

OUR MISSION

EMERGE empowers and equips high-achieving students from low-income communities to apply to, thrive at, and graduate from the nation's best colleges.

OUR VISION

Changing the future, one student at a time.

OUR REACH

EMERGE serves more than 3,000 scholars across a dozen school districts and more than 100 selective colleges and universities across the country.



EMERGE has a strong network of nearly 1,500 alumni, who are employed by prestigious companies such as Amazon, Goldman Sachs, and Microsoft.



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BUILD THE VILLAGE
LUNCHEON

March 3, 2026 | 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
River Oaks Country Club



EMERGE

Changing the future, one student at a time.

LUNCHEON CHAIRS



Kate Dearing Fowler
Executive Director, The Jerry C. Dearing Family Foundation

Kate Schilling Kelm
Senior Vice President of Asset Management, Barvin

Kate Dearing Fowler and **Kate Schilling Kelm** have shared a friendship since their undergraduate years at Tulane University and now share a commitment to expanding opportunity for students across Houston. Their partnership reflects the strength of community and the collective investment required to ensure students can pursue ambitious futures. Through their support of EMERGE and our Build the Village Luncheon, they help champion the vision that every student deserves access to opportunity. We are deeply grateful for their leadership and for the generosity and commitment they have shown in support of this year’s luncheon.

LUNCHEON HONOREE



Mia Mends
*Chief Executive Officer, Cushman & Wakefield Services
Former EMERGE Board Chair*

We are proud to honor **Mia Mends** in recognition of her commitment to expanding educational opportunity and strengthening our community. Mia is a steadfast believer in the transformative power of education, having earned her bachelor’s degree in economics from Wellesley College and her MBA from Harvard Business School. A longtime champion of EMERGE’s mission, Mia served on the Board of Directors, including as Board Chair from 2021 to 2023, helping guide the organization through growth while remaining deeply connected to the scholars we serve. Her leadership extended beyond governance. As a mentor, she invested time and insight in helping scholars navigate their college journeys with confidence and clarity. Mia continues to champion access, excellence, and upward mobility, embodying the spirit of building a village that ensures every scholar has the opportunity to thrive.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Diana Villatoro Sorto
Klein Collins High School ’26

Diana Villatoro Sorto will graduate summa cum laude with a Medical Assistant certification and plans to pursue a pre-med track as she continues her academic journey toward a career in neurology. Through EMERGE’s comprehensive advising and college access support, Diana refined her academic goals, navigated the admissions process with clarity, and strengthened her vision for the future. Her journey reflects the preparation, opportunity, and belief that define EMERGE’s work. As she steps into her next chapter, Diana carries with her the support of an entire village and the promise of what’s possible when students are given the chance to lead.

PROGRAM

Welcome

A Story of Resilience

Marlee Morgan, EMERGE Alumna
*University of Virginia ’25
Master’s Candidate, Syracuse University ’26*

Leadership Remarks

Ashley Cash
Chief Executive Officer, EMERGE

Honoree Presentation

Ruth Beaubrun, EMERGE Alumna
*University of Chicago ’23
Senior Associate, DoorDash*

Mia Mends, 2026 Honoree

Lunch

A Story of Perseverance & Hope

Diana Villatoro Sorto, EMERGE Scholar
Klein Collins High School ’26

Closing Remarks

Kate Dearing Fowler, 2026 Co-Chair
Kate Schilling Kelm, 2026 Co-Chair



LUNCHEON SPONSORS

Valedictorian

Laura & John Arnold
The Jerry C. Dearing Family Foundation

Salutatorian

Janet F. Clark/
Virginia (Ginger) A. Clark

Summa Cum Laude

Hillary Holmes Archer & Matthew Archer
Katie & Nick Johnson

Magna Cum Laude

Pedro Caruso
Claire & Joe Greenberg
Twana Griffith-Faykus & Chadwick Faykus
H-E-B
Carla Knobloch
Liz & Andy Stepanian
Maria & John Zerr

Cum Laude

Anonymous
Ruth & Ken Arnold/
Marci & Mark Arnold
DFIN
Kate & Steve Fowler

Debra & Mark Gregg

Monica & Vik Kalra

Ann Kennedy & Geoffrey Walker
Mends-Akalou Family

Louise Wiggins Rios & Luis Rios

Marci Rosenberg & Ben Samuels

JJ & Gerry Spedale

Kelley & Harper Trammell

Melanie Trent & Bob Edwards

Randa & K.C. Weiner

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Maire & David Baldwin
Judy & David Bell/
Barbara Segal Goldfield
Jessica Bresler & Anish Hariharan
Amanda & Robert Brock
Karen & James Chenoweth
Jennifer & Gregg Costa
Kimberly & Bradley Dennison
Kari Findley & Ken Sill/
Becky & Phil Eisenberg
Annie & Bob Graham

Kristen Habich

Lauren & Zach Harris

Jill & Dunham Jewett

Diane S. Kaplan/
Virginia (Ginger) A. Clark

Kate & Chris Kelm

Judy Le, TakeRoot LLC

Kim & Scott Martin

Sara & Bill Morgan

Denise & Elliott Smith

Ann Stern

Jennifer & John Vogel

Claudia Zettner

Ann & Ben Ziker

Honor Roll

Newie & Mark Brinker
Sally Cummins
Suratha Elango
Karen & Steve Fowler
Jennifer & Kyle Hawes
Gretchen Himsl
Sis Johnson
Leah Barton & David Kim
Kathryn Rabinow
Len Slusser
Claudia & David Vassar
Polly & Jeffrey Whittle