

Paying it forward

We met three Lewisham Alumni who are using their success to give something back to their schools and communities

Jack Green

Jack, 27, went to Sedgehill School before going on to study psychology at university. He now teaches science and psychology at Forest Hill School, where he is also Head of Year 10.

'As a young man I wasted a lot of time focusing on things that weren't progressive. It's easy for a week, a month, even a year to pass as we coast along. Setting targets has helped to put things into perspective and motivate

What advice would you give your younger self?

“Start setting yourself targets and dream big!”

me on a daily basis.

'At school I loved basketball, which I still play semi-professionally. I chose a college outside the borough so I could train at a basketball academy, and after A-Levels I took a year out to play before going to university. After my degree, I began working



as a mentor before going on to do my teacher training.

'I joined the Lewisham Alumni

What advice would you give your younger self?

“Listen and ask!”

my connections to my benefit. I now realise that young people can achieve so much more if they are connected with the right people.

'I was always scared to ask about work experience in interesting companies because I was scared of being rejected. Now I'm working in an industry where if you don't speak up for yourself, you will miss out on exciting career opportunities. So be confident – the worst they can say is no and then you just try again another time!

The Lewisham Alumni, an initiative introduced by Laurelle Henry, a former Young Mayor of Lewisham, connects young people who live in the borough with young adults who have reached a level of personal success after leaving school. It aims to support young people in Lewisham make further education choices and get the training and life skills they need to step out into the world of work.

to help young people in our community find their own path to success. Having grown up and lived all my life in Lewisham, I know first-hand what help I needed when I was young. Having found my own success, I want to be part of giving that help to the youth of today. Young people are the future and it's important that people like me who came before can offer advice and guidance.'

Junior Garba

Junior, 25, attended Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College and went on to study economics and finance at Birmingham City University. He is now a cyber-underwriter for a leading insurance firm in the City of London, and co-founder of the Afro Caribbean Insurance Association.

'I remember the challenges I faced as a young person who aspired to have a career in the finance industry. There was a major lack of opportunity for people of my demographic, and despite meeting all the academic requirements, we still had to fight hard to get the opportunities. During my studies



What advice would you give your younger self?

“Be daring and ask for help! No-one can do it on their own.”

I would spend the summers doing internships in corporate insurance to get ahead.

'I've now set up a social enterprise to boost black representation in the insurance industry, and I joined the Lewisham Alumni so I can give young people in Lewisham an easier shot than I had. I still live in the borough, and offering my knowledge and support to the young people of Lewisham is so important to me – if you're fortunate enough to make it up you must send the elevator back down.'

Alice Schweigert

Alice, 21, attended Prendergast Ladywell School and Sedgehill Sixth Form before going on to study philosophy and psychology at the University of Hertfordshire. She is now an account executive at leading digital marketing agency Havas Helia, working with global brands such as Adidas, Tesco and Unilever.

'From a young age I always felt like I was expected to go down the same path as everyone else, and that didn't feel right for me. I never really realised how to use



'It's really important for me to be helping the next generation reach their full potential, whether that's advising on careers, teaching practical skills for adulthood, or helping them grow into the person they want to be. Giving something back to your old school is community in action and exactly what we need in this day and age. Community is everything!

Could you become a Lewisham Alumni?

We are looking for people aged 18-30 who went to school in Lewisham and have achieved personal success. Have you got an inspirational career story you can share with young people in Lewisham, to help them believe in themselves and get on the right path? Please contact jacob.sakil@lewisham.gov.uk for more information.