



SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2 *LEAPers Return to Nature For Overnight Camping*
- 3 *Mental Health, On Site & In Reach*
- 4 *Learning Beyond the Classroom*

Executive Director's Note

Reflecting on a record-breaking summer made possible by your support.

Dear LEAP Friends,

You made a lot happen this summer!

LEAP's camp served a record-breaking 900+ children across eight sites, expanding capacity because we knew funding cuts to other programs would shrink summer opportunities. 200 teenagers and young adults – many LEAP alumni – worked as counselors and program staff. Even with expansion, hundreds remained on our waitlist—demonstrating both community trust and growing need.

Cesar Chavez said, "Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own." This spirit guided our community partnerships this summer. LEAP operated three pools where LEAP instructors taught 900 LEAPers plus 120

children from the City's PAL program. 70 volunteer readers made possible our 23rd Annual Read-In on the New Haven Green, while our collaboration with Camp Cedarcrest gave children transformative outdoor experiences—many camping for the first time.

These achievements come as LEAP faces over \$1 million in federal funding cuts. Now more than ever, we're dependent on local allies who understand investing in young people builds our community's future.

Your support enables us to stand with children and families during uncertain times while nurturing the next generation of leaders.

Henry Fernandez

Executive Director



The Fun Behind the Hard Work



Counselors gather at the Dixwell Q House for a "Glow in the Dark Party."

This summer, our dedicated high school and college-aged counselors went above and beyond to make the program a success. To show our gratitude and give them a chance to unwind, we brought back an old LEAP tradition called, "Counselor Night Out," a weekly event where they can hang out in a safe and fun space outside of their work duties.

Each week, two of our sites teamed up to plan a themed evening of entertainment. They had a blast with a variety of themes, from a classic Backyard Barbecue to a vibrant Glow in the Dark Party. It was beautiful to see our counselors connecting, laughing, and making memories. They spent their evenings playing basketball, dancing, and enjoying delicious food.

This time was a wonderful opportunity for them to build stronger bonds and create a supportive community, making our LEAP family even stronger.



LEAPers visit a nearby park to play basketball.



Students show off their self-portrait masks.



Making Waves

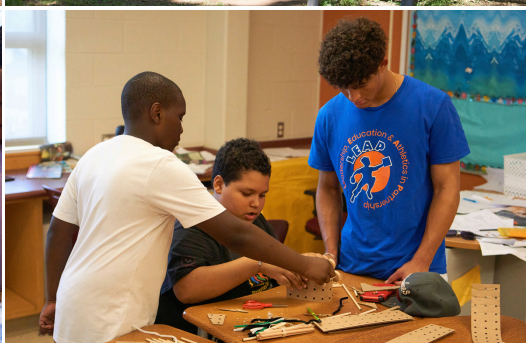
Hundreds of LEAPers learn how to swim this summer.

This summer, LEAP expanded its long-running swim program to three neighborhood pools: the LEAP Community Center at 31 Jefferson Street, the YMCA on Howe Street, and—for the first time—John S. Martinez School in Fair Haven. Over 900 LEAPers and Leaders in Training (LITs) took part in free lessons designed to build confidence and teach kids how to swim.

Instructors, many of them local teens, completed two weeks of training and led daily 45-minute sessions in small groups. Elvert Eden, LEAP's Aquatics Director, ensured every swimmer had access to essentials like swim caps, goggles, and towels.

Eight-year-old Tylon proudly floated on his back, saying, "Swimming can be fun." His classmate Marielena added, "Stay calm," when asked how she keeps going.

This fall, LEAP will continue swim lessons and family open-swim nights—keeping the momentum going beyond summer.



LEAPers Return to Nature For Overnight Camping

Our youngest campers are finally sleeping under the stars again.

After years of hiking day trips, LEAP is thrilled to announce the return of overnight camping for our 7-8-year-old LEAPers! For the first time since the pandemic, they were able to experience the full joy of camping: exploring the woods, playing games, and gathering around campfires.

For seven-year-old Mason, this was his first camping trip ever, and he was full of curiosity. The new environment was a source of wonder, and he spent his free time near the cabins searching for "weird bugs and cool rocks."

This experience was made possible through the partnerships with Camp Cedarcrest and the Yale Peabody Museum, who provided fun, educational activities and helped foster a deep love of nature in our young adventurers.



Mason and his counselor Tristin.



LEAPers alongside the Peabody Museum staff after completing an obstacle course.



Swim instructor teaches a student how to flutter kick.



Marielena, one of the many LEAPers who learned how to swim.

Mental Health, On Site & In Reach

LEAP expands mental health support with social workers at every site.

Led by LEAP's Clinical Coordinator, Chantalle Martin, a former LIT herself, our Social Worker team made a powerful difference during our biggest summer ever. With record enrollment, LEAP met children and families where they are and ensured every child had access to the support they deserved.

This year, for the first time, each of our eight summer sites had its own social worker. Some providers from the team returned from last summer, showing their strong commitment to LEAP's mission and the youth we serve, and the results were inspiring.

Social workers facilitated over 100 groups using the Wayfinder Social Emotional Learning

Curriculum, provided 1:1 check-ins, maintained strong communication with parents, and introduced calming corners for de-escalation. They responded to crises, offered case management, modeled positive strategies for counselors, and led trainings that supported both youth and staff development.

Survey results show the difference this made: 95% of LITs said the program positively impacted their mental health, and 83% of LEAPers reported that LEAP helped them feel good or very good about themselves.

As current funding sunsets, we remain committed to many more summers where every child has the tools, care, and confidence to thrive.

JOIN US TODAY:

Ways to Give



Monthly Donations

Your consistent support fuels our programs year-round.



Donor-Advised Funds (DAF)

Recommend a grant from your DAF to make an impact.



Qualified Charitable Distributions (RMD)

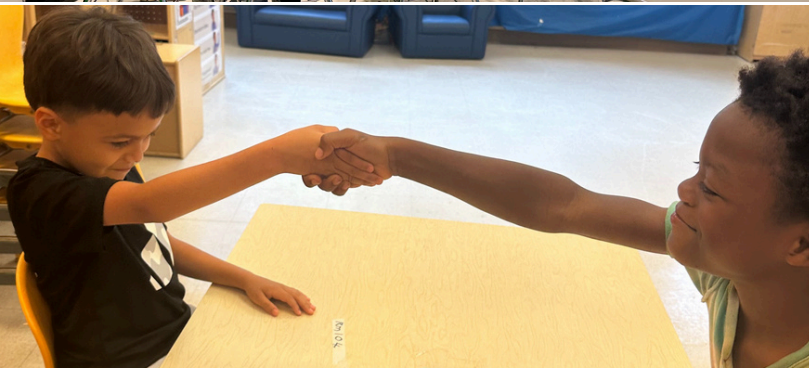
Give directly from your IRA and reduce your taxable income.



Corporate Matching

Double your impact if your employer matches charitable gifts.

www.leapforkids.org/donate



Creating a New Haven for Our Children

Leadership, Education and Athletics in Partnership, Inc.

31 Jefferson Street

New Haven, CT 06511

Phone: (203) 773-0770

Fax: (203) 773 - 1695

www.leapforkids.org



@Leap, Inc.



@LEAPforkids



@LEAPforkids



Scan me with your
smartphone to donate to
LEAP today!

Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

New Haven, CT

Permit No. 442

Address Service Requested

LEAP Board of Directors

Chair

Tai Richardson

Vice Chair

Adriana Arreola Joseph

Immediate Past Chair

Ann Baker Pepe

Treasurer

Susan Biel Kerley

Secretary

Cynthia Mann

Co-Founders, Past Charis

Roslyn Milstein Meyer and Anne Tyler Calabresi

Directors

Rick Antle, Marcus McFerren, Ken

Russell, Alexis Smith, Deborah

Stanley-McAulay, Clifton Watson,

Stephen Wizner

Emeritus

Honorable William Dyson

Jerome Harris Meyer

Executive Director

Henry Fernandez

THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT GRANTORS!

Bill Graustein • Connecticut State Department of Education • Taco Bell Foundation • TD Charitable Foundation • The Barnes Foundation • The Carolyn Foundation • The Cyrus M. Quigley Foundation • The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation • The Lewis G. Schaeneman, Jr. Foundation • The Nellie Mae Education Foundation • Town Fair Tire Foundation • United Way of Greater New Haven

4



Students receive an art lesson at the YCBA.



LEAPers and their counselors visit the Yale Peabody Museum.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

LEAP partners with Yale museums to provide hands-on learning.

This summer, we've worked to further strengthen our long-standing partnerships with Yale's Art Museums, the Eli Whitney Museum, and the Peabody Museum, implementing a variety of strategies to provide a more effective, educational trip to each museum.

Counselors visited many of our partnered museums at the start of the summer, learning about the content and highlights of each museum and working with their educators to develop specialized trip structures and tour curriculum

for our LEAPers, allowing counselors to better lead their trips and kids to learn in an environment made to enhance their education.

At each museum, kids engaged in museum-specific activities, allowing them to learn through hands-on experience; Yale Art Gallery attendees were challenged to sketch an object through only their partner's description, while YCBA goers assigned real-life sounds to different qualities of a painting, like thunder or blacksmithing.

Gio, a Senior Counselor who led one of our many museum trips, believes that trips like these "motivate our LEAPers towards what they want to do when they grow up."