Welcome to LEAP!

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Dear LEAP friends,

In September of 2022, I laid out LEAP’s plans for the new fiscal year to our board and staff. I said then that after two years of growth, it would be a time to get better, not bigger. And wow, our team delivered. We have better programs for kids and families, better tools for our staff, and better partnerships that make us and our partners stronger.

Our curriculum and training team researched, designed, and implemented a new phonics based curriculum to help overcome the large literacy gaps exacerbated by COVID-19. Our programs team restarted our wilderness camping program for hundreds of LEAP children, building a first time partnership with the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Cross departmental teams built a new Salesforce based platform that we use to track children, attendance, and demographic data. New programs at the Q House include dance classes with New Haven Ballet and a summer evening family movie series attended by about 150 children, parents, and grandparents each week.

Just as important as we begin our new fiscal year is how many of our supporters have helped us be better. Friends of LEAP stepped in to repair our pool ceiling; purchase the materials, books, and laptops needed for phonics instruction; fill funding gaps as federal COVID stimulus dollars recede; and provide scholarships for LEAPers heading off to college.

While we remain big, serving more than 2,000 people last year – we have definitely become better. So, thank you for being part of the LEAP family and helping us be the best we can be.

Thank You,

Henry Fernandez

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In 1992, Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership, Inc. (LEAP) was founded by leading educators, students, and community activists in New Haven to address a need: they saw that youth and communities of color were systematically underserved and as a result faced barriers such as unequal educational opportunities and generational poverty. Thus, the founders of LEAP established a multi-tier mentorship model, free after-school and summer programs, and college preparation resources, all intentionally designed to address systemic inequalities.

LEAP believes young people in New Haven have the ability to be powerful leaders, inspiring role models, and strong mentors. LEAP’s mission is to develop the strengths and talents of young leaders who create and implement year-round, neighborhood-based programs designed to achieve positive outcomes for children living in high-poverty urban neighborhoods. We believe that the best people to support youth in a given community are other young people from that same community. These young people serve as role models and are empowered as leaders in their communities and beyond.

To allow youth to develop their leadership skills, LEAP uses a unique multi-tier mentorship model. This model includes a literacy and enrichment-focused children’s program for youth aged 7-12, a Leaders in Training program for youth aged 13-15, and employment, professional development, and peer support for young people aged 16-24 years old who are mentors, instructors, and counselors in the children’s program.

Since our founding over 30 years ago, LEAP has grown to become a trusted community institution serving and empowering over 1,300 local youth this year. We also have a large network of successful LEAP alumni currently serving as school teachers and principals, nonprofit executives, elected officials, business leaders, and community organizers.
2 Community Centers:

The Roslyn Milstein Meyer Community Center on Jefferson Street, where LEAP kids come to swim, dance, garden, cook, build friendships, and learn. The Jefferson Street location is also the home base for the Youth Development Program.

The Dixwell Q House Community Center in the historic Dixwell neighborhood is a LEAP site and a place where community members can attend events and take free classes in art, Zumba, fitness, cooking, dance and more.

1 goal of creating young leaders across New Haven!
LEAP's Impact 2023

Overall

Operating a multi-tiered mentorship program, where youth ages 7-24 grow and learn

#1 Employer of youth in New Haven

1,305 young people impacted

Youth Development Program

Training our youth to be leaders to prepare them for their future

15 Aquatics Staff

113 Junior Counselors (ages 16 to 18)

139 Leaders in Training (ages 13 to 15)
LEAP's Impact 2023

Children's Program

Strengthening the academic, emotional, and social development of our kids

1,561 Program seats filled across the fall/winter, spring, and summer sessions

952 Children ages 7-12 served (unduplicated)

Senior Counselors

Employing college students who serve as role models and community leaders

101 Senior Counselors from 16 different universities

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In the Children's Program, youth ages 7-12 explore opportunities that are often unavailable to them as a result of the systemic barriers that poverty creates. LEAP provides meaningful resources for children, allowing them to build new skills and expand on what they know. Children in our youth program enjoy literacy activities, swim instruction, gardening, cooking, dancing, art, and so much more. LEAP is purposefully structured so that children are surrounded by strong role models — college and high school students trained by LEAP as mentors and counselors. Following our mentorship model, many children who participate in LEAP grow up to become counselors themselves or full-time program staff. This allows for a close-knit LEAP family that forms a strong foundation for connection, growth, and confidence.

This past year, LEAP provided free after-school and summer programming to 952 children from six low-income New Haven neighborhoods, filling 1,561 program seats. 100% of LEAP children receive free or reduced school meals, an indicator of poverty or near-poverty status.
Though LEAPers participate in a wide variety of activities, LEAP places a special emphasis on literacy. During summer mornings and school-year afternoons, LEAPers learn through a literacy curriculum designed to build reading skills and critical thinking.

This past year, LEAP’s dedicated curriculum staff implemented a redesigned curriculum to better engage our children by including more culturally-relevant authors, activities, and themes that reflect the backgrounds and experiences of our LEAP kids. Themes in recent components included Black History Month, Family, Self-Care and Joy, and Women’s History Month.

This past summer, the curriculum was organized into five units based on the theme "All About Me & Society": Me, Myself, & I; Me & My Family; Me & My Community; My Country & Me; and My World, Your World, Our World. Although units are the same across all age groups, the books and activities within each unit vary to be age appropriate.

Our literacy curriculum also addresses the different learning styles of children in our program. For example, we offer visual and hands-on learning to complement their reading. In this way, LEAP empowers young people through literacy and encourages them to build a strong sense of self.
While LEAP is back to operating in our pre-pandemic format, our youth are still grappling with the devastating impacts of the pandemic, especially when it comes to their reading skills. Less than 30% of elementary school-aged children enrolled in New Haven Public Schools are reading at the appropriate grade level. In response to this literacy crisis, LEAP has launched our new phonics program.

After completing a successful pilot program during the spring component, all LEAPers ages 7-8 participated in the University of Florida Literacy Institute phonics program this summer. Children engaged in the phonics-specific program twice a week for 1.5 hours each day with small group work, individual tutoring, and computer-based programs. By incorporating different teaching tools like Lexia (also used in New Haven Public Schools) and gamifying the learning process, we help LEAP youth stay more engaged with literacy programming. This summer, 73% of the 7-8-year-old students improved in their ability to decode at least one or more sound patterns within words.
LEAP encourages children to experience the joy of reading at home! At Book Fairs held at each school-based site this summer, LEAP kids got to choose up to eight brand new age-appropriate books to take home and build their home libraries. When children have the freedom to select their own books, they develop a love for reading and enjoy the experience more.

LEAPers also participated in Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time, encouraging them to practice reading at home to become avid readers on their own.

Additionally, LEAP kids participated in engaging activities related to the themes of the books. For example, during the Me & My Family unit, our 7-8-year-olds read *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* by Sara O’Leary. After reading the book, the LEAPers drew the people they consider their families and built houses around them using popsicle sticks. The goal of this activity was to reinforce the lessons learned about how a family can be so much more than just a mom, dad, and kids.

We are so excited that LEAPers are expanding their at-home libraries so that reading can be a fun activity both at LEAP and at home with their families.
At LEAP, children participate in a wealth of enrichment activities that we call “resources,” including swimming, African dance and drumming, yoga, chess, photography, healthy cooking, gardening, Capoeira, puppet theater, and more.

Trained LEAP staff provide instruction for swimming at our Roslyn Milstein Myer Community Center. Additionally, LEAP partners with expert instructors and local organizations such as the Girl Scouts of Connecticut, The Breed Academy School for Music and the Arts, and Smiling Spirit Yoga to teach unique resources. At LEAP, we aim to educate and nurture children both in and out of the classroom by exposing them to hands-on, diverse learning experiences.
LEAP counselors take their students on adventures all across New Haven to explore, examine, and experience all that the city offers. At the end of summer programming, LEAPers go on longer trips called journeys outside of New Haven!

Counselor-led trips included mini adventures around the city of New Haven to Lighthouse Point Park, the Yale Art Gallery, splash pads, bowling, the movie theater, and more! Journeys relate to the LEAP curriculum and reinforce material LEAP kids learned over the summer. These Journeys allow them to have new experiences and see unfamiliar places.

Our 7-8-year-olds ventured to the Connecticut Science Center in Hartford, where they learned about space, health, physics, and the environment. Our 9-10-year-olds explored the Bronx Zoo, where they saw animals such as lions, tigers, and bears.
Children's Program Impact

Child Survey Results

- I am healthier or more active because of LEAP. 76%
- Participation in LEAP has made my reading better. 68%

Parent Survey Results

- I trust LEAP to keep my child/children safe. 84%
- I would recommend LEAP to other families. 90%
Michaela is ten years old. She joined LEAP at the age of seven, making this her third year as a LEAPer. Her favorite thing about LEAP is the trips. Michaela loves having the opportunity to go to places like the beach, the movies, and the library. Her favorite trip is camping; she excitedly looks forward to this during her summers at LEAP.

Michaela feels as though LEAP’s curriculum helps her with school, aligning with the essence of what we try to achieve with every student. She describes how her counselors have helped improve her academic abilities: “[The counselors] do curriculum because we go back to school soon, and they said they want us to be smart when we go back to school. That’s what I like.” Michaela also says that LEAP helped her learn how to focus and pay attention in school and while reading. While Michaela’s favorite thing about school is math, she learned to love reading as well.

LEAP places a strong emphasis on retention from component to component for LEAPers and counselors. Michaela, like other LEAPers, loves this part of LEAP as they “keep getting the same counselors,” thus enabling LEAPers of all ages to form meaningful relationships with one another.
This summer, LEAP campers turned into *wilderness* campers as they once again could travel into the woods for summer camping trips to sites like Sleeping Giant and Putnam Memorial State Park. We appreciate the partnerships with the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for large spaces for dozens of tents, the Appalachian Mountain Club for training counselors, and the Peabody Museum for helping to teach students about the ecosystems they explored. Through counselor-led trips, students were encouraged to explore and interact with their surroundings to take full advantage of the time spent outside. Our adventurous campers were able to appreciate all of the flora and fauna around them!

Donovan, a LEAPer going into 6th grade, was excited to share his experience. Though he has been at LEAP for three years, this was his first time camping, and he wasn’t sure what to expect. During the day, his group played activities like volleyball and baseball. By night, they played flashlight tag and gathered around the campfire to roast s'mores. He mentioned that his “favorite thing was playing sports in nature.”

The children stayed in tents overnight to immerse themselves in the full forest experience. While it was intimidating at first, Donovan expressed that he was extremely happy he went and that he can’t wait to do it again next year.
Expos

The LEAP Expos take place on the final day of the program, providing an opportunity for students to celebrate with their families and display all the activities and projects they have been working on for the whole program. It is a chance for students and counselors to showcase their achievements during the program. The Expo serves as a platform for students to reflect on their experiences and practice their presentation skills.

The students made posters to display their projects and organized presentations in the auditorium for all students to see. This year, LEAP participants showcased various talents, such as a yoga storytelling performance, hip-hop dance, science experiments, and spoken word poetry.

The auditorium was filled with enthusiasm as students presented their hard work and bravery in front of their peers. The Expos were the best way to conclude busy seasons full of fun and learning.
Youth Development

LEAP is committed to preparing our youth to be strong leaders, capable of mentoring LEAP children and strengthening their communities and beyond. Our Youth Development program includes our Leaders in Training (LITs), who are 13-15 years old, and our Junior Counselors (JCs), who are high school students 16-18 years old. This year, LEAP expanded, serving 139 LITs and employing 113 JCs.

Leaders in Training (LITs): Our LITs are transitioning from camper to counselor and middle to high school. As a result, their curriculum is designed to consider the social and educational development needs of their age group while also preparing them to take on leadership roles in their community. LITs participate in workshops that provide them with tools to problem-solve issues teenagers face, make informed decisions around their own health and sexuality, and set goals for their future. These tools allow them to connect more deeply and meaningfully with their peers and with their community. Our eldest LITs participate in internships at LEAP sites, acting in similar roles to our counselors. LITs are based at our Roslyn Milstein Myer Community Center using the LEAP Computer Learning Center (LCLC), the garden, the pool, and our gym. Over the summer, they read Flyy Girls: Micah: The Good Girl by Ashley Woodfolk, and Freedom's Children by Ellen Levine. LITs also participated in cooking classes, swimming, gardening, and even an overnight trip to Washington D.C.

Junior Counselors (JCs): Our JCs are older high school students. They work under the supervision of Senior Counselors who mentor them as they lead groups of LEAP children. JCs are given a significant amount of responsibility and receive training to be successful in their roles. Our JCs also receive resources such as college counseling, financial literacy workshops, and academic coaching. This summer, 84% of our Junior Counselors were former LEAP kids, LITs, and/or returning counselors.
Our Youth Development Program strives to prepare our young people for their futures. Part of this is ensuring that they can pursue higher education. Our college access programming for LITs and JCs includes college essay writing workshops, career fairs, college advising, resume writing, and financial aid training for parents.

LEAP also awards $13,000 in scholarships to our youth to acknowledge and celebrate their dedication and service to our LEAP community. In 2023, seven LEAP counselors received the Regina Winters Scholarship, Steifel Williams Family Scholarship, Jay Bovilsky Scholarship, and the inaugural Annie B. Veale Scholarship created to honor the late Mrs. V, LEAP’s longtime receptionist.

Of our seniors, 100% graduated on time, 19 will be matriculating to 2- or 4-year colleges in the fall, 2 are going to trade school, and 2 are entering the military. They will attend a broad range of schools, including Cornell University, the University of Connecticut, Howard University, Virginia State University, and more. We are eager to see their development and progression.
The cornerstone of our college access program is our free college tours. We ensure all our counselors in high school have the opportunity to experience the variety of colleges and universities they could attend to help them imagine their possible future. This fall, we added a local college tour, bringing 27 students to visit Springfield College and Western New England College.

In the spring, 41 LEAP high school students, along with LEAP staff as chaperones, went on an in-person week-long free College Tour to Washington D.C. and Georgia. They visited 9 colleges and universities including both HBCUs and PWIs that range in size and setting: Howard University, Fort Valley State University, University of Georgia, Clark Atlanta University, Georgia State University, Clayton State University, Emory University, Morris Brown College, and Morehouse College. Tours at Howard University and Clark Atlanta University were led by current LEAP Senior Counselors who are students there.

Junior Counselor, Nyree Lawson, had not previously considered going to college outside of the state of Connecticut. Lawson’s college tour experience has led her to consider Morris Brown College, her personal favorite, as a potential school to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. This decision was heavily influenced by her time mentoring LEAP children.
The LEAP Career Fair was a great success with 16 professionals participating. The event was designed to give counselors exposure to different possible career paths and inspire them to consider potential future occupations. Professionals from a diverse array of industries and fields gathered in the Q House to share their experiences including an architect, a movie set designer, a juvenile probation officer, a doctor, a therapist, and many more.

Throughout the event, students cycled through different tables and spoke to each of the panelists one-on-one to learn more about their work. The intimate nature of the set-up allowed counselors to ask personalized questions and receive advice about their own career plans. This kind of experience is invaluable in leading to new interests and exploration.

This exploration was paired throughout the year with practical workshops on writing college essays, practicing job interviews, creating resumes, and finding financial aid and scholarships. LEAP’s new Academic Success Coordinator, Alexis Christy, gives one-on-one support to our counselors relating to academics, their college process, and career goals.
This year, our Leaders In Training (LITs) traveled to Washington D.C. overnight and went camping at Putnam Memorial State Park. While in Washington D.C., they visited the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, and the International Spy Museum. LITs also braved the wilderness at Putnam Memorial State Park, where they pitched tents, cooked over a campfire, and became one with nature.

Outdoor education and overnight trips are critical for advancing our young leaders’ independence and broadening their experiences. Additionally, these opportunities are designed to complement their curriculum with historical and artistic explorations. In the past, LIT overnight journeys have included trips to Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and New York.
Youth Development Impact
13-15 year old Leaders in Training (LITs)

I am on track to graduate on time. **90%**

I have developed strong leadership and mentoring skills as a LIT **67%**

I built stronger social and emotional skills in the LIT program and engaged positively with my peers. **70%**

LEAP has given me opportunities to improve my personal and professional development and apply acquired skills. **60%**
Meet a Leader in Training: Adama

Since he was a young child, Adama always considered himself better at math than reading. He enjoys how math feels similar to a puzzle with different moving pieces, where one has to rearrange these pieces to create the proper picture, or in this case, solution. “Math is hard, but it’s fun to learn,” he says, because “there are games in math.” His favorite part is how proud he feels after solving a difficult question.

As a budding mathematician, he did not have as much interest in reading – until LEAP. Adama became a student at LEAP at age seven and has attended every summer since. Now, he is entering high school and is grateful for all of the academic exposure that LEAP has been able to provide to him. “Ever since I came to LEAP, I started to read more,” he remarks. He has started to read for fun in his free time instead of just in school for assignments.

Not only has LEAP broadened his interests, but it also has given him a space to explore new hobbies and activities he would not otherwise have had the chance to try out. His favorite special activity from past years has been the annual camping trip to the forest. On a weekly basis, he loves playing basketball with his friends to show off his skills and going swimming on Thursdays.

Adama plans to stay at LEAP until he becomes a counselor. He wants to stay connected to the community and continue being part of the program that has shaped so many of his summers!
Meet a Junior Counselor: Ashley

Ashley, a recent high school graduate, began her position as a counselor in February of 2022.

Ashley started working at LEAP “because it was a rough time at home and [she] needed to help out [financially].” She was hoping to “have that little sister bond that [she’s] never had.” Ashley continues to return to LEAP because she “really enjoys the kids learning from [her] and being the example that they don’t really have much of at home.”

In addition to extending wisdom to LEAPers, Ashley has also learned a substantial amount of leadership skills in her position as a counselor. Ashley “was shy before LEAP and didn’t really know how to lead.” Ashley vividly remembers that during her first few months as a counselor, the kids were not engaged in the material. Aiming to make a difference, “[she] wanted to be the leader to break the boring thoughts [the students] had about LEAP so they could see it in a more positive light.” Ashley said she was motivated by her site coordinator, who always said, “you have to be corny to lead.”

Ashley wants to keep a strong relationship with LEAP. She says “I’m a community person and I love when people come together. I love morning meetings when we come together and bring all the energy.” To Ashley, “LEAP is home.”
Senior Counselors

Our Senior Counselors (SCs) are college students who are responsible for overseeing children grouped by age and gender. They receive extensive training to prepare them for the tremendous responsibilities of teaching, inspiring, and caring for children, as well as mentoring the Junior Counselors (JCs) with whom they partner. Their preparation includes training in literacy education, CPR, conflict resolution, classroom management, and trauma-informed education. As part of their holistic development, SCs are also provided with workshops and sessions on topics ranging from poetry to financial literacy. Through our unique model, SCs gain experience in a substantial leadership role while receiving support from their supervisors.

At LEAP, we provide opportunities for the younger generation to enhance their skills and take on increased responsibility and leadership positions. Our success is reflected in our high retention rate. In the summer of 2023, we had 96 SCs, and 63 of them were returning counselors. Over the course of the whole year, LEAP employed 101 young adults from 16 universities.
Senior Counselor Impact

I feel that I have been a successful mentor to my students. **87%**

Working at LEAP helped prepare me for future careers. **65%**

Working at LEAP has been financially helpful for me and/or my family. **77%**

Working at LEAP helped prepare me to be a leader in the community. **89%**
Meet a Senior Counselor: Jaquan

Jaquan, a student at the University of New Haven, is in his first year as a LEAP counselor. Jaquan is passionate about studying criminal justice with a concentration in juvenile justice. Jaquan wanted to work as a counselor because in the neighborhood he lives in, “a lot of kids get in trouble because they don’t have a role model, and [he] wants to be that for somebody.”

His favorite aspect of being a counselor is “teaching [the LEAPers] right from wrong and being like an older brother to them.” When explaining his approach to mediate conflict or extend wisdom to LEAPers, Jaquan says “you have to remember that you were once their age and you used to act the same way.” He believes that putting himself in their shoes enhances his leadership capabilities. Jaquan’s desire to guide the kids down the right path stems from his own personal experience as he says “I know how easy it is to go down the wrong path...I want to prevent that” with other kids.

As a counselor, Jaquan has the opportunity to share his passions with LEAP kids. Jaquan says, “I’m an athlete so I help them out with a lot of sports...advice and workouts.” In fact, his group is quite athletic, and they love playing basketball. Jaquan supplements his LEAPers’ athletic endeavors by encouraging them to read. He says, “Right now we’re reading a book about kids growing up in the segregation era...a couple of them really like to read and then writing about them.”
LEAP Community Center

At LEAP’s Roslyn Milstein Meyer Community Center at 31 Jefferson Street, LEAPers have a space of their own equipped with a garden, gym, pool, computer learning center, kitchen, reading corner, and dance studio, amongst other learning spaces.

The Community Center is the home base for LEAP’s activities and operations. The Leaders in Training (ages 13 – 15) receive academic enrichment, counseling, and peer support onsite. The LEAP children visit from their school-based sites to participate in enrichment activities such as swimming. The Roslyn Milstein Meyer Community Center also houses the offices of LEAP’s full-time staff and is where some of our professional development takes place, including LEAP’s extensive counselor training throughout the year.
Community Center $1.9 Million Grant

In May of 2023, LEAP received a federal HUD Community Project Funding grant of $1.9 million dollars for renovations and building improvements of the Roslyn Milstein Meyer Community Center. Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro advocated for LEAP as a recipient of the grant and has been an essential supporter of LEAP’s free programs. Congresswoman DeLauro has a special connection to the space that has always been used for young people - her father had spent time in the 108-year-old building when it was originally used as a Boys Club.

The grant will be used for capital improvements to the building, including improvements to the indoor pool, increasing accessibility, and renovating the teaching kitchen and other student spaces. The project is expected to significantly improve the building’s functionality for both staff and students, and have a major impact on LEAP’s primary headquarters.
For many young people, LEAP is the initial and sometimes only chance to learn to swim. When coming from a family where neither parent knows how to swim, there is only a 13% chance that a child will learn to swim during their lifetime (USA Swimming). Drowning is the second leading cause of death for children, with approximately three children dying daily (CDC). This number is even more alarming for African American children, who collectively die at rates 5.5 times higher than white children (CDC). At LEAP, we seek to change this statistic by providing children with swimming lessons in our pool as part of our after-school and summer programs.

After reopening the pool at LEAP last summer, our aquatics program has continued to grow in capacity. Under the direction of Aquatics Director, Ryan Rooks, we have increased our aquatics staff to now include seven swim instructors and eight lifeguards. In addition to our swim lessons for LEAP students, LEAP has re-started offering low-cost swim lessons to anyone in the New Haven community to address the need for more access to affordable aquatics programs and swimming lessons.
LEAP Garden

During the summer, LEAP students are busy tending to the Roslyn Milstein Meyer Community Center garden, complete with a gazebo and a wide variety of vegetables, medicinal plants, and butterfly bushes. Campers work together to cultivate their plants - planting from seeds, watering, and using compost to help the soil and see them grow throughout the year. Since the garden’s inauguration, it has become a flourishing space for flora and fauna and the perfect practice for students to use their green thumb.

Their talents as budding farmers have allowed all the fruits, vegetables, and flowers in the garden to thrive. Some of the plants include sunflowers, tomatoes, artichokes, bok choy, and horseradish. The skills students learn from gardening can inspire them to grow their own food and gain a hands-on lesson in sustainability while spending time outside.

Volunteers, mainly from the Garden Club of New Haven, come throughout the year to maintain the garden’s infrastructure and conduct some of the larger repairs. Through this community effort, the garden is maintained as a vibrant space full of life and delicious food.
This year, the Q House has been bustling with community activities, events, and LEAP programming. Since the new Q House building opened in 2021, it has become a thriving hub for the arts, cultural connections, and entrepreneurship.

For example, some of the activities hosted over the past year include summer movie nights, a spoken word open mic, and open gym sessions for youth. In February, the Q House celebrated Black History Month with student dancers from Betsy Ross Magnet School and a visual art showcase, along with a reunion of local businesses with a food banquet. Students at the New Haven Ballet put on the Nutcracker in the Q House with a spectacular performance and incredible set design. For the holidays, there was a Thanksgiving Day of Joy and a toy gift distribution by Avelo Airlines.

One of the biggest developments at the Q House is the new weekly Farmer’s Markets on the plaza in the afternoon. Vendors gather outside to showcase their homemade (or homegrown) goods and share their products; among some of the sellers are Tierra Soap Co., Pedals, and Massaro Community Farm. To make these products more accessible, CitySeed offers tokens to cover the price of the products by half – incentivizing both vendors and community members to come together and support local businesses.
Julia's Run

Julia's Run is a 5K run in April that celebrates the memory of Julia Rusinek. The run combines Julia's passion for running with her commitment to making a difference in the lives of children. This year, Julia's Run took place in the scenic Edgewood Park, just off Whalley Ave in New Haven’s Westville neighborhood. While rain threatened to interrupt the run, our brave community members rallied and powered through. 100% of proceeds from the event benefit LEAP, and every year, you can find LEAP staff counselors and children volunteering or running in the race.

Read-In on the Green

LEAP's annual Read-In in July is part of our summer literacy curriculum to support the reading development of youth in our children’s program over the summer. While this event is typically held on the Green, due to the rain this year, it was held in all of the LEAP school sites. Almost 800 LEAPers gathered together with over 60 volunteers who shared their love of reading by picking out books to read to small groups. The community bonding and learning experience was enjoyed by both adults and children.
The LEAP Year Event is an annual occasion held on the last Thursday of February. It features great food and meaningful discussions led by esteemed speakers. Due to the pandemic, this year's event had a virtual cocktail reception that featured speeches from our counselors, three LEAP Community Service award recipients, and a LEAP update from Henry Fernandez, followed by an in-person dinner or a group conversation through Zoom. Over 550 community members joined us for our 28th annual LEAP Year Event, raising over $350,000 for LEAP programming. In addition, LEAP Year Event supported local eateries by purchasing 63 meals from Caffe Bravo, Sandra’s Next Generation, September in Bangkok, and Union League.

LEAP Year Event Dinner Hosts

Rick & Nancy Antle
Bill Aseltyne & Jeff Stryke
Andrea & Jeremy Asnes
Rita Berkson & Randy Reinhold
Renu & Dowin Boatright
Allie V. Perry & Charlie Pillsbury
Roxanne & Kevin Coady
Monja Endicott & Petra Frisell
Lely & David Evans
Cynthia Farrar & Paul Kennedy
Pat & Davis Gammon
Shelley & Gordon Geballe
Miriam Gohara & Marcus McFerren
Gisela & Richard Goldstein
Alva Greenberg

Susan Kerley
Christine Kim & Doug Kysar
Meg & George Knight
Kasia Lipska & Jake Halpern
Sue McDonald & Corey Stone
Ruby Melton & Gail McAvay
Celeste & Stephen Myers
Debra & Ron Nudel
Patricia Rossi & Robert King
Lynne & Mark Schpero
Francine Farkas Sears
D. Ellen Shuman & Douglas Rae
Clifton Watson
Maureen Weaver & Rob Leighton

LEAP Year Event Guests of Honor

Michelle Wilde Anderson
Deborah Archer
Emily Bazelon & Ross Douthat
Lary Bloom
Jennifer Clair, Home Cooking NYC
Nicholas Dawidoff
Kismet Douglass, Maxine Harris & Cortney Renton
Reginald Dwayne Betts
The Elm City Quintet
Beverly Gage
Anthony McDonald & Anthony Lupinacci

Bill McKibben & Mary Evelyn Tucker
Michael Morand
Priyamvada Natarajan
Lisa Sanders
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Emily Wang & Dowin Boatright
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The incredible support we have from this community allows us to offer our programming free to all participants while simultaneously being one of the largest employers of youth in New Haven. We increasingly rely on individuals to help support our mission so we can continue to improve our programming and serve at least as many youth as we have in the past.

**Fiscal Year 2023 Total Expenditures: $5,475,357**

**INCOME**
- Individuals: 37%
- Private and Corporate Foundations: 23%
- Government: 39%

**EXPENSES**
- Administration: 6%
- Fundraising: 9%
- Programming for children and youth: 85%
- Private and Corporate Foundations: 23%
- Government: 39%
- Individuals: 37%
Meet Our Staff

In addition to our Junior and Senior Counselors, LEAP has a dedicated full-time staff with offices at our Roslyn Milstein Meyer Community Center at 31 Jefferson Street. Lists staff in August 2023

Executive Director
Henry Fernandez

Chief of Staff
Yakeita Robinson

Deputy Chief of Staff
Tina Sapiente

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Laura Lindgren

Director of Finance
Rachel Kline Brown

Director of Development and Communications
Summer Choate

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Kenneth Notarino-Jeffrey

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Grant Writer
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Kayla Penza

Curriculum and Training Coordinator
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Frankie Roman

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Aysia Reese

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Alexis Christy

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Tony Evans

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Marvin Parker

Deputy Director of the Q House
Robin Williams

Q House Kitchens Operations Manager
Our Partners

LEAP has numerous community partnerships that enable us to provide free and high-quality programs for young people. Programs such as the Yale Focus Pre-Orientation Program, the Yale Dwight Hall Summer Fellowship, and the University of New Haven’s Community Work Study Program help connect passionate interns to paid opportunities in LEAP’s office. New Haven Public Schools provide free classroom space in our seven school sites. CT Department of Transportation provides free bus passes for all children and counselors so that students can move throughout the city to do their activities.

Our partners provide support at our annual events, workshops at the LEAP Community Center, and a regular curriculum of activities – such as Smiling Spirit yoga classes for all ages and Arts in CT Corps arts workshops – for children every week. These partnerships play a critical role in connecting young people from New Haven’s underserved communities with the city’s rich cultural and educational resources.

LEAP’s Community Partners

- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Arts Simplicated
- Arts in CT Corps
- B & B Transportation
- Black Pre-Health at Yale
- Boundless Literacy
- Bradley Street Bicycle Co-op
- Breed Academy
- Capoeira Esperanca
- CitySeed
- Citywide Youth Coalition Inc.
- David Dorfman Dance Company
- Delta Phi Basileus Sorority
- Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
- Dixwell Avenue Congregational UCC
- Drums No Guns Commission, Inc.
- Earl Ali-Randall
- Eighty-Seven Pixels Photography
- Elm City Communities
- Gather New Haven
- Garden Club of New Haven
- Girl Scouts of America
- DJ Herman Ham
- Higher Heights Youth
- Empowerment Program
- IYABARTS Puppetry
- Je T’aime Cupcakes and Cocktails
- Jack and Jill of America, New Haven Chapter
- Kamron Samuels, Artist
- Karla Miller Yoga
- The Keeper Archive
- Koffee Katering
- Kulimushi Barongozi, Artist
- Lauren Little Edutainment
- Momma Kiss Kitchen
- Melting Pot Rhythms
- New Haven Ballet
- New Haven Coalition for Active Transportation
- New Haven Hiring Initiative
- New Haven Public Schools
- New Haven Reads
- New Haven Tutoring Initiative
- New HYTES
- North Haven Racquet Club
- Judy Sirota Rosenthal Photography
- Smiling Spirit Yoga
- Sportsometry
- TJAY Autism Foundation
- Triangle Community Center
- United Way of Greater New Haven
- Yale Center for British Arts
- Yale Peabody Museum SciCORPS
- Yale New Haven Hospital
- Youth Entrepreneurs Inc.
...and more!
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We gratefully acknowledge our donors who made contributions to LEAP between September 1, 2022, and August 31, 2023. If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, please accept our apologies and notify Rachel, our Director of Development and Communications, at rklinebrown@leapforkids.org.

* Multi-year pledge  † 10+ year donor  ** Monthly donor  ‡ 25+ year donor

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