

**BRIDGES**  
From School to Work®  
ESTABLISHED BY THE MARRIOTT FAMILY

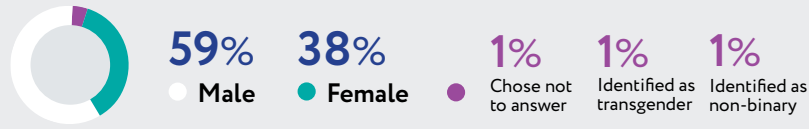


# ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

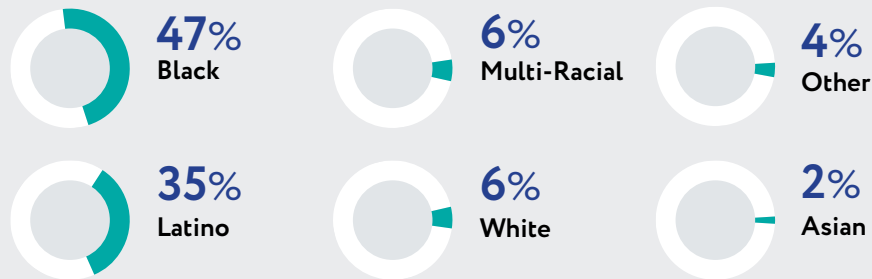
IMPROVING CAREER OUTCOMES  
FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH  
DISABILITIES SINCE 1989

## BRIDGES DEMOGRAPHICS

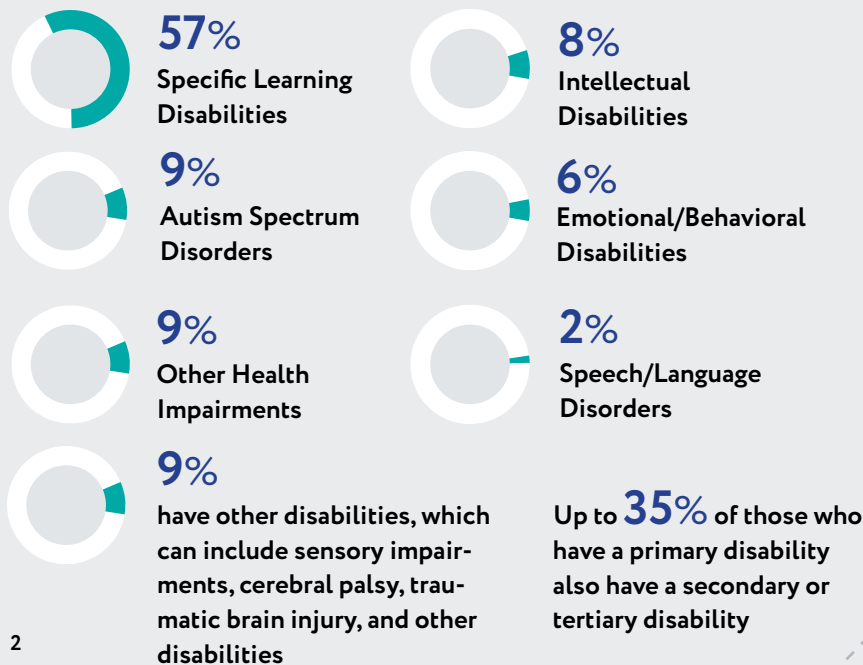
### YOUTH BY GENDER



### YOUTH BY ETHNICITY



### YOUTH BY DISABILITY TYPE



## FACTS & FIGURES

SINCE 1989, BRIDGES HAS WORKED WITH

900 High schools

28,000 Youth

7,100 Employers



We began the 2023 Bridges program year by collaborating with professional educators in 19 school districts to identify and recruit high school students and recent graduates to participate in Bridges from School to Work. These schools included those that referred participants for the third and final year of the NextGen randomized controlled trial with Mathematica, whose details are outlined in the Organizational Achievements section of this annual report.

Three of these school districts are the largest in the nation, including New York City Public Schools, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and Chicago Public Schools.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that over 400,000 youth with disabilities aged 14 to 21 exit public education each year.

The mission of Bridges from School to Work is to transform the lives of young adults with disabilities through the power of a job.

# FACTS & FIGURES

Among marginalized and underserved youth in the U.S, those with one or more disabilities face some of the greatest barriers to achieving positive post-school outcomes. People with disabilities consistently realize poorer health, education, employment, and economic outcomes – by almost every measure.

Bridges provides comprehensive workforce development services to youth with disabilities ranging in age from 16 to 24. Youth with disabilities who get jobs with the help of programs like Bridges realize increased prospects for career satisfaction, earning potential, lifelong workforce participation, and overall wellbeing.

**949** Enrolled

**758** were hired in jobs

**575** retained jobs for 90 days

**483** retained jobs for 180 days



## SCHOOLS DISTRICTS SERVED

- Atlanta Public Schools
- Berkeley Unified School District (CA)
- Boston Public Schools
- Chicago Public Schools
- Clayton County Schools (GA)
- Compton Unified School District
- Dallas Independent School District
- Douglas County Schools (GA)
- Fort Worth Independent School District
- Fulton County Schools (GA)
- Garland Independent School District (TX)
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Marietta City Schools (GA)
- New York City Public Schools
- Oakland Unified School District
- Paulding County Schools (GA)
- San Francisco Unified School District
- School District of Philadelphia
- West Contra Costa Unified School District (CA)

# BRIDGES QUICK FACTS



96%

of Bridges participants still live at home with their parent or guardian.



76%

of Bridges participants are still in high school at the time they enroll.



**Nine** of our 10 program directors across the country began their Bridges careers as employment specialists, the direct service personnel who work with participants to prepare for, find and succeed in jobs.



Over 90%

of Bridges participants and employers report a positive experience with the program.



83%

of Bridges participants heard about Bridges through a teacher or through a Bridges employment specialist who visited their high school.



76%

of Bridges participants are between the ages of 17 and 19.



With programs across **10** major U.S. cities, Bridges maintains partnerships with some of the nation's **largest** school districts, some which have endured for more than **25** years.



# ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

## JOB TITLE CHANGE

Since last year's annual report, we have changed the job title of our direct service personnel known as employer representatives. Their new job title, youth employment specialist, is a more accurate reflection of their multifaceted role, which encompasses that of case manager, mentor, instructor, career counselor, life coach, and job developer. Within Bridges, we employ 51 youth employment specialists who are experts in preparing youth for—and connecting them to—the adult workforce.

## UPDATES TO NEW HIRE ONBOARDING TRAINING

For more than one year, we have collaborated with the Center for Technology in Education at Johns Hopkins University to revamp and refresh 16 new hire e-learning modules that were designed nearly 10 years ago. The new modules reflect our name change in 2019 from the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities to Bridges from School to Work, as well as IT efficiencies we integrated into our processes before, during, and after the pandemic.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Young adults with disabilities experience higher rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences,

and reports of mental health challenges among school-aged youth have risen during and after the pandemic. To better equip Bridges personnel to meet the needs of program participants, we have retained consultants to deliver professional development training sessions about the lasting effects trauma can have across the lifespan.

As part of this process, thirteen staff members from around the country have spent more than 12 months undertaking the requirements for Bridges to become a trauma-informed care organization. These individuals have participated in information sessions and working groups to ensure that Bridges operates and integrates a trauma-informed approach in its policies, procedures, and program design.

Once Bridges is regarded as a trauma-informed organization, these individuals will continue to champion evidence-based practices in their Bridges cities, promote ongoing professional development related to trauma-informed care, and help the organization maintain a trauma-informed lens across all program elements.



# ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



## FEDERAL GRANT

In September 2024, we learned that we won a competitive three-year, \$3.3 million U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Pathways for Youth grant that we applied for in July 2024. Bridges was one of six national organizations that won the grant, which began on October 1, 2024. Through these demonstration grants, Bridges and other organizations will serve marginalized and underserved youth, providing them with workforce readiness programming, including soft skill development, career exploration, job readiness, work-based learning opportunities and work experiences, all that aim to improve career opportunities.

## NEXTGEN RCT WITH MATHEMATICA

At the end of June 2024, Bridges exceeded the targets for young adults with disabilities across multiple cities who over three years enrolled in NextGen, a randomized controlled trial administered by Mathematica. Bridges recruited and enrolled a grand total of 933 study participants. Participants were randomly assigned to a group eligible to receive Bridges services, or they were randomly assigned to a control group. The control

group did not receive Bridges services, but those assigned to it all received a list of other community providers equipped to assist them with training and career goals.

In addition to Mathematica, other NextGen partners included the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within the U.S. Department of Human Services and the Social Security Administration.

Mathematica will soon publish a NextGen descriptive report that will describe how Bridges was implemented under the study. Over the next several years, other reports will document the impact of Bridges services on participant employment-related outcomes relative to those of participants in the control group. Study results could provide actionable information to policymakers about interventions for assisting individuals facing complex challenges as they find jobs, build economic security, and advance in the labor market.

# ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

## RETAINED FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

We were retained by the Manhattan Strategy Group to provide technical assistance and training to a recent cohort of federal Department of Education, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) grantees, including the following:

- New York State Department of Labor
- Connecticut Department of Labor
- Kansas Department of Commerce
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

In November 2024, we assisted these grantees with identifying, recruiting, and enrolling youth with disabilities through relationships with school districts and other potential referral sources, as well as with instructing them about best practices for helping youth overcome or circumvent employment barriers that may hinder their prospects for success in the labor market.

We identified several high-performing and seasoned Bridges personnel who have now delivered two one-hour video conference sessions to 30 or more participants using expertise our organization

has acquired over nearly 35 years of improving career opportunities for young adults with disabilities in some of our nation's largest cities and school districts.

## IPADS

We have tested iPads across several cities and have deployed 43 of them with data plans across all our cities. Employment specialists will use them in high school classrooms, where Wi-Fi access is unreliable, to access the internet for Bridges enrollment forms, job boards, and job applications.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

On May 28, 2024, the Board of Trustees approved a strategic plan that will span from 2025 through 2027. Through this plan, Bridges will increase the number of youth who get jobs by 40%, meaning that more than 1,000 Bridges participants across 10 cities will begin employment each year. Developed in collaboration with Accenture, which provided pro-bono consultative services, Bridges aims to meet this goal through operational efficiencies such as enhanced use of technology, specialization of staff assignments, increased social media outreach, as well as increasing the number of front-line staff in key Bridges markets.



# THE POWER OF A JOB

## JAKOBE OF ATLANTA

Sometimes we encounter young adults whose circumstances require them to assume adult responsibility far too soon: Jakobe and his twin sister lost their mother before they graduated from Fulton County's Creekside High School in May 2022. With lots of help from his Bridges employment specialist, Sharron Pearson, Jakobe has been

working full-time since September 2022 for two of the restaurants in the Atlanta Airport Marriott Hotel, first as a utility steward and more recently as a food runner. He and his sister now share an apartment and are living independently. An outgoing young man with unbridled enthusiasm, Jakobe is ideally suited for the hospitality industry and well positioned for years of career advancement with Marriott.



## A GRANDMOTHER'S EMAIL

In March 2024, Bridges Executive Director Tad Asbury received an email from the grandmother of an Atlanta Bridges participant.

The grandmother, visiting from Rhode Island, was impressed by the relationship that Atlanta Bridges Employment Specialist Dominique Siler (right) had forged with her granddaughter, Kyla (left), a student at Midtown High School.



**Bridges' employment specialist Ms. Dominique Siler found the perfect job match for Kyla, one that has transformed her from a shy young lady to one who takes on leadership roles. Ms. Siler cares about the needs of the students and is there to assure them that they are capable of success.**

**I returned from Atlanta to Rhode Island feeling so blessed that my granddaughter has such a professional in her life, and I just had to share my thoughts with Bridges.**

IDA M.  
GRANDMOTHER IN RICHMOND, RHODE ISLAND



# THE POWER OF A JOB

## BEN OF OAKLAND

Ben has been employed since May 2023 as a lot associate at a Home Depot store in Oakland, CA, where his co-workers have recognized him for providing excellent customer service and for exemplifying company values. Ben, whose favorite color happens to be orange, looks forward to wearing the Home Depot apron for each shift.

When Ben applied for the position, the Home Depot recruiter helped expedite his application and interview. Once hired, Ben's managers fostered an affirming environment for him.



Twenty-one-year-old Ben is on the autism spectrum and struggles with communication, but as each week passes, he grows more confident in his interactions with teammates and customers. His managers have adjusted his schedule by giving him shorter shifts and by assigning him duties he enjoys, which include organizing and arranging carts, hand trucks, and flatbeds.

Before Home Depot, Ben worked in a grocery fulfillment center. Although he stuck with the job for 90 days, the quota and pace required to fill orders proved too stressful, so he and his employment specialist, Lisel Brunson, decided to find a better match for Ben's aptitudes and skills. Lisel and Ben's mom, Akilah, are thrilled that Home Depot is proving to be an environment where Ben can flourish.

## CALVIN OF PHILADELPHIA

Calvin of Philadelphia has been employed with Cleanlogic for over two years. At Cleanlogic, Calvin works as a production associate for a popular body sponge, a role that involves sewing, attaching a packaging sleeve, and bundling items into cartons for shipping. To foster safety and success for its employees, managers function as mentors, working in tandem with floor aides who circulate throughout the facility to answer questions and provide help when employees need it.

Cleanlogic even invited Calvin's parents to tour the facility and ask questions until they were satisfied that the company would offer a supportive and nurturing environment that would meet his needs.

Located near Valley Forge, Cleanlogic manufactures and ships bath and body care products, including exfoliators, scrub brushes, and sponges. The company offers a line of sustainable products with certified organic cotton, recycled polyester, and soy-based foam. A socially and environmentally responsible company, Cleanlogic aims to have persons with disabilities make up 75% of its workforce by 2026.



# THE POWER OF A JOB

## CHRISTIAN OF CHICAGO

After graduating from George Washington High School in Chicago, Christian enrolled in Bridges and began a job with grocer Jewel-Osco in February 2017. He worked at Jewel more than a year, first in a courtesy clerk position, and was rewarded later

for his work ethic with a promotion to cashier. Christian's real interest, however, was IT, one he had cultivated from years of gaming and from tinkering with old laptops his dad left around the house.

Christian's employment specialist at the time, Mirna Velic, now our Boston Bridges director, learned of an opening with one of our national employer partners, Accenture. Christian's first Accenture interview, which required him to observe a technician performing a sequence of IT tasks and then demonstrate that he could replicate them, didn't result in a job offer. He later interviewed for a different job, this time securing an offer and becoming an Accenture location services associate in May 2018. For the next three years, Christian coordinated IT logistics for in-person and virtual meetings at his Accenture office.

In September 2021, Christian moved into a new Accenture position, this one in event express support. He still coordinates IT logistics, but now on a much larger scale; these days, Christian produces virtual department and market-wide town hall meetings for 200 to 2,000 attendees.

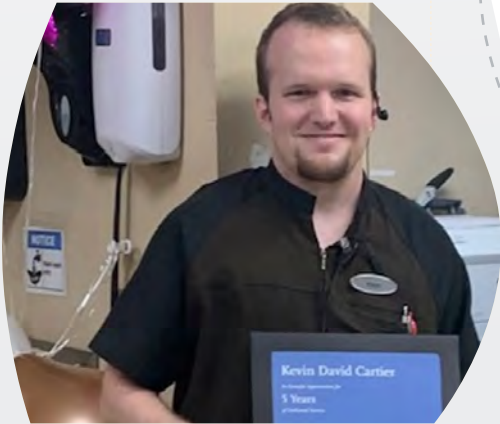
The interpersonal skills Christian developed at Jewel, and the ability to work under pressure in a grocery checkout line, came in handy at Accenture. At Jewel, Christian learned to remain calm—even when others are not. Jewel instilled in him the professionalism and composure needed for his Accenture roles.

Christian is now 26 and comfortable talking about his autism and the stigma and bullying common among students who receive special education services. In an interview, he recounted that Mirna Velic believed in his potential when others didn't. No matter how much effort he put into getting a job, Christian said that Mirna worked even harder to make his IT dream a reality.

When Christian was ready to live on his own, Mirna helped him avoid the pitfalls and scams designed to target inexperienced apartment hunters. "Bridges was the spark that ignited my career and adult independence, and without Mirna and her support, the life, friends, and mentors I have now would have taken years longer to realize."



## AN EMAIL FROM A GRATEFUL MOM IN DALLAS



**This is Kevin's Mom.**

**Kevin had his five-year anniversary at the Hyatt. I've been meaning to email you about this milestone for months now.**

**Here is a photo his manager took of him on that day with his certificate. He also got a nifty catalog and got to pick out a five-year anniversary gift. He opted for a pair of wireless earbuds. :)**

**Thanks for all the work you do to help young adults like Kevin find employment. He has had a wonderful five years at the Hyatt!!**

KEVIN'S MOM

## THE POWER OF A JOB

### AISHA BUFORD OF CHICAGO

Chicago Bridges alumna Aisha Buford-Morrison got early work experience as a sales associate with Dylan's Candy Bar. She performed so well that Bridges helped her progress into a role with Accenture as a location services associate, a position she held for more than four years.

Since August 2021, Aisha has worked as a claims assistant with the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, where she is a member of the union with full benefits, including a pension.



# THE POWER OF A JOB

## PAUL OF GRAPEVINE, TX

At a Bridges event held in October 2023 at the Dallas Marriott Uptown, we recognized program alumnus Paul of Grapevine, TX. Paul has been employed more than four years at Michael's, the arts and crafts store.

Paul, now 25, is pictured below (center) with his senior youth employment specialist, Erica Jones (right), and his human resources manager from Michael's, Lauren Tarpley (left).

Paul's mom, Heather, feared that her son, who has an intellectual disability, would never be able to get a job. Heather wrote a detailed testimonial explaining what Bridges has meant to her and Paul. Below is an excerpt.



“

Paul has been at Artistree, a subsidiary of Michael's, for over three years, where he works full-time, with good pay and full benefits. Every day that he has a job is a miracle to me.”

Erica Jones with the Bridges program coached Paul through the interview and job application process. She helped him through the transition from being a sheltered special education student to an adult employee, including innumerable obstacles that emerged during the pandemic.”

HEATHER C.

# THE POWER OF A JOB

## ARAMARK HIRES CHAMPIONS

Twenty-five-year-old Cameron of Plano, Texas, is a champion, whether he's feeding a hungry lunch crowd or competing in a Special Olympics swim meet.

Cameron, pictured here and with his co-workers below, has worked full-time for nearly three years in the Capital One cafeteria managed by Aramark, where his co-workers, along with his Bridges employment specialist Cassandra Poole, are always cheering him on.



## A CULINARY WORK ANNIVERSARY

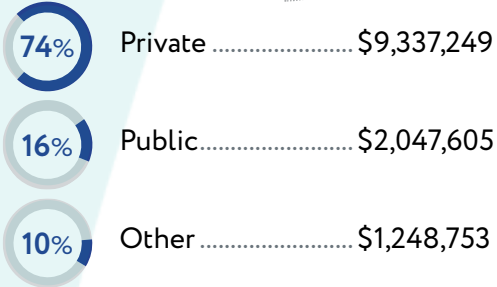
A graduate of Moises Molina High School, Pedro, 21, has already surpassed 18 months of employment at the Dallas Renaissance Hotel, where he works full-time as a prep cook.

Renaissance Human Resources Manager Blanca Barbosa says "Pedro is an absolute pleasure to work with. He is so sweet and kind and loves learning new culinary techniques. He even helps us recruit and has referred multiple people to apply for our openings."

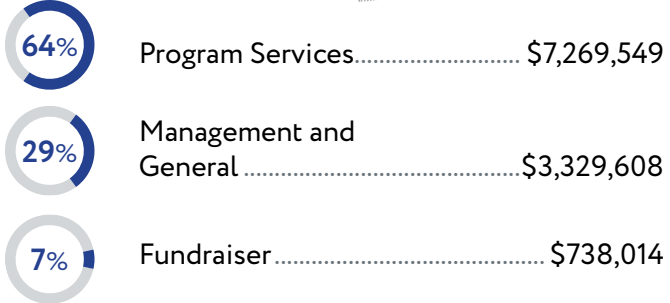


# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

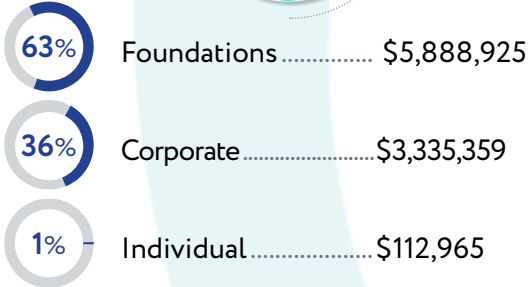
## BRIDGES REVENUE 2023



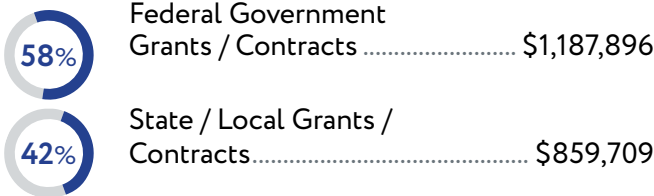
## BRIDGES EXPENDITURES, 2023



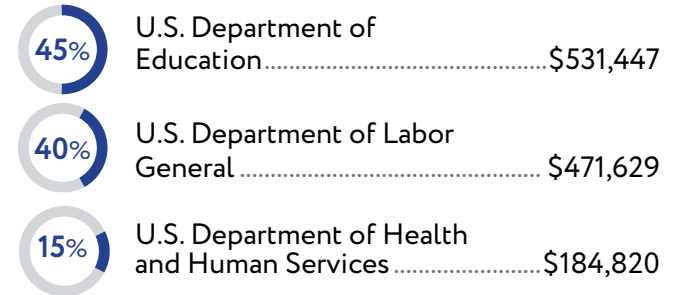
## BRIDGES REVENUE PRIVATE



## BRIDGES REVENUE PUBLIC



## BRIDGES FEDERAL FUNDING BY AGENCY



# SUPPORTING OUR MISSION

## 2024 BRIDGES GALA

On the evening of Tuesday, May 28th, Bridges Board Chair Richard E. Marriott (below right) welcomed more than 1,000 guests to the Marriott Marquis in Washington, D.C., for our 2024 Bridges Gala. We raised over \$2,260,000 in support of Bridges from School to Work.

Bridges alumna Ku Say of Chicago (below right, center) received the Stephen G. Marriott Youth Achievement Award. Actress and Tony Award winner Ali Stroker (below left, center) entertained us with her Broadway vocal talents and her inspiring message about “turning limitations into opportunities.”

The evening’s record-setting donations were also due in large part to our 2024 Bridges Gala Co-Chair, Joe Ucuzoglu, Deloitte Global CEO, (below left) and his call to action: We need to harness the power of employers to help young adults with disabilities realize their career aspirations.



## NEW BOARD MEMBER

In December 2023, we were thrilled to welcome Julie Marriott as the newest member of our board of trustees.

## DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

In July 2024, Bridges hired its first-ever director of development, Kate Brown. Kate has worked in development with an organization called Higher Achievement since 2016 and holds a B.A. from the University of Richmond. Kate will lead our efforts with securing new sources of funding through grants and proposals, as well as oversee our annual gala-fundraiser.



# SUPPORTING OUR MISSION

## 2024 BRIDGES GALA TOP SPONSORS

### PREMIER

About Objects  
Accenture  
Deloitte  
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP  
Host Hotels and Resorts  
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### LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

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and Steve Torbeck  
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Marriott International  
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PwC  
Shaw Contract Hospitality  
SIXT rent a car  
Top5 Incorporated

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**Jennie Blumenthal**  
CEO & Founder, Corporate Rehab

**Debbie Harrison**  
Global Culture Ambassador Emeritus, Marriott  
International

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President Emeritus, Gallaudet University

**Ellen Ryan Mardiks**  
Chair, Golin

**Julie Marriott**

**Julie Sweet**  
Chair and CEO, Accenture

**Jimmie Walton Paschall**

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