sense, while events like the photo studio exploration have helped me expand my horizons.

One person I would say has helped me in the Museum is one of the educators, Ms. Anna. Prior to my acceptance into the program, I was a part of the summer camp and Ms. Anna was my educator for the week. She recognized that I was older than most of the other attendees at the camp and introduced me to Ms. Jess, who I am forever grateful for giving me an interview for the program. Ms. Anna has never stopped checking in with me, asking about my schoolwork, grades, and home life. She's encouraged me to pursue different programs within my school (such as the International Baccalaureate Program) and to do things I normally wouldn't. I thank Ms. Anna and look up to her, as her friendliness and helpfulness are aspirational. My favorite part of the program is meeting new people, who are now my best friends. And especially shoutout to Ms. Jess and Ms. Shirley, who not only oversee the program but make all the kids feel welcome every day we meet. This program is one of the best things that I could have enrolled in, and I would not change a thing about it.





FARLEY CHAVES-LINARES

CLASS OF 2026

I am grateful for being in the Explorers Program as it has shown me a new perspective on things, so I believe it is a good life readiness program. I appreciate that it gives me something else to do with my time. It changed my social life since I got my first phone for this program, because sadly for people to connect in the modern world they need technology such as smart phones for communication but getting one did help. The program is my work life since it's my first and only job for now. It didn't really change my career plans since being a producer/audio engineer was something I was planning to do before joining, but it gave me another perspective on finances for college.

I'm not really that good at describing myself, but I guess I was an antisocial person that liked to be indoors. I guess I'm less antisocial now especially since I got a phone to communicate with more people. The people working at the Museum are great and I appreciate their contribution to it and the community. They helped me out by guiding me through tasks and other things like it. I'm grateful to be in the Explorers Program since it is my first job and wouldn't be as stressful as working in retail or something of the sort. Not really a lot surprised me about the program, it was more of a learning experience from the time I've been there. My favorite part of it was the workshops and all the people that were brought in to teach us something, like the financial aid workshop. In general, I'm grateful for all the things they offer and for being employed by The Newark Museum of Art.

IYONA AMOURA GADDIE

CLASS OF 2026

I first learned of the program through an invitation from my art teacher to showcase my art. Because I was dealing with hardships such as the loss of my father, who was my number one supporter, I didn't give it much thought. Coming to the Museum for the first time was an eye-opening experience, and the museum has given me opportunities to show what I'm capable of and where I can improve. The Newark Museum of Art is important to me because of the comfort the program provides. The Museum became my second home.

The program has impacted my school and social life by further expanding my time management skills and offering me events to help with the future. It has also taught me how to let people know what I need. Before this program, I used to mostly stay at home and never go everywhere, now I attend events with people my age. Being an Explorer has allowed me to help behind-the-scenes to make other people, especially children and teenagers my age, happy. But I'm grateful the most for the unconditional love that the Museum has shown me. My favorite parts of the program are the meetings and the field trips. The field trips that the Museum brings are fun and educational at the same time and they offer many more experiences with going to places that I've never dreamed of going to as a field trip. The Newark Museum of Art provides many opportunities teenagers my age cannot experience within their time in high-school as well as helping me change as a person for the better for not only myself but for the people around me too.





PENELOPE HERRA

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program is important to me because it allows me to touch on things that I haven't learned about. The Explorers Program has impacted my social life, financial life, work life in a beneficial way. The Explorers Program has pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to learn new ways to socialize. This program has also given me an idea of what I need to do now and, in the future, as a student and as an adult. The person I was before the Explorers Program is different from who I am now. I picked up some good habits and got rid of the bad ones. When I first joined the Explorers Program, I was extremely nervous and only stuck with the ones I knew. Thanks to Ms. Jessica, she pushed me even further to socialize. I'm grateful for being an Explorer because every meeting I attend, I learn something new. One of the biggest things that the Explorers Program has surprised me with is the ability to be myself. With some of the programs I've attended, they're very strict and it benefits the program owners. But the Explorers Program benefits me and I'm able to express myself.

KATHERINE KOLAWOLE

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program became important to me in ways such as serving, entertaining and helping my community. It prepares me for the outside world and allows me to take on my own responsibilities and think independently. The Explorers Program has impacted my social life and career plans positively by allowing me to make new friends, think professionally, and be aware of my choices and how they will affect me in the future. I'm learning to socialize more, and I am also learning more about how to act as a young person and how to stay financially stable.

At the Museum, other Explorers and our advisor Jessica Nuñez help and support me when I need support. I participate in community days when I can, and I always make the best out of them. One thing about this program that surprised me was the amount of trust we're given and how we're allowed to be independent. My favorite part of the Museum is the Explorers meeting room, it's an office that belongs to us Explorers where we can be comfortable and commune during meetings and a lot gets done in that room. I'm very grateful for this program because it's brought me many opportunities and so far, taught me to be aware, organized, and prepared.





VANESSA MENDEZ

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program is important to me because I get to make memories, learn life lessons, and share the experience with others. There is never a dull moment in the program. The Program has impacted my career plans and school because of the financial literacy class we took. I didn't know much about scholarships or financial aid and realized that going to college out of state was going to be more of a challenge than I thought it would be. It's way more expensive, and there is more financial support from the state that you live in. It has made me want to work harder and strive for more scholarships and put more effort into my goals.

Before the Explorers Program, I was shy and withdrawn. But getting more used to being around other people has brought me out of my shell. In the Explorers Program, Maria (She is now an educator) guided me through what she did as an Explorer. Her experience has helped me decide that this program is worthwhile and a great experience for me. I am extremely grateful for being an Explorer because I can use this experience to think about what I want to do in the future. It's easier to know what I want and don't want to do if I can get a first-hand experience of it. For example, I won't know if I truly enjoyed working with kids until I work at the summer camp. Something that has surprised me about the Explorers Program is the amount of effort that goes into every project. My favorite part of the Explorers Program would be the community. It has a very welcoming and supportive environment where I feel like I can be myself.

JUSTIN NOE CONTRERAS

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program has been an incredible, eye-opening experience that has left a significant impact on me. My sister suggested I join the program when her artwork was showcased in the “Who Am I?” competition. Ever since then, I’ve grown exponentially as I met new people, made friends, and learned different life skills. While at the Museum, I have also learned to value teamwork, giving back to the community, and the significance of being a part of a workforce. My favorite part of this life readiness program has been learning about different artwork, expanding my knowledge of different places through field trips, and workshops. The Explorers Program allows me to learn about the experiences of others and is a place where my voice can matter.

The Museum has also helped me learn to create a balance between my personal life and activities. Although it can be stressful at times, my passion for learning and finding a joyful career, has kept me going. Before I joined the Museum, I was unproductive. This program allowed me to be productive and use my time in something that matters. Participating in community days and seeing the smiles made it all worth it. I have benefited from being an Explorer because it allows me to be prepared for what I will face in the future.

All in all, I am truly grateful for being an Explorer and sharing the Museum space with others. I have met fantastic individuals and was surprised by the friendly space that The Explorers Program provided me, allowing me to fit in, and the mutual respect provided. I have truly enjoyed my time in the Museum and look forward to continuing my stay in the program.





BRYAN OKO

CLASS OF 2026

Since I've started with the Explorers, I have gained a sense of operating in a different environment that's nothing like any regular job or school classroom. There are so many new things to learn and gain interest in. The Explorers Program put me in touch with art and culture and pushed me to be more creative than I was with the projects that we're doing. I learned to think outside the box, push the limits of what I could understand, because there truly is a deeper meaning behind what you can see. I can also say I've become more social because I've been exposed to a very diverse group of individuals, from the icebreakers we did and group activities, interacting with everyone has been a wonderful experience, and brought me out of the shell I was once in.

And then there's the community aspect of it, working with other Explorers with my friends to make stuff happen, like these Teen Nights, where we give teens a space where they can chill, and knowing that I was a part of the team that made it happen is very enriching. Then for me personally, starting at the Planetarium even though it's only been a day has been so fun and interesting, especially because I've always been fascinated by Astronomy. Being able to see how the Planetarium works, being a part of the show and learning something new myself is awesome. I used to be someone who thought Museums were incredibly boring ever since I was a child, but The Newark Museum of Art and the Explorers Program really changed that for me.

NAISHA SAINT-SULNE

CLASS OF 2026

When asked the question “Why is the Explorers Program important to you?”, many would say because of the pay, and although that is a great part of it, it is not the most important part. Through the Explorers Program, I have learned many life skills such as financial literacy, more specifically how to manage a credit card and the proper way to take care of a loan, professionalism, proper etiquette, and more. Through the SAT Prep, the Explorers Program has helped me do stronger in school, especially since I just took PSATs last week. I can proudly say that because of the Explorers Program I have met so many great people. Before I entered the Explorers Program, I was a shy little eighth grader who didn’t like to interact with new people. Now I am a sophomore, I won’t lie to you and say that I am the most social person in the world, but I will admit I am much more comfortable talking to others.

At the Museum, my boss helped by pushing me out of my comfort zone and making me interact with others. She is the reason I am not as shy as I was before. I am grateful for the way the Explorers Program has uplifted me and made me into a much more confident person. One thing that surprised me when entering the program was the fun trips. I came into this job thinking that it would be mostly work but that exciting aspect has really intrigued me. The trips are also one of my favorite parts of the Explorers Program, along with being able to meet and interact with new people. Also, being able to learn new life skills that I don’t think just going to school would’ve taught me.





SAUDEEK SIMMS

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program is important to me because it allows me to build my resume, be financially independent, learn how to manage money, and other life skills and talents. Moreover, The Newark Museum of Art expanded upon my social life by allowing me to meet new people that I have not interacted with before. Before the Explorers Program I didn't really do much after school and instead went home and procrastinated. The Explorers Program gave me the motivation or drive to focus on schoolwork. Also, Ms. Jess has helped me by allowing us not to be very stressed by work and school at the same time and allowing us to pursue our interests. On the other hand, I am grateful to be an Explorer because of how fun it is to hang out with people at the Museum while also doing many different things like public speaking, finances, and yoga. I was surprised by how much freedom there was when it came to being an Explorer and how we did not have to be working all day as long as we came in and tried our hardest. Finally, my favorite part of the Museum is going to different community days and supporting the community and seeing the diverse populous of people that come out.

DIEGO SOARES

CLASS OF 2026

The Explorers Program is important to me because it is a way for me to connect with other people in the community. It lets me grow as a person and learn from people that come from other cultures. We come together and learn from each other. The Explorers Program has impacted my life because everyone has taught me different things, like self-defense. The Explorers Program has helped me determine where I want to go to college and how I want my future to look. They also taught me self-defense and helped me know what to do to stay safe. Before the Explorers Program, I was someone that didn't have a thought of what I wanted to do in the future, but now I know what I want to do and where I want to go for college. The person that has helped me the most from the Explorers Program is Ms. Jess. I entered the program a couple months ago and she has been there every time, and she has shown me a lot like public speaking and resume building and much more.

The program has helped me for the future. I am grateful for being an Explorer because I have learned so much from this program and it gives me more opportunities in the future. What has surprised me about the Explorers Program is the amount of people that are in the program. I didn't expect to be around that many people in the program. My favorite part of the program is the teen nights because I'm around more people my age and we just hang out and have a good time.





CLASS OF
2027





EVANI EBINIM

CLASS OF 2027

The Explorers Program is important to me because it benefits me and allows me to understand different cultures and to continue the legacy my mother started, as she was an Explorer. The aspects of my life that the Explorers Program has impacted were my schedule and allowing my mind to gain new knowledge. The Explorers Program has impacted my school life because it helps me with my social life and socializing with my peers and my teachers. I am thankful to be an Explorer because the program has impacted my home life. I can now share new information with my mom and others in my household. The Explorers Program has impacted my college selection because it gives me more opportunities to get into better colleges, knowing that I have participated in this program as an extracurricular with different cultures and different beliefs.

After joining the Explorers Program I'm aware of different cultural beliefs and I care more for art and different art pieces because of the historical history behind it. Museum staff has helped me to grow as a person and have offered me this amazing opportunity. Also, the Juniors have helped me because they offer me advice and motivate me to strive for more. I'm grateful for being an Explorer because of the window of opportunity it has opened for me. My favorite part of the Explorers Program is being able to socialize with others and enhance my personality and skills as a person.

THANDIWE HINTZE

CLASS OF 2027

I am a freshman, so this is my first year as an Explorer. I started in 2023, and (hopefully) I'll graduate from the program in 2027. I've only been an Explorer for around 5 months now, so I can't say that I've experienced any monumental shifts in personality. I will say; however, that I believe that the Explorers Program has matured me.

The Program is important to me not only because it's the only space (outside of my house) where I can exercise true independence, but because it's just integrated itself into my life. The rhythm I've fallen into every Tuesday and Thursday of making my way down to the Museum, the friends I've made here, the project I've been slowly chipping away at. I get to be independent, but the Explorers Program also provides a certain structure that you can't really get anywhere else. I wouldn't know of course, but I suppose it's the closest step I've taken to adulthood, and I'm grateful for that.

In terms of the other aspects of my life: school, my other clubs, my hobbies, my plans for the future; the Explorers Program has wormed its way into those as well. I said that I haven't had huge shifts in personality since I joined the program, and I stand by that, but it has changed the way I think about everything. In terms of the future as well, I've realized that I am capable of good work; I am capable of being a good scholar, and it's made me more ambitious and confident in what I intend to pursue. Being an Explorer is not an opportunity that many kids get to have. It's essentially the dream. I'm grateful for what I'm able to accomplish in the program itself, but also for what opportunities it will present for me in terms of future colleges or jobs that I might aspire to.





JELANI LAMBERT

CLASS OF 2027

The Explorers Program at the Museum has had a profound impact on me over the past year. Through this program, I have had the opportunity to learn and grow in ways that I never thought possible. My favorite features of the program are the hands-on activities and the chance to work closely with Museum experts. These experiences have fueled my passion for science and exploration and have helped me develop invaluable skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

The Explorers Program is important to me because it has provided me with a unique and enriching learning experience outside of the traditional classroom setting. It has not only broadened my knowledge of science and history, but has also allowed me to connect with like-minded peers who share my interests. This program has impacted every aspect of my life - from my academic performance at school to my future career plans. Before the program, I was unsure of what path I wanted to take, but now I see myself pursuing a career in a STEM field thanks to the insights I have gained through the Explorers Program. I am grateful for the support and guidance of the Museum staff who have helped me along the way, fostering my passion for exploration and discovery. My favorite part of the Explorers Program is the field trips, where I get to apply what I have learned in a real-world setting and gain hands-on experience. I am truly grateful for being an Explorer, as it has opened a world of possibilities for me and has shaped me into a more confident and curious individual.



The Newark Museum of Art is proud to recognize the following funders who have supported our Class of 2024 Explorers over the course of their Explorers journey:

Sara and Jonathan Bonesteel
 Cepreghy Foundation
 The Charles E. and Edna T. Brundage Charitable Foundation
 The Eleanor Upton Charitable Foundation
 F. M. Kirby Foundation
 Nancye and Robert Falzon
 Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
 Ellen and Don Greenfield
 The Greenfield Family Fund

Kathy and Mark Grier
 Megan Myungwon Lee
 Panasonic Corporation of North America
 Jonathan and Kathleen Peacock
 Adrienne A. Phillips, MD, MPH
 The Provident Bank Foundation
 Prudential Foundation
 PSEG Foundation
 PSN Charitable Trust
 PwC Charitable Foundation, Inc.
 Laura J. Niles Foundation, Inc.
 Charles Lowrey and Susan Rodriguez
 New York Community Trust, Wattles Family Charitable Fund
 New York Life Insurance/Judith and Donald Robinson

Rochelle and Ronald Karp
 Schumann Fund for New Jersey
 Maudie Shanley
 Monica Slater Stokes
 The Sloan Family
 Turrell Fund
 United Airlines
 Verizon Foundation
 Victoria Foundation

and many generous individual donors.

This Program has set me up for greatness, and although I'm looking forward to my exciting future, I will be sad to leave this Museum that has been so kind to me on my journey. – Emma Raughley

My perspectives have been expanded and my interest about the world around me has been nourished thanks in large part to the Explorers Program. – Kobi Ezeokoli

The Explorers Program is important to me because it's a third place. In this program, I feel cared for, and I get to make a difference. – Moboluwaduro Fola-Akintola

Although I attend a STEM school, my passion lies in the arts, and I hope to attend an art school in the future. However, opportunities for art-centered programs are limited in my school and local area. This program holds immense importance for me as one of the few avenues to explore and nurture my interest in the arts. I was surprised by the welcoming atmosphere of the program. – Sumayah Orphelia

To me, the Explorers Program is more than just my "first job," it's a place where I learn to express myself, make important friendships and discover what I want to do after high school. – Nmesomachukwu Aghaji

I walked around with an attitude of not caring because I had no hope that I could do things and be something. However, despite all of that, I am now a person who is more extroverted and have full confidence that I can grow even more into a more well-rounded person. – Deborah Emile

THE
NEWARK
MUSEUM
OF
ART

EXPLORERS
PROGRAM