



MENAC
BUILDING MINDS BUILDS COMMUNITIES

AUGUST 11, 2026

April - June This Quarter's Highlights

Apr 16 SOAR Meeting

Apr 18 Roses & Thorns
Brunch

Apr 23 United Way
Onslow Golden
Lightkeepers Award
Ceremony

May 2 Nonprofit
Executive Roundtable

May 7 UNCW Tour

May 26 Board of
Directors Quarterly
Meeting

Jun 2 Sturgeon City
Program Collaboration

Jun 15-18 Summer
Leadership Retreat



FROM CAMPUS TOURS TO COURAGE: MENAC STUDENTS SHINE AT 2026 SUMMER LEADERSHIP RETREAT!

Savannah, GA & MCRD Parris Island, SC - June 15-18, 2026

What do a college campus, an art museum, an arcade full of laughing teenagers, and a United States Marine Corps graduation ceremony have in common? For 11 lucky MENAC students and their 8 dedicated mentors, they were all stops on one unforgettable summer journey — and the results were nothing short of inspiring!

Day One: College Dreams Come to Life

The adventure kicked off at Savannah State University, where students traded the classroom for a real college campus — and loved every minute of it. Walking through residence halls,

chatting with university staff, and hearing about admissions, financial aid, and student life turned "someday" into "definitely" for a lot of our students. There's something magical about standing on a quad and realizing: I could be here in a couple of years. That spark of possibility is exactly what this trip was all about.



ART, INNOVATION, AND "WAIT, THAT'S A CAREER?"

Next stop: the Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art. Students wandered through galleries bursting with creativity — architecture, fashion, animation, graphic design, digital media — and mentors made sure to connect the dots: creativity isn't just a hobby, it's a career path. For students who'd never thought of themselves as "artsy," the visit cracked open a whole new world of possibilities they hadn't considered before.

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BONDING, BIG LAUGHS, AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION

Every great leadership retreat needs a little fun, and Dave & Buster's delivered in a big way! Between the games, the friendly trash talk, and the team high-fives, students and mentors built the kind of trust and camaraderie that doesn't come from a worksheet — it comes from shared laughter. These lighter moments turned out to be some of the most powerful bonding experiences of the whole trip, reminding everyone that strong relationships are the foundation of strong leadership.

STANDING TALL AT PARRIS ISLAND

The retreat closed on a truly powerful note: witnessing a graduation ceremony at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. Watching recruits complete months of intense training left a lasting impression on every student in attendance. Discipline. Perseverance. Commitment. Service. These aren't just words Marines live by — they're principles our students walked away ready to apply to their own lives, whether it's finishing a tough school year, showing up for their families, or chasing a big goal that once felt out of reach.



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Upcoming Highlights

Aug 14 Mentor
Training

Nov 17 ECU Tour

Dec Growing Together

Feb 11 Campbell
University Tour

Mar Generational
Builders

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THE REAL WIN: WHAT STUDENTS TOOK HOME

Beyond the campus tours and the ceremony, the heart of this retreat was the daily conversations mentors led on leadership, integrity, goal-setting, and resilience. Students left with:

- A clearer vision of college as an achievable goal — not a distant dream
- A broader sense of career possibilities, from creative fields to public service
- Stronger bonds with their mentors, built on trust and shared experience
- Real-world models of discipline and perseverance to carry into their own lives

As one recurring theme echoed throughout the week: leadership isn't something you wait to grow into - it's something you practice every day, starting now.

A Huge Thank You

None of this happens without the incredible MENAC mentors who gave their time, energy, and heart to make this retreat a success. Thank you for showing our students what's possible — and for reminding them that someone believes in their future. Here's to more campus tours, more big laughs, and more students stepping confidently into their own leadership journeys. See you at the next MENAC event!

A LOOK BACK AT THE ROSES & THORNS BRUNCH

On Saturday, April 18, 2026, the Eastern North Carolina Regional Skills Center transformed into a powerful space of connection, healing, and joy. Hosted by MENAC Inc., the highly anticipated Roses & Thorns Brunch brought together women, young ladies, and preteens from across Jacksonville for a transformative four-hour experience.

The free empowerment event was carefully designed to give local women a safe, supportive environment to share their real-life journeys.

The Highlights

- **Mentorship & Connection:** Generational gaps closed as women of all ages networked, offered mentorship, and lifted each other up.



- **Real Conversations:** Attendees openly discussed life's "thorns"—the painful trials, losses, and setbacks we all face—alongside the "roses"—our collective victories, growth, and beautiful milestones.
- **Exciting Giveaways:** The energy stayed high throughout the afternoon, capped off by multiple \$100 gift card giveaways to celebrate the community.
- **Delicious Brunch:** Guests enjoyed a beautifully curated brunch spread that fueled a day of deep bonding and networking.

Moving Forward Together

The room left filled with a renewed sense of purpose, confidence, and sisterhood. MENAC Inc. extended a heartfelt thank you to everyone who brought their authentic selves, vulnerable stories, and bright energy to the table. This event proved that while life will always have its thorns, we bloom much brighter when we support one another.

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