

Honoring top young leaders making a difference in metro Atlanta

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Make way for the millennials! It's Atlanta Business Chronicle's first Who's Who focused on the new generation of Atlanta leadership, 30 Under 30.

In this section, we profile top young professional leaders in the metro area with bios, photos and a short questionnaire about how they see their much-discussed generation, what received advice has resonated with them so far and a glimpse into their hopes and dreams for the future. (Some quotes from those questionnaires are on this page.)

Although other Chronicle Who's Who lists are industry-specific, this one was open to all industries as long as nominees were under 30. This list was compiled with the help of nominations from the leaders of young professional leadership groups at industry professional associations in Atlanta, such as the **Urban Land Institute** Atlanta's Young Leaders Group and **Technology Association of Georgia's** Young Professionals. The Chronicle's editorial board also contributed.

Please enjoy this section highlighting the up-and-coming leaders who are already influencing change in our community.

Jon Birdsong

Rivalry

CEO

Age: 29

Education: Bachelor's degree, **University of Georgia**

Career highlights: Jon Birdsong is CEO of Rivalry, a sales coaching software company. Rivalry claims a growth rate in double-digit figures month-over-month. It is venture-funded by Atlanta's BIP Capital. Before starting Rivalry, Birdsong ran marketing and sales for fast-growing software company SalesLoft. Birdsong helped start and run Atlanta Startup Village, the biggest monthly gathering of entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts in the Southeast.

Website: www.rivalry.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? The most important characteristic as a millennial is to listen. I see too many young graduates out of college think they have all the answers because of their popularity on social media or ability to quickly pick up technology (which is just the price of admission, today). The millennials who are constantly in a state of "humble learning" make great strides professionally. Their parents or grandparents may not know how to work an iPhone but technology will never replace timeless qualities (ex: writing hand-written thank-you notes).



Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? My mother told me to take the best quality from her, my father, grandparents, brothers, friends, etc. and apply each one to my life. On a subconscious level, it helped me navigate influences during the most impactful time in all our lives (high school, college, today and on).

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? I wish I could put it in the paper, but I'm not sure people would believe it.

Taylor M. Brown

The Integral Group LLC

Development manager

Age: 29

Education: Master of real estate development, **Clemson University**; bachelor of business administration, Valdosta State University

Career highlights: Brown currently serves as a development manager at **The Integral Group** LLC. He has seven years of professional experience in the real estate industry including development, design, underwriting, financing and construction of mixed-use, income-producing properties. He is currently overseeing the development of roughly \$150 million in mixed-use new construction and adaptive reuse projects throughout metro Atlanta, Texas and North Carolina.

Website: integral-online.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think our greatest characteristic is creativity — an independent, entrepreneurial spirit. We have a need to challenge the way things have been done in the past and to carve out new paths to success. Almost a third of all startups today are launched by millennials — that's a striking number for such a young population. We're also leading the re-urbanization movement in cities across the country.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?""Never buy a house when it's on fire." My father.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? I want to push my field toward an even greater investment in creative and socially responsible development. I have a passion for catalytic projects that create value (both economic and social) in undervalued locations. ... I want to stay at the forefront of that work. ...

Brooks Buffington

Yik Yak Inc.

Co-founder and chief operating officer

Age: 24

Education: Bachelor's degree, Furman University

Career highlights: Brooks Buffington, originally from Atlanta, co-founded Yik Yak in 2013 with his fraternity brother, Tyler Droll, shortly after graduating from Furman University. Brooks was initially interested in a degree in the arts, but during his sophomore year at Furman he switched to accounting to work toward a career in finance. Shortly after developing Yik Yak, Buffington decided to put his finance career ambitions on hold to pursue app development full time.

Website: <http://www.yikyakapp.com/>

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think our age group tends to be more accepting of other people. Race, religion, sexuality, gender, these things don't matter to us as much as they do to older generations. We don't let these things get in the way of progress.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? During our conversations with business leaders and VCs in the early stages of Yik Yak, someone said to me, "No one knows your product better than you." I do not recall the specific person but it has certainly rung true when making decisions on which direction the company and product should go in.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? I want to have an enormous garden with chickens and goats. I want to live locally and be able to get almost all of my food from my backyard.

Sandy Chapman

The Coca-Cola Co.

Manager, International Government Relations and Public Affairs

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor's degree in environment, economics and politics, Claremont McKenna College

Career highlights: Sandy Chapman has been with The Coca-Cola Co. for more than five years. He is responsible for coordinating the company's global economic development partnerships with organizations including UN Women, the **International Finance Corporation**, and the Better Than Cash Alliance. In his role, Chapman also collaborates with teams in emerging markets to measure the socio-economic impact of Coca-Cola's supply chain and operations, and works with them to develop local economic policy strategies. Chapman is co-founder and co-leader of the Coca-Cola Young Professionals Network.

Website: www.coca-colacompany.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think we're an incredibly diverse group in the U.S. and around the world, but can highlight a few common characteristics that I've observed. We have grown up in an increasingly connected world and are exposed to such an immense flow of information on a constant basis. I've found this makes us apt to form opinions very quickly and decisively, and to place a significant value on the authenticity of messages. ...

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? A senior executive at Coca-Cola in my first few months as an intern. His advice to me was that there will always be people smarter than you, but you have it within your power to be the hardest worker.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? With music, my biggest dream is to have the opportunity to learn directly from one of my personal piano heroes: Chuck Leavell, Dr. John or Page McConnell.

Stephen Clifton

PM Realty Group

Vice president

Age: 26

Education: Bachelor of business administration, Presbyterian College

Career highlights: Clifton is currently a vice president at PM Realty Group, where his primary focus is office leasing transactions on behalf of institutional clients. Over the last three years, Clifton has participated in several hundred transactions representing approximately 3 million square feet of office space including assets such as 999 Peachtree, The Fountains at Piedmont Center and The Peachtree Lenox Building. Additionally, Clifton is involved in the acquisition, disposition, and development of office projects throughout metro Atlanta.

Website: www.pmrg.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think the millennial generation's ability to adapt and blur the lines between their business and personal lives is remarkable. Long gone are the days of driving home at 5 p.m. and picking up where you left off at 8 a.m. the next morning, and the ability to efficiently manage all of the information and tasks while maintaining an appropriate work/life balance is a challenge. Additionally, the renewed entrepreneurial spirit and belief in a free market economy is exciting, and I think it speaks to the resilience of our generation. ...

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? Early in my career, my father told me, "You are always going to have ups and downs in business and many things will happen that are beyond your control, but that if you maintain focus on the things you can control — attitude, integrity, work ethic, and personal relationships — you stand a great chance of success."

Gloria Ann Cox

Chick-fil-A Foundation

Associate Director of Programming

Age: 27

Education: Bachelor of science in international affairs, **Georgia Tech**

Career highlights: Gloria Cox is the associate director of programming for the **Chick-fil-A** Foundation. She is responsible for cultivating partnerships and developing programs that bring to life the mission of the Chick-fil-A Foundation to help children reach their fullest potential. In 2014, Cox's work resulted in feeding over 1 million children in communities across the country; teaching entrepreneurship skills to 70,000 children; and introducing 1,000 urban youth to college campuses for the first time. Prior to joining Chick-fil-A, Gloria worked in asset development and also managed political campaigns in the Atlanta area. She is a member of the LEAD Atlanta Class of 2015. A native of Atlanta, Gloria resides in Grant Park with her husband Charlie, where they are active in their community and church.

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Millennials aren't afraid to challenge the status quo and ask difficult questions. This characteristic allows us to be catalysts for positive change in our workplace and local communities.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? My father always encouraged me to follow the instruction of Proverbs 3:6, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight."

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? I would love to see the two girls I mentor attend and complete college.

Cory A. Croft

Delta Air Lines Inc.

Manager-merchandising

Age: 30

Education: Bachelor of science, **University of Minnesota**; MBA, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

Career highlights: Cory A. Croft is currently the manager of merchandising for Delta Comfort Plus, responsible for leading cross-functional efforts to drive core demand for the Delta Comfort Plus brand. He has nine years of professional experience in retail, consumer goods, and strategy consulting. As a consultant with **Accenture**, Croft worked with numerous clients to solve problems pertaining to growth strategy, customer experience, competitive analysis, and market sizing. In the community, Croft works with the Atlanta Speaks organization, assisting with growth strategies and volunteering in the classroom with college and career readiness. He also serves on the boards of The Scholarship Academy and United Way Young Professional Leaders.

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I admire my generation's demand for social responsibility in business. Companies targeting millennials as shoppers must demonstrate activity in the communities in which they operate as well as commit time and resources to the causes we care about.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? A professor whom I admire greatly once told me: "Being a great leader isn't about being the best. It's about getting people to be their best."

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? I will one day be a leader of a multimillion-dollar business. I aspire to use my influence in business to make a positive impact by helping underprivileged neighborhoods, food deserts, and homeless people. ...

Anna Czachurski

AIG Global Real Estate

Associate

Age: 29

Education: Dual bachelor degrees in mathematics and finance, Auburn University

Career highlights: Anna Czachurski is currently an associate in the Investments group at AIG Global Real Estate, covering acquisitions in Southern California, in addition to student housing and senior housing across all regions. She began her career as an analyst at **Trimont Real Estate Advisors**, where she worked as third-party asset management, responsible for helping manage a 19,000-unit, \$1.2 billion multifamily equity investment portfolio. She then joined Jamestown Properties where she started as an analyst in asset management. At Jamestown, she transitioned to a development associate. Czachurski was selected to be a part of the 2012 NAIOP Georgia Future Leaders Program and served as a committee member for the 2013 Future Leaders class. She is also a member of ULI Atlanta.

Website: http://www.aig.com/real-estate_3171_523524.html

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I call us the "Shark Tank" generation. Growing up, we were always encouraged to "dream big" which has led us to believe that anything is possible. Millennials have created a startup revolution and I think it's because we crave authenticity. I believe there's an entrepreneurial spirit in most of us and anyone with sheer determination and a little bit of luck can go make something of themselves.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? My grandparents represent a generation where working hard and living simply was the only way of life. As farmers in Alabama, they have always led by example and said that hard work pays off. Also, they told me to always save your money. ...

Tyler Droll

Yik Yak Inc.

Co-founder and CEO

Age: 24

Education: Bachelor's degree, Furman University

Career highlights: Tyler Droll, originally from Duluth, Ga., co-founded Yik Yak in 2013 with his fraternity brother, Brooks Buffington, shortly after graduating from Furman University. While pursuing his undergraduate degree, he took an app development class and began putting that knowledge into practice. After first developing a social polling app, the duo decided to try their hand at a new product when they recognized a need for localized, open communications to give everyone on their campus a voice. During this process, Droll decided to forego medical school in order to work on the app development full time.

Website: <http://www.yikyakapp.com/>

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Millennials are amazing at adopting new things quickly. The speed of innovation and progress has increased over time, and we grew up in the middle of it. Whether it's a new technology, pop culture trend or law, we have a knack for seeing something new and understanding it very quickly.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? One of my mentors jokingly told me, "Don't mess it up." This really resonated with me because it highlights the essence of entrepreneurship. There is no big corporation to fall back on in a startup. The path really is yours to pave, whether it's a success or failure. This piece of advice helps me stay motivated and remember that it is our responsibility and opportunity to make something great happen.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? Finding my soulmate and starting a family because family is everything.

Rachel Kathlyn Ford

FIXD Automotive Inc.

Founder and chief operating officer

Sucette Baby Products

Founder and CEO

Georgia Tech Innovation and Design Collaborative

External PR and business development

Age: 23

Education: Biomedical engineering and finance, Georgia Tech

Career highlights: Ford began her path in entrepreneurship in the spring of 2014, when she won second place in the InVenture Prize Competition, concurrently enrolled in Georgia Tech's first Startup Lab course, and was selected as an NSF University Innovation Fellow. The following summer, Ford's two startup teams, now FIXD Automotive Inc. and Sucette Baby Products, were selected to participate in Tech's inaugural Startup Summer program. Following the establishment of the two companies, FIXD's successful Kickstarter campaign and winning **Cisco's** Internet of Everything challenge, Ford now focuses on product development and business relations.

Websites: www.FIXDapp.com
www.sucettebaby.com
www.designbloc.gatech.edu

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? My age group is defined by the constant thirst for information, which largely stems from constantly being "connected" — to the easily accessible Internet, to social media outlets, and to mobile devices. With instant access to such a massive amount of information, (from) it stems the need to apply it to new ideas, to innovate, and to create a better world around us.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? The best advice I ever received was, as corny as it sounds, to pursue what makes me happy. When I was an intern, my boss at DuPont was the one that finally convinced me that I was unhappy with my current major and that I should embrace the skills that I was born with.

Laurel Graefe

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Director, Regional Economic Information Network
Age: 29

Education: Bachelor's degree in economics, summa cum laude, Agnes Scott College

Career highlights: As director for the Atlanta Fed's REIN program, Graefe supports monetary policy deliberations through her analysis of regional and national economic developments. Graefe gives regular speeches about current economic conditions, the economic outlook, and the functions and history of the **Federal Reserve**. Her work has been cited in numerous publications, and she recently contributed a chapter to the Handbook of Oil Politics. Graefe's community engagement includes work with the GEMS program (girls excelling in math and science) and coaching young women pursuing in careers in STEM.

Website: <https://www.frbatlanta.org/>

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Members of the millennial generation have spent a large portion of their formative years in one of the most severe recessions in recent memory. This experience has helped to form a strengthened sense of community responsibility combined with a certain toughness and resilience. ...

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? I spend a good deal of my free time outdoors rock climbing, an activity that can require focus and precision in the midst of pressure and fear. A climbing partner once reminded me that even the strongest, most skillful athlete will struggle without the edge that self-confidence and conviction bring. His advice was to drown out doubt by speaking nicely to myself when I'm in the midst of a climb—to silently repeat to myself that I can succeed—even if at first I don't believe it. ...

Abby Hall

Childress Klein Properties
Associate
Age: 22

Education: Bachelor's degree, finance, University of Alabama

Career highlights: Abby Hall's role at Childress Klein is assisting with leasing nearly 2 million square feet of office space at Atlanta Galleria Office Park. Hall is active with CREW Atlanta where she is a member of the Golf Committee and assists annually with UCREW. She is a past recipient of the CREW Network and Foundation Scholarship. Hall is also a member of ULI Atlanta.

Website: www.childressklein.com; www.atlantagalleria.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Millennials want to do something with purpose. We hope that our jobs, our kids, our cars, and our communities are able to influence a better world. Millennials see their bottom line as more than just success.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far and where did it come from? In my final interview with Childress Klein, Don Childress offered a strategy to minimize mistakes by not acting as if you have the answer to every question. Instead, he encouraged me to use my inexperience as leverage for follow-ups with accurate information.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? Career: I would like to oversee and lease a newly developed office building. I want to become an expert in commercial real estate. Personally: I would like to travel to every continent.

Lindsey E. Hardegree

Atlanta BeltLine Partnership

Development director

Age: 30

Education: Bachelor of arts in both English and theatre, Wake Forest University; master of fine arts in performing arts management, University of North Carolina School of the Arts

Career highlights: As development director for the **Atlanta BeltLine** Partnership, Hardegree is responsible for developing and implementing the revenue strategy for the partnership and for achieving its annual fundraising and sponsorship goals. Prior to joining the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, she served as the special events and board manager for the **Alliance Theatre**. Hardegree serves on the board of C4 Atlanta, the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Atlanta, and the Young Professional Leaders Advisory Board for the United Way of Greater Atlanta. She also serves as a member of the Cathedral Chapter (Board of Trustees) for the Cathedral of St. Philip, and is involved in several ministries within the parish. Hardegree volunteers with the Junior League of Atlanta and is a member of the LEAD Atlanta Class of 2015.

Website: www.beltline.org/member

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? The common denominator I notice among my peers is how driven and passionate we are. Millennials are eager to work hard, and are excited by success when their efforts pay off. There's also a strong sense of how the work we do now impacts the future.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? In grad school I worked at **Starbucks**, and my store manager was a phenomenal mentor for me... The best advice she gave me was about communication styles: as a strong leader, you need to adapt your communication style to the team you're leading. Don't expect everyone to meet you where you're comfortable, but make the effort to meet them where they're comfortable.

Smith Haverty

Atlanta Property Group LLC

Acquisitions analyst

Age: 25

Education: Bachelor's degree, banking and finance, University of Georgia

Career highlights: Smith Haverty began his career in SunTrust Robinson Humphrey's **Real Estate Group**, which provides real estate advice to investment banking clients and acquires single-tenant real estate assets. While at SunTrust, Haverty was involved in over \$250 million of real estate transactions. In the summer of 2013, Haverty joined Atlanta Property Group focusing on acquisitions. In this role, he has helped the company grow its office portfolio to over 3 million square feet, making it the largest local, private owner of office properties in Georgia. Haverty is actively involved in NAIOP where he is a member of the 2014 Future Leaders Class. Outside of work, Smith enjoys spending his time as a leader with Northwest Atlanta Young Life.

Website: <http://www.atlantapg.com>

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think the defining characteristic that makes the millennial generation unique is the adoption and integration of technology into our lives. To use technology to make life easier, become more educated, maintain personal relationships, and create new possibilities and efficiencies in our respective industries.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? In terms of business, the importance of integrity and reputation. To always do your absolute best to fulfill what you said you would and to help other people without expecting anything in return. This is advice I have received from both my dad and real estate mentors.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved?... It has always been a dream of mine to one day start and build my own company.

Tanner Hicklin

Prologis Inc.

Leasing Manager

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor's degree in financial management, Clemson University

Career highlights: Hicklin is currently a leasing manager for Prologis Inc., the world's largest owner and developer of warehouses and distribution facilities. Hicklin oversees leasing, including asset management responsibilities, for an approximately 6 million square feet of the company's 15 million square feet in Georgia's portfolio. Hicklin was responsible for leasing transactions with values totaling 27 million dollars in 2014. He serves as director of the NAIOP Future Leaders program. Hicklin also serves on the Advisory Committee for the **Atlanta Commercial Board of Realtors' Young Council**.

Website: www.prologis.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Our generation, particularly in a city like Atlanta, has a strong appetite for career advancement, which might mean company changes or even industry changes. I think other generations sometimes see this as restless or disloyal. I see our lack of complacency as an energy boost that drives competition, keeps motivation high, and will ultimately lead to more innovative workforce. Our generation is compassionate, with a particular sensitivity to global issues. I think we are and will continue to take creative and open-minded approaches to tackling these issues.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? Early in my career I had a mentor who told me, "If you play in the mud with the pigs, you're going to get dirty." It's a simple concept, but an important one. It has led me to always surround myself with reputable people...

Richard Allan Johnson Jr.

AT&T

Regional director, external affairs

Age: 30

Education: Bachelor's degree in political science, University of Tennessee

Career highlights: Johnson currently serves as the regional director of external affairs for AT&T where he works with local and state policymakers throughout metro Atlanta to enhance Georgia's communication services' industry and ensure a strong business climate. In this role he is also responsible for AT&T's philanthropic activities where he works with community leaders, nonprofits and chambers of commerce to improve areas like workforce development, education and technology adoption. Johnson serves on numerous local chamber of commerce boards, Communities in Schools of Atlanta board and the City of Milton Design and Review Board. He and wife Allison have one son and are expecting a daughter in May.

Website: www.att.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? While every age group has demonstrated a commitment to philanthropy, millennials seem to have a strong sense of community and desire for social justice more so than ever before. Our approach is different than in the past, using social media to become advocates for causes we are passionate about, we develop a sense of community based on issues rather than location. Valuing and listening to all ideas, millennials are open to new approaches, flexible with changing direction and ready to toss aside what may have worked for a new approach that delivers results.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?"There is no substitute for hard work."
My father, Rick Johnson.

Jake Jones

Cherry Bekaert LLP

Audit senior associate

Age: 25

Education: Bachelor of business administration in accounting, master's degree in accounting, University of Georgia

Career highlights: As a certified public accountant, Jake Jones works as an audit senior accountant with Cherry Bekaert LLP. He has more than three years of experience in public accounting, performing both financial statement and compliance audits. Prior to public accounting, Jones' experience included working at a local accounting firm performing client accounting services and working at a community bank acting as an account representative. At Cherry Bekaert he is a member of the UGA core recruiting team which works to obtain accounting talent from the University of Georgia. He serves as chairman of the Board of Directors for the Technology Association of Georgia's Young Professional Society.

Website: www.cbh.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Millennials bring an open-minded approach and a unique perspective to handling tasks. This is one of our most outstanding characteristics. We are also courageous in asking why something is done a certain way; we don't mind questioning the status quo. ... Another outstanding characteristic of millennials is that we are passionate about what we are doing and want to know that our work matters to the overall well-being of our organization. ...

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? Perform whatever task you encounter to the best of your ability. This is something that my dad always instilled in me.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? Starting a family. ...Until then maybe I can work on paying off my student loans!

Rohit Malhotra

Center for Civic Innovation

Founder and executive director

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor of art, **Emory University**; master in public policy, **Harvard University's** John F. Kennedy School of Government

Career highlights: Rohit Malhotra is the founder and executive director of the Center for Civic Innovation in Atlanta, his hometown city. His background is in social entrepreneurship, digital communications, open data and community organizing. He worked in leadership positions at Malaria NO MORE, Bono's ONE Campaign, the Democratic National Committee and the World Cup's 1GOAL Education for All Campaign. Most recently, he served as an Ash Innovation Fellow in the White House Office of Management and Budget, focused on the administration's efforts around social impact bonds and pay for performance. In 2015, he was appointed to the Board of Directors of the **Metro Atlanta Chamber**, where he is the youngest-serving member in recent history.

Website: www.civicatlanta.org

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? While growing up, many of us watching our parents live and breathe the ebbs and flows of the American Dream. Adulthood for many of our parents came with a binary fork in the road of going this way or that way. Because of our parents' hard work and desire for a better life for their children, millennials are given a shovel and a compass to pave our own path forward. The generation before us defined success as not failing; our generation defines success as not being afraid to fail...

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?...The greatest advisors in my life have all given me one strong piece of advice: you have to love what you do so much that it wakes you up in the morning, and it keeps you up at night. I'm fortunate to say that I do.

Johanna B. McCrehan

Georgia Conservancy

Urban Designer

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor's degree in architecture, Clemson University; master's degree in city and regional planning, Georgia Tech

Career highlights: Johanna McCrehan is currently urban designer at the Georgia Conservancy. In this role she focuses on the physical components of community sustainability through design and planning. She has worked across the state on issues such as the impact of school location on community stability (Harlem, Ga.); and how our small towns remain competitive as populations migrate to larger cities (Albany, Ga.). McCrehan has worked with Atlanta Streets Alive, the

Atlanta Regional Commission and StreetPlans Collaborative in the build-out of these projects and contributes her expertise on several Atlanta BeltLine Inc. committees. Last year she was awarded as a 30 Under 30 Nonprofit Leader by the **Georgia Center for Nonprofits**.

Website: www.georgiaconservancy.org

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? It's hard to generalize — a lot has happened in that 20-year-span. There's so much opportunity today for our generation to impact change — we've seen that great innovations can come out of young people, as well those more established in their fields. To me, that also shows that there's no age limit as to who can affect change in an organization... Many of us are also fortunate to find places of work that are willing to tailor positions around employees' various talents and passions ...

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? On my first day at one of my first jobs at an architecture firm, my mom told me to have lunch with anyone at the firm who asked me. I still do that to this day. ...

Shannon Price

Jones Lang LaSalle Inc.

Senior associate

Age: 29

Education: Bachelor of science in marketing, bachelor of arts in advertising, University of Georgia

Career highlights: Having transitioned to commercial real estate from a career in marketing five years ago, Price initially represented office building owners on the agency leasing side of the business at a firm now known as Newmark Grubb Knight Frank (NGKF). Realizing a greater desire to represent the office user's interests, Price transitioned to office tenant representation in 2012 at Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL). In that transition year, both sides of the business collided in the PulteGroup Inc. relocation to Atlanta in which Price's team at JLL represented Pulte and her former team at NGKF represented the owner of Pulte's new headquarters building. Most recently Price was part of the team consulting **Mercedes-Benz USA** on their impending relocation from New Jersey to Atlanta.

Website: JLL.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? 1. We are adaptable — because of our tech-savviness and ability to multi-task, we can create opportunities, accomplish tasks, and achieve goals quickly and effectively. 2. We are achievement-oriented — since childhood we have been held to a high performance bar behaviorally, academically and now professionally; and we take pride in surpassing expectations. 3. We are confident — we are sure of our abilities and optimistic about achieving success both in our professional and personal lives.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? I have always liked the Churchill quote, "Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts." To me this is a motivator to never stop moving. ...

Matt Prince

Eastdil Secured LLC

Vice president

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor of business administration, finance and real estate, University of Georgia

Career highlights: Prince is currently a vice president at Eastdil Secured LLC, focusing on office investment sales across the Southeast. His role includes the underwriting, marketing and execution of sale and recapitalization assignments for institutional-quality office properties. During his four-year tenure at Eastdil Secured, Prince has been involved in the sale and marketing of more than \$7.5 billion of office, retail and land assets. He is involved in numerous industry organizations and was selected as a member of the 2014 Class of NAIOP Future Leaders by the Georgia Chapter of the **National Association of Industrial and Office Properties**.

Website: <http://www.eastdilsecured.com>

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? The defining characteristic of millennials is our preference for urban living and experiences. I see the impact of these

preferences in the commercial real estate industry through the success of urban multifamily and mixed-use developments, revitalization of in-town neighborhoods, and the continued shift by employers to urban environments with workplaces designed specifically around millennials.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? To be successful you must act with a sense of urgency — My father.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? To own my own business.

John Wesley Risher

Haddow & Co.

Associate

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor's degree in political science, Louisiana State University; master's degree in city and regional planning, Georgia Tech

Career highlights: Risher is an associate at Haddow & Co., where he conducts in-depth market research to assist clients, ranging from families to developers, in making informed real estate decisions based on current and near-term market conditions. He is part of a small team that keeps the real estate community apprised of the state of multifamily housing in intown Atlanta through the publication of Haddow's Apartment Report and Haddow's Condominium Report. Risher is a member of the Urban Land Institute's Young Leaders Group. Prior to real estate, he worked for a healthcare communications agency assisting with the strategic marketing of hematology/oncology pharmaceuticals.

Website: www.haddowandcompany.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I'm most proud of millennials for our commitment to creating great communities. In real estate, this is manifesting in revitalized intown neighborhoods that are walkable and lively. In addition to offering tremendous health and social benefits, these communities also redirect growth back into established areas, protecting rural and natural resources from the pressure of development.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? The best advice I have received so far came from Lisa Hefner, the former president of E Squared Communications. She told me that she believed that the key to success is to generate a broad base of support and that it is just as important to have the trust of your colleagues and subordinates as it is to have the support of your superiors.

Ryan Shepard

Office of Mayor Kasim Reed

Performance and operations consultant

The Human Capital Theory

Founder

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor's degree in philosophy, **Morehouse College**; master's degree in education policy and management, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Career highlights: Ryan Shepard was a 2008 Teach for America Corps Member in South Fulton County at Seaborn Lee Elementary. In 2010, he was a Reynolds Foundation Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship at the Harvard Kennedy School Center for Public Leadership. While at Harvard, Shepard also served as Student Government Association president. In 2011, he joined **McKinsey & Co.'s** Atlanta office as a generalist. Shepard now works as a consultant in the office of Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed. In this role, he coordinates across departments to pursue progress towards priorities of the administration. Outside of work, Shepard serves as treasurer of the board for the nonprofit Full Court Peace, an organization that promotes conflict resolution through basketball. He is also the founder of a social impact organization called The Human Capital Theory.

Website: www.TheHumanCapitalTheory.org

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think we have the hunger, curiosity and concern to match any generation before us. We've also shown a bit of grit as many of us faced an unkind economy early in our careers. And our distinctive opportunity is hyper-access to information and

mobility. We are better positioned than any generation before us to learn and connect with people and issues the world over.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? My grandmother insisted, "Be kind to everyone because you never know who will be the one to wipe the sweat from your brow." ...

Blake Underwood

Columbia Property Trust

Director

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor of business administration in real estate, University of Georgia; MBA with concentration in real estate and finance, Emory University (graduating May 2015)

Career highlights: Blake Underwood is currently director of real estate transactions at Columbia Property Trust focusing on acquisitions and dispositions of class A office properties in key markets across the country. To date, he has been involved in over \$3.4 billion of transaction activity during his tenure, most notably acquiring 221 Main Street and 650 California Street in San Francisco and 116 Huntington Ave. in Boston. Underwood also serves as an Executive Committee member for NAIOP's Future Leaders program at the state level and serves on NAIOP's National Developing Leaders forum.

Website: www.columbiapropertytrust.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I believe my generation has really fought for and believes in a balanced lifestyle that allows us to maximize our professional and personal lives. We enjoy thinking creatively on how to tackle issues, find satisfaction in meaningful work and appreciate having fun at the same time!

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?""It's OK to say no to good things" is advice I was given as a freshman in college that has really helped shape my life. First off, it's not advice to promote laziness, but one that encourages me to be selective in where I spend my time to help promote a culture of sustainability and effectiveness.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? My wife and I had our first child back in October (2014) and my biggest dream is to be the best dad I can be. ...

Ashley M. Van der Lande

Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco

Attorney

Age: 27

Education: Bachelor of arts in environmental policy, **University of the South;** juris doctor, Vermont Law School

Career highlights: Ashley Van der Lande is an attorney at Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco, involved in the firm's environmental and land use work, primarily in metro Atlanta, but also throughout the broader Southeast region. Van der Lande works on complex litigation involving storm water and sedimentation, solid waste permitting and compliance, zoning and environmental issues associated with the revitalization and reuse of distressed properties. She is involved with the Georgia Brownfield Association, and the Urban Land Institute. Website: www.wncwlaw.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? Curiosity and creativity are the most outstanding characteristics of our age group — a tendency empowered by ready and mobile access to information. We no longer just accept things because "that's the way they have always been done." We are comfortable asking why, and we are using the answers (or lack thereof) to help Atlanta resolve some of the issues that may be holding it back. Effectively, we are not looking to tend to the symptoms of the problems, but instead we are hoping that in our work, we can mitigate the causes. This often treads on new territory, and while our ideas may stand on less experience, our curiosity gives credibility to the creativity we employ. In the end, I think the millennials will be revered for being true problem-solvers.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? My dad always reminds me to make the best of it. It's incredible how much a positive outlook enables you to overcome obstacles.

Dar Vanderbeck

Teach for America Inc.

Managing director of values-based leadership & social innovation

Age: 29

Education: Bachelor of arts in political economies in transition (independent interdisciplinary), Bates College

Career highlights: Dar Vanderbeck is managing director of values-based leadership and social innovation for Teach For America's national team. Prior to this, she co-founded Imperative and New York-based technology to connect people to their purpose; co-founded the civic dinner party project Cities of Purpose; was vice president of resolute consulting and adjunct faculty at the **Maryland Institute College of Art** in design thinking for social change. From 2008-2011, Vanderbeck was an appointee in the Obama Administration, serving as program strategist for the **United States Agency for International Development**, where she managed programming in Afghanistan and beyond; and managed the foreign assistance team for the Obama-Biden Transition Team. In 2008, Vanderbeck was a field organizer for Obama For America in Florida and prior to that a caseworker in prisons for Muslims for Human Rights in Kenya.

Website: www.teachforamerica.org

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? As a millennial, I think we've been most known for our audacity — that, yes, can unfortunately also express itself as arrogance — but I think when it is matched with a deep sense of humility, and connectedness, that audacious hustle is a truly outstanding quality of our generation.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from? My father told me when I was younger that the size of your life is the size of the challenges you take on. And I have always wanted to live a great, big life.

Matt Westmoreland

Atlanta Board of Education

District 3 Representative

Age: 27

Education: Bachelor's degree in history, Princeton University

Career highlights: Westmoreland is a member of the Atlanta Board of Education, where he serves as chair of the Budget Commission and Legislative Liaison to the Georgia General Assembly. He also serves as assistant director of Horizons Atlanta, an educational non-profit serving low-income students across metro Atlanta through summer enrichment programs. Before joining the school board, he was a Teach for America Corps Member and taught History at Carver Early College High School in southeast Atlanta. Named one of the 20 People to Watch in 2014 by Creative Loafing, Westmoreland is a member of the LEAD Atlanta Class of 2015 and serves on the Atlanta Regional Commission's Millennial Advisory Committee.

Website: www.mattwestmoreland.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? We are proud of and embrace our diversity. We're service-minded and passionate about building a sustainable regional landscape. We are social — able to connect with each other and our communities through more mediums than ever before.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?"Vote as though you're not seeking re-election." My dad — in remarks to my colleagues and me as he swore us in to the board.

Q: What is your biggest dream yet to be achieved? For Atlanta to bridge our divides of race, class and culture — and for every child here to get the excellent education that will open up real opportunity and choice in life.

Natalie A. Williams

Jones Day

Associate

Age: 29

Education: Juris doctor, **Columbia University** Law School; bachelor's degree in political science and journalism, Emory University

Career highlights: Natalie Williams' practice includes a wide range of litigation matters with an emphasis on securities litigation, white-collar criminal defense, and **SEC** enforcement. She has represented clients in matters involving the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, allegations of racketeering and RICO violations, 10b-5 prosecutions, and shareholder derivative suits, among others. Williams is active in the Atlanta community. She serves on the Artemis Board for the **Fernbank Museum of Natural History** and the Leadership Council for **The Posse Foundation** Inc. She is also a committee member for the Leadership Institute for Women of Color Attorneys and is a class member of LEAD Atlanta's Class of 2015.

Website: www.jonesday.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? I think what most distinguishes our age group and the millennial generation is our genuine desire to engage in difficult discussions in unique and unprecedented ways. I believe our generation is known for identifying critical issues with the hope of sparking opportunities to share differing perspectives and possible resolutions. And, the way in which we have these discussions and garner interest is really unique for our time. With the ever-changing technology that seems to dominate our world as a generation, we, as millennials, have found ways to use this technology to highlight and galvanize interest on community, national, and global issues in truly remarkable ways.

Kai N. Williamson

Youth Enhancement Services

Executive Director

Age: 28

Education: Bachelor's and master's degrees in public policy, Georgia Tech

Career highlights: Williamson is currently executive director of Youth Enhancement Services, an Atlanta based non-profit organization that has provided education services for 25 years. Over the last five years, Williamson has built the agency into an effective provider of alternative education solutions. The curriculum and program models she has developed are utilized by Fulton County, Urban League of Greater Atlanta and Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. Williamson has been the recipient of several honors including **Georgia Center for Nonprofits 30 Under 30 and The Humanitarian Award** from the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice. In addition to her work in non-profit management, Williamson operates an interior design and image consulting firm, kaistyled.

Website: www.yesgeorgia.org

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? My age group is willing to abandon the conventional concepts of stability in our pursuit of success and happiness. There is a cocktail of confidence and adventure that allow us to advance our careers, cultural experiences and global footprint.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?"Work smarter, not harder." This advice came from a mentor and serves as a constant reminder to take a step back from the tactical execution in order to build my vision.

Q: What your biggest dream yet to be achieved? My dream is to leave a legacy that reaches well beyond my immediate social circle and lifetime. I want to one day be spoken of as a catalyst of change, an innovator and someone who impacted the lives of others—to be legendary.

Awet Goitom Woldegebriel

The Coca-Cola Co.-North America

University talent program training coordinator

Knowledge Aid Foundation; 100 Cups 100 Stories

Founder and executive director

Age: 22

Education: Bachelor of arts in international relations with an emphasis in international economics/business, Oglethorpe University

Career highlights: Awet Woldegebriel currently works at The Coca-Cola Co. under the University Talent Program as a training coordinator. His work focuses on aiding the business in attracting, developing and retaining strong talent throughout its pipeline. Woldegebriel joined Coca-Cola in 2013, and at 20 years old, was the youngest member of the

people function, all while a full-time student at Oglethorpe University. Woldegebriel is also the founder and executive director of Knowledge Aid Foundation, a non-profit that furnishes 300 libraries across the developing world and advances the education of 15 first-generation college students by 2020. Prior to working at The Coca-Cola Co., Woldegebriel worked with the Clinton Global Initiative in 2011. He is the youngest member of the Buckhead Rotary Club. Website: www.coca-cola.com

Q: As a millennial, what do you think are the most outstanding characteristics of your age group and why? For millennials, work life balance is a given — a requirement of any job — while for many other generations it has long been a goal that they one day hope to master.

Another striking characteristic of millennials is that our generation strives to understand how to impact and succeed in all three parts of the Golden Triangle of business, government and civil society.

Q: What is the best advice you've received so far, and where did it come from?"Show up, and answer your email" — President Lawrence Schall of Oglethorpe University. ..."Trust in God" — My father. ...

Jessica Saunders
Managing Editor
Atlanta Business Chronicle

