

BY HALEY LUNDEBY
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SPOTLIGHT ON: HALEY LUNDEBY
FROM IDAHO TO IMPACT: MY CHARLOTTE STORY



In three months, it will be eight years since I packed my car and drove the 2,000 miles from my home in northern Idaho to Charlotte. I didn't know a soul. No apartment. No roadmap. Just a start date and with a belief that I could build something meaningful.

Today, I'm a Finance & Strategy Analyst at Vanguard, co-chair of the [Supportive Housing Communities](#) (SHC) Young Professionals Board, a member of CRBA's Emerging Business Leaders (EBL) cohort, and just months away from completing my first year in [UNC Kenan-Flagler's Executive MBA program](#).

But titles don't tell the full story. Community does.

Finding Purpose at Vanguard

When I joined Vanguard, I was initially disappointed not to be working in Uptown in what I saw as 'the bustling big city'. That changed when I learned it's not about where you work — it's who you work with and why you show up.

Colleagues helped me navigate the city, grow professionally, and weather personal challenges. I learned about Vanguard's mission, "To take a stand for all investors, to treat them fairly, and to give them the best chance for investment success." I have seen this ring true time and time again as we focus on 'the 3C's' – clients, crew (our employees), and community. Working with people every day can be just a job – or something more.

Some coworkers have become lifelong friends. This June, I'll attend the fourth wedding of a group that bonded during the Pandemic — a reminder that shared purpose builds lasting connection.

Giving Back, Growing Forward

Two years ago, I spent a day volunteering at SHC simply because I saw a sign-up to join a group of Vanguard crew. What I saw — residents with a sense of community and support, mission-driven staff who brought positivity and laughter. What I heard – the power of SHC's mission to provide affordable housing to alleviate (chronic) homelessness and human suffering — moved me. I joined their new Young Professionals Board not long after, and today I serve as co-chair.

This week has been heavy. Disturbing messages of hate, a shaken sense of safety for some, and the mounting challenges faced by those who came here with a dream have left many feeling uncertain – even unwelcome. But in the face of that, I got to see something powerful: Charlotte showing up.

On Thursday evening at our second annual Brewers Ball, planned by SHC's YP Board and staff, the community came together – not just to raise funds, but to raise hope. Everyone deserves a place to call home, a future, and a place to belong. That's the Charlotte I know. That's the purpose that keeps me going.

Leading with Values

When I was nominated by Vanguard's NC Executive team for the EBL program, I was honored and knew I was about to embark on a season of growth. At the same time, I was preparing to start a new role at Vanguard and had recently begun the daunting two-year journey of the UNC Kenan-Flagler EMBA program.

In our first session – focused on leadership development, expanding our thinking, and sharing insights, we talked about our 'Workplace Big 5' personality profile and values-based leadership. I have always believed in showing up authentically, but this inspired me to reconnect to who I am and what I am here for.

That transformation into a fuller version of myself continued when our group selected to complete the group project which required volunteering at a non-profit and interviewing the CEO. The group enthusiastically agreed when I suggested SHC, where we sat down with CEO Laura Caldwell and spent time cleaning some common areas at McCreesh Place. Her message stuck with me: lead with purpose, bring your strengths and surround yourself with others who complement them, and say yes to the call – people recognize in you what you might not recognize in yourself.

That day, we didn't just serve, we connected. I know that I can call on my EBL peers anytime – for advice, support, or a shared mission.

Two and a half months away from finishing year one of my EMBA program, a successful spring of development for SHC, and seven months into my new role at Vanguard (and loving it!) I am more energized than ever. The friendships, the lessons, the challenges – it's everything I could've hoped for and more. While I hadn't planned to stay in Charlotte when I moved here, I am so glad that I did.

Looking Back, Moving Ahead

If I could show the 20-something woman from Idaho a glimpse of this life – the community, the resilience, the purpose, the grit – I would. But maybe it's better that she had to build it from scratch.

To anyone new to Charlotte: there's room for you here. Opportunities to lead, to serve, to belong. Find your community, love your neighbor, and be present. See you out there, Charlotte!

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