

## YAA Board of Governors Excellence Awards celebrate incredible accomplishments of Yale alumni organizations

By Carissa Violante, Alisa Masterson, and members of the YAA Board of Governors | Posted November 15, 2022



Every year, the YAA Board of Governors Excellence Awards recognize alumni organizations for excellence in their programs, events, and best practices for Yale and on behalf of Yale. These awards honor groups such as Yale College classes, regional clubs, interest groups, and graduate and professional school associations.

This year, the honorees were recognized during an awards ceremony at the Omni hotel in New Haven on Thursday, November 10. The recipients of the YAA Board of Governors Excellence Awards were celebrated alongside the winners of the YAA Leadership Awards and the Alumni Schools Committee Awards.

**Related: 2022 YAA Leadership Awards honor exemplary alumni volunteers**

Here's a look at the 2022 Excellence Awards recipients:

## Yale Club of Charlotte



The Yale Club of Charlotte is being honored for their Yale Day of Service project with the Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency. Through this first in-person event since the pandemic started, the Yale Club of Charlotte provided much-needed support to refugees, including former Afghan interpreters, who are relocating to the Charlotte, North Carolina area. Yale alumni and their families and friends contributed their time and talent, donating and sorting much-needed clothing, furniture, and other essentials, sharing heart-felt messages on handmade cards. Alumni who were unable or uncomfortable about volunteering in-person donated items and funds to support the refugees' resettlement. This event had a positive impact far beyond these efforts, since the event inspired a class for the Yale Young Global Scholars 2022 program called "The Art of Giving Back: Local and Global" and a tour of summer talks for high school students about the importance of volunteering in their community and abroad. Inspiring gifted



young students to give back is important for the global good and an essential part of being a member of the Yale community. The Yale Club of Charlotte brought alumni and friends and family members together to make a real impact on their community and to help change the lives of their newly arrived neighbors.

## Alumni of Pierson College Class of 1992



The Alumni of Pierson College Class of 1992 and friends are being honored for having the highest reunion to date at 14,000 feet! 28 members of the Class of 1992 from all parts of the United States and as far away as London, England, gathered in Colorado in July of 2021 to re-connect, have meaningful conversations, and summit Mount Yale. The peak was named in 1869 by Josiah Whitney, Yale Class of 1839, for his alma mater. The expedition was a grassroots effort that emerged from weekly Zoom calls that began at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. Everyone contributed to the planning and coordination for the weeklong trip that included horseback riding, and a distillery tour, souvenirs, and karaoke. Many had never been to any Yale reunion before, and the



inclusion and diversity of participants in the Mount Yale reunion was a striking component of the outing. The breadth of participation in the group and the duration of the expedition, were significant factors in making the gathering remarkable and special. It was a true group effort that succeeded in not only reaching the summit, but also further strengthening the bonds of friendship and camaraderie. We wish them another joyous event and successful climb as they plan for the next one in the summer of 2023!

## Yale Club of South Florida



The Yale Club of South Florida is being honored for its creative programming involving multiple cities in South Florida and comprising diverse events appealing to alumni groups with varying interests. Under the leadership of its new President, Jonathan Kim, and a fully reconstituted Board of Directors, the Yale Club of South Florida has boosted the number and variety of events it has hosted and sponsored. The club's programming effort coincided with a large influx of Yale alumni to the South Florida region from places such as New York City and California throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Many alumni

who are originally from the region have also returned to South Florida on a permanent basis. Attendance records have been broken repeatedly, with events varying in locations and topics such as happy hours in Coral Gables, Miami, and Fort Lauderdale; sporting events including a Yale-Harvard Game Watch Party, attending a Florida Panthers hockey game, and a Miami Dolphins football game; speaking events with Yale faculty such as Akhil Amar; Yale-centered events such as Feb Club, a Whiffenpoofs concert, and a send-off gathering for admitted students; as well as unique events such as an Art Basel meet up at the Miami Convention Center, an Omara film screening with a question and answer session after, and a sushi rolling class! The Yale Club of South Florida has successfully rebooted itself by taking advantage of the changed environment and demographics of the COVID-era and creating a sustainable model for continuing engagement.

## Yale International Alliance



The Yale International Alliance is being honored for its Common Rooms Program which connects and inspires global Yale alumni, fellows, faculty and students through small group virtual meetups. The groups discuss topics which have included the environmental, global health, geopolitics, arts and education, threat and deterrence of nuclear war, spy craft, music, US-China relations and more, and also have had philosophical discussions around areas such as consciousness and identity. The Common Room program is highly inclusive, scalable and diverse. So far it has included



alumni from 71 countries across 22 time zones, graduates between the ages of 22 and 95, and those from all walks of life with all types of cultural perspectives. A Common Room group can be as small as three or four people and as large as seventeen, as long as the synergy and chemistry among the participants work well. Training hosts around the globe is undertaken by a Common Room committee, and many Yale International Alliance board members are hosts of Common Room meetup groups and later become trainers, a practice which builds the sustainability of the program by generating future hosts and trainers. Participants feel their connections with Yale are strengthened by this engagement with other alumni from around the world, and given the popularity of the program, it is clear that these life-long Yale learners value the relationships they have built with other alumni in their Common Room.

## 1972 Yale Women



1972 Yale Women is being honored for quickly rising to the challenge of COVID by creating a new Zoom group to help the class of 1972 Women fight social isolation by sharing Yale events, health information, activism, 50th Reunion plans, and family celebrations. With the YAA's aid, 1972 Yale Women transformed the 1972 Women's Luncheon Group in New York City into monthly Zoom sessions for more than fifty classmates in over ten cities. Every first Friday for 30 months '72-ers have been meeting

on “Hollywood Squares”, otherwise known as Zooms! This is amazing participation by the smallest class of women in Yale’s history — 165 sophomore transferees in the Fall of 1969. The discussions draw on everyone’s life experiences. In one particularly timely conversation, vaccines were discussed by a former Pfizer drug developer, a CDC researcher, four doctors and two public health experts. Members joined Yale Women’s Health Research programs on Women and the Pandemic. When George Floyd was murdered, three black classmates, Jerylle Kemp, Shirley Daniels, and Connie Royster, led a full discussion on race in America. During the Ukraine war, Betsy Scheer described her trip to Poland to assist fleeing Ukrainian refugees. Others spoke about helping Afghan refugees in the U.S. After having been part of the cohort of 575 First Women spread among 12 colleges in 1969, the 1972 women are using modern technology to unite, offer mutual support, and solidify the friendships formed at Yale. 1972 women have been as intrepid and innovative in the COVID era as they were as Yale trailblazers 50 years ago.



## Yale Club of Chicago



The Yale Club of Chicago is being recognized for its efforts building the regional Yale community through programming. While the world was reeling from COVID-19, the Yale Club of Chicago took initiative and organized a diverse set of activities to engage its members. These activities ran the gamut of educational, social, artistic, athletic, volunteer, and philanthropic programs. On top of this, the Yale Club of Chicago managed to make an impact through service events, either by raising money or devoting their time to others, all while operating on a shoestring budget. A few of the highlights include the following: First Place Community Fundraiser for the 20th Annual PAWS Chicago 5K Walk/Run for their Lives event in September 2021, successful host of many 2022 Yale Day of Service events, Yale Chicago book talks by a number of outstanding and diverse local Yale alumni authors, supporting alumni in their professional growth and development with a popular Career Series, and engagement of all alumni through events such as young alumni happy hours, picnics, dim sum brunch, ice skating, and concerts. With these efforts, the Yale Club of Chicago captured the essence of Yale's mission and



priorities: community service, lifelong learning, and raising engagement.

These accomplishments are impressive under normal circumstances, but commands even more recognition for thriving despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

## Yale College Class of 2008 and Careers, Life, and Yale



Yale College Class of 2008, in partnership with Careers, Life and Yale, other Yale College classes, and the Office of Admissions, is being honored for its Yale College Admitted Students Event. This event gave admitted Yale College students the chance to hear directly from alumni about their experiences at Yale and about how Yale has been a part of their lives after graduation. Over 100 admitted students participated in small group discussions by Zoom with 60 Yale College alumni, during which admitted students could candidly pose questions about the Yale experience. Perhaps for the first time ever, this afforded the opportunity for Yale College alumni across a diverse range classes, geographies, and more to meet with Yale College admitted students while they were still deciding whether to accept their offers of admission. By its very design, this event was intended to help Yale students forge connections with Yale alumni even before the first day of their time on-campus as students. Alumni were encouraged to openly share stories of their time at and after Yale, and admitted students were encouraged to openly

share what they were excited about and worried about in thinking about college in general and a Yale College experience in particular. Ultimately, this was intended to help all attendees learn from one another's life experiences.

Yale Club of Washington, D.C.



*The Yale Club of Washington, DC  
Celebrates Black History Month*

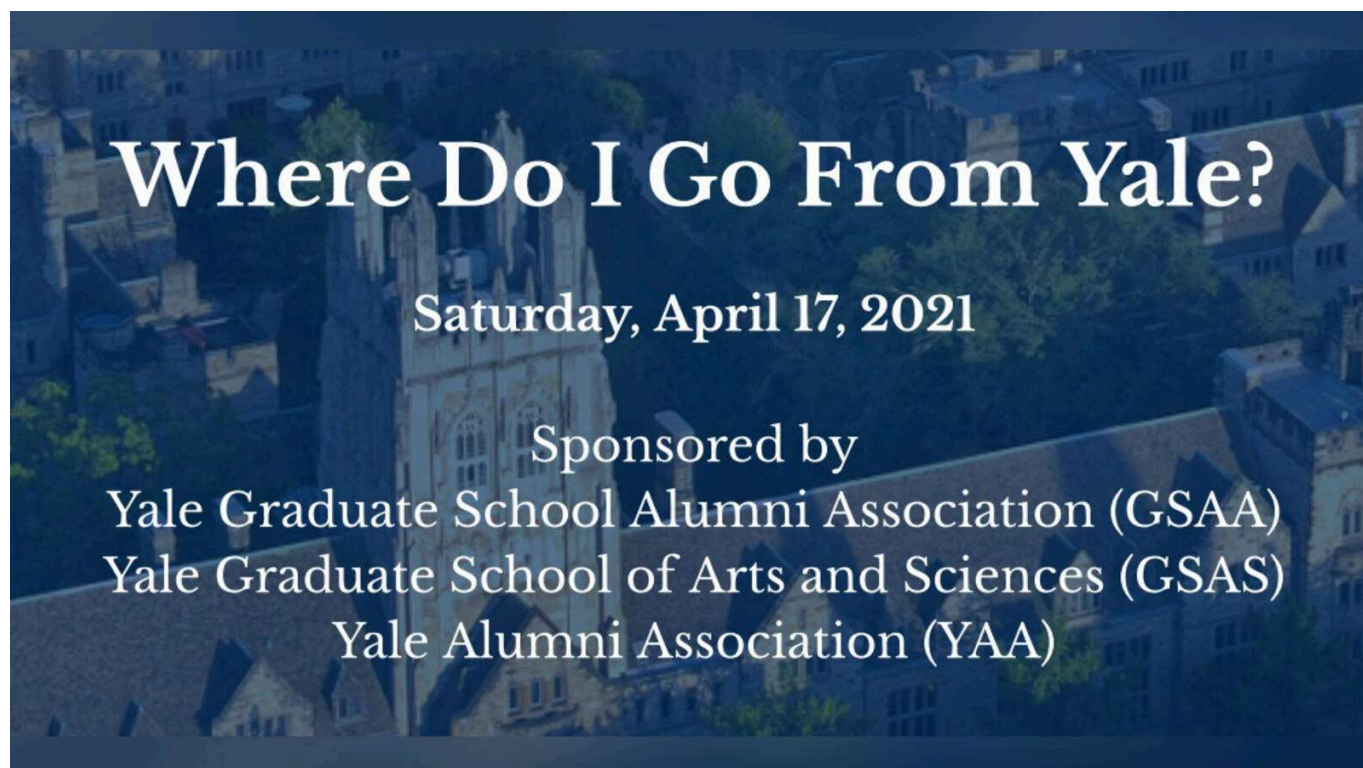
*In partnership with the Yale Black Alumni Association DMV*

The Yale Club of Washington, D.C. is being honored for its celebration of Black History Month in February 2022. A committee of the board designed a multi-faceted program which supported neighborhood Black-owned restaurants and business; provided cultural and educational program offerings; arranged for a tour of the historic Virginia Freedom Trail; shared book selections from members by favorite Black authors; and even offered a virtual yoga class taught by a Yalie! This was a month-long focus on Black excellence and included the opportunity to hear from nationally and internationally renowned Black alumni in the D.C. area, such as FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks '08 JD and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton '63 MA, '64 LLB. The plethora of events drew approximately 2000 users, attendees, readers, viewers of digital imprints, and more. The team engaged with broad content in the hope of providing educational opportunities and promoting greater awareness of Black contributions. One main goal was to increase awareness of these treasures in local neighborhoods within the Yale community. This approach fostered connection among alumni of all years and created a greater awareness of the club's commitment to diversity. The attention to detail even included examining naming elements of programming, recognizing that "African American history" does not necessarily account for those of the greater diaspora who might not



connect with or identify as African. The commitment to exceptional programming for Black History Month by the Yale Club of Washington, D.C. provides an example and inspiration for other regional Yale clubs and alumni groups who can plan events and activities that celebrate the diversity of our alumni community.

## Yale Graduate School Alumni Association Board



The Yale Graduate School Alumni Association Board is being recognized for the Where Do I Go From Yale program, Managed by a committee of the board, the program's many events bring together Graduate School students and alumni to answer the question: Where do I go from Yale? It is an innovative outreach initiative that engages students and helps them navigate the practical and psychological parts of the career search, and it reaches a very diverse audience of students and alumni. In partnership with the YAA and its work to engage with alumni of all schools, Where Do I Go from Yale supports the Graduate School Alumni Association mission to provide a channel of mutual communication between the alumni and the Graduate School. The program taps alumni who offer insight into how they have utilized their graduate degrees, especially in areas outside academia, which helps keep the Graduate School up-to-date as to how best serve current student needs. In April of 2022, this group held a virtual 2-day career symposium that attracted 243 unique participants and included 60 alumni speakers. They have collaborated with the YAA's Careers, Life, and Yale program and the Office of

Career Services as well as organized follow-up Coffee Chats for students with alumni speakers. It serves as a model for other graduate and professional schools as a means of alumni to student outreach and alumni engagement.

## Yale Club of Hong Kong

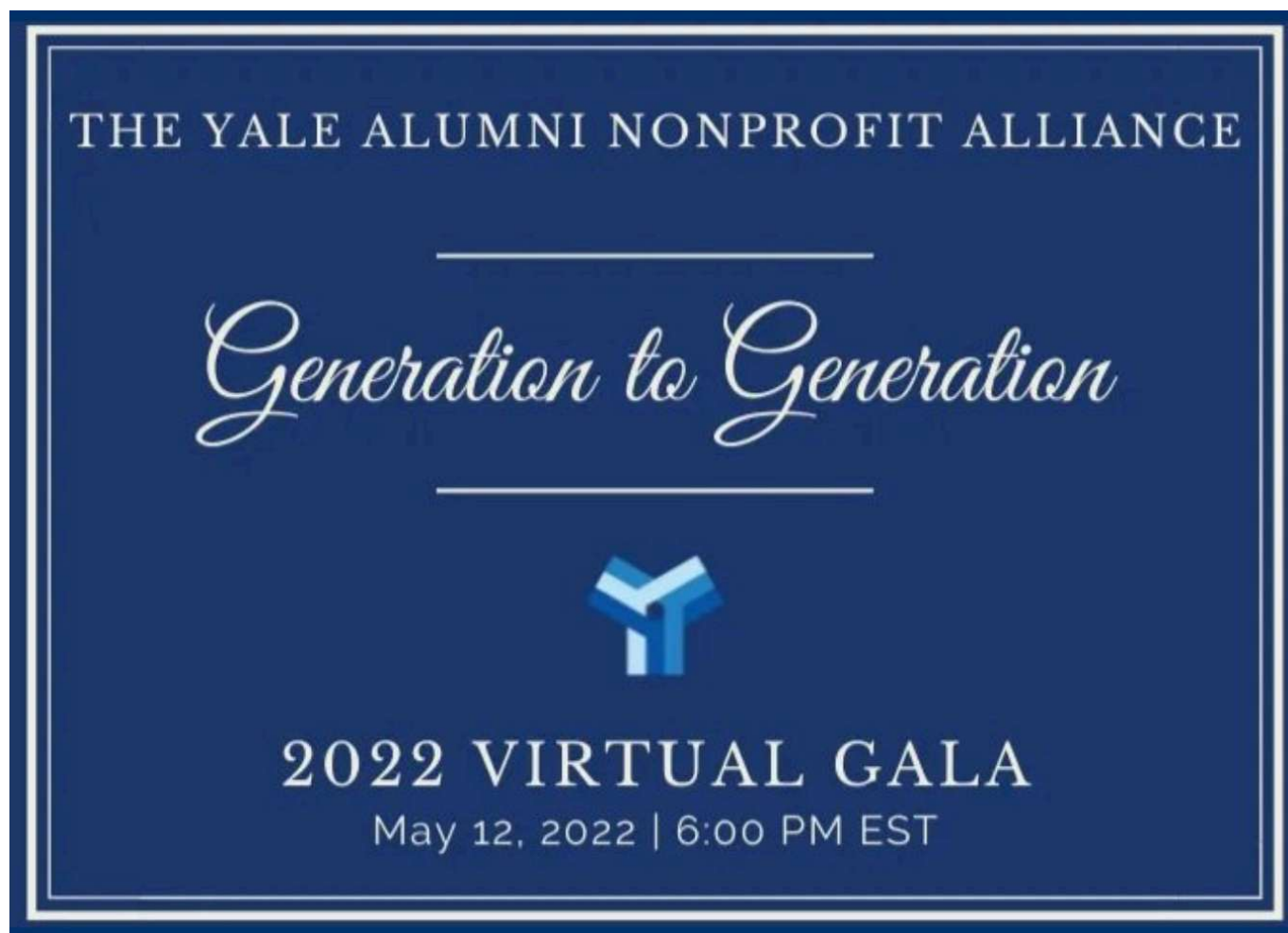


The Yale Club of Hong Kong is being honored for its creative lunch club which brings together seventy to eighty alumni participants monthly. Through the Lunch Club, Yale alumni are randomly assigned to meet each other in pairs for lunch at any mutually convenient time and place. This model does not require large amounts of time or resources and can easily be replicated by other Yale Clubs. The program enables graduates to meet people from different Yale schools, ages, and backgrounds, creating the opportunity for meaningful interactions and the exchange of ideas outside of their normal social networks. The Lunch Club renews the lifelong Yale experiences for those who participate, reminiscent of student days at Yale when conversations were sparked over a meal in a residential college dining room or at a local hang out. Participants have included alumni from the College, the Law School, School of Management, the Music



School, the Graduate School and more, and they have created many new social and professional relationships. The program is highly popular and is proving to be sustainable for the long term, with many new matches provided every month.

## Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance



The Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance (YANA) strives to inspire and support lives of impact. Toward this goal, in May YANA hosted “Generation to Generation,” a virtual gala honoring five alumni across three generations who have dedicated their lives to empowering the vulnerable and underserved and who are true champions of diversity, equity and inclusion. The gala attracted 300 Yale alumni and generated donations enabling YANA to continue cultivating Yale’s next generation of social impact leaders. The success of the gala allowed YANA to expand programs and services in several areas, including the YANA-Dwight Hall Fellowship and support for YANA Chapters in New England, the Pacific Northwest, and internationally in East Africa. With this virtual event, YANA creatively leveraged technology to develop a program featuring a diverse range of

alumni speakers and performers, including President Salovey, Secretary Hilary Rodham Clinton, Frances Beinecke, and the Whiffenpoofs. By celebrating the opportunity and responsibility to serve humanity, YANA exemplified Yale's highest principles.

## Yale Club of New York City



The Yale Club of New York City is being honored for their recognition of the 50WomenAtYale150 anniversary celebration through the commissioned portraits of three extraordinary Yale women — Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Reverend Doctor Pauli Murray, and Admiral Grace Hopper. In 2021, the Club began a yearlong celebration of the remarkable life of Pauli Murray, the first African American with a JSD degree from the Yale Law School which she received in 1965. The events included lectures, a film screening, and culminated in the unveiling of her portrait by artist Sam Adoquei in June. At the event, Club members were joined by the Murray family, Yale professors and administrators, and other special guests, many of whom spoke, including the artist. Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church and Yale Divinity School graduate Michael Bruce Curry recorded very moving remarks for the occasion, which were



broadcast during the ceremony and are available for viewing online. As a pioneering civil rights lawyer, activist, priest, the first African American woman ordained in the Episcopal Church, and poet, Pauli Murray is an inspiring figure for past, present, and future generations. The Yale Club was proud to honor Murray as the first African American, and only second woman, to have her portrait displayed at the club. By celebrating her life and legacy through programming and a portrait commission, the Yale Club amplified her story and vision of a more just and equitable society for all. Her portrait continues to serve as a daily reminder to members and guests that diversity of all kinds is welcomed.

## 1stGenYale



For the fourth year in a row, 1stGenYale continued to blaze a trail of focused alumni leadership. Through its Summer Bulldogs program partnership with the Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance, 1stGenYale helped 99 current Yale students secure paid summer internships across the globe which were supported by the Yale Offices of Career Strategy and Fellowships & Funding, including 69 at nonprofit organizations. The Summer Bulldogs program not only helped match Yale students with valuable professional opportunities, it provided non-profits with an enthusiastic, high-potential workforce without incurring budgetary impact. By engaging over 100 student applicants and nearly 100 alumni sponsors and volunteers across 6 decades of class years,

1stGenYale provided Yale alumni and students with a home of inclusion, opportunity, and lifelong friendships. With the Summer Bulldogs partnership with YANA, 1stGenYale supported economic diversity at Yale and represented Yale at its best.

## Yale Club of Los Angeles



The Yale Club of Los Angeles is being recognized for their tremendous club revitalization efforts. The task of rebuilding the Yale Club of Los Angeles, one of Yale's largest regional clubs, has been a challenging and daunting one. Over a series of years, YaleLA's leadership and volunteer base had gradually fallen apart, including its institutional history and organizational structure. With the help of the Yale Alumni Association, new President Anita Wu '03, '05 JD and Vice President Marcos Luis '07 began re-engaging the Los Angeles alumni base by designing a new website, rebuilding a following on social media platforms, and crafting engaging e-mail blasts. They enlisted the help of Yale volunteers and leaders in LA to have hard and thoughtful discussions about the past and future of the Yale community in the area, including the future of local chapters of Shared



Interest Groups and the engagement of the recent alumni community. They also enlisted the help and insights of leaders of Yale's other strong regional clubs, and other schools' alumni clubs in LA. As local COVID regulations eased, YaleLA began thoughtfully organizing and hosting events again, both virtual and in-person, knowing that the quality of its early marketing and event production would be critical in determining the success of its relaunch. Successful events during its reboot have included its November 2021 Harvard-Yale Game Party, the May 2022 Yale Day of Service, the April 2022 Project Connect event, and an August 2022 Summer Party and Class of 2026 send-off. The club has also held numerous joint events with other Ivy League alumni clubs, including panel discussions and networking mixers. In addition, YaleLA's leadership has met with young alumni to identify new leaders and engage new volunteers. These efforts have all but transformed the Yale Club of LA and given it new life and a vibrant community.

## Accelerate Yale



Accelerate Yale is being honored for its third pitch competition which provided an opportunity for promising Yale startups to pitch directly to Yale venture capitalists and angel investors in real time. This global virtual event attracted 138 attendees who watched six innovative companies pitch to six investors in real time for a total of \$15,000 in cash prizes. Eight seasoned investors reviewed 79 competitive applications from throughout the Yale community. The finalists represented class years from 1981 to 2022,

as well as Yale College, the School of Management, the School of Music, and the School of Drama. Hellometer, founded by Alexander Popper class of 2022 from SOM, won the grand prize of \$10,000, while Flowly, founded by Celine Tien, class of 2017 from Yale College, won \$5,000 as runner up. All finalist teams received high value pro bono services from six alumni in the areas of fundraising, digital marketing, legal advice, and more. The event was co-sponsored and promoted by 11 Shared Interest Groups, including the Yale Black Alumni Association, the Yale Latino Alumni Network, the Association of Asian American Alumni at Yale, 1stGen Yale, YaleWomen, and others. Official sponsors included the Yale Office of Development, Yale Ventures, and Newfront Insurance. Entertainment was provided by violinist Ilana Zacks, who graduated from the School of Music in 2022. This event showcased the burgeoning interest and support for entrepreneurship and innovation throughout the Yale community, both on campus and around the world, and set a new high bar for future pitch competitions.

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