



LEAP Newsletter

Summer 2020

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The summer of 2020 will be a touchstone for all of us years from now as we look back on how we weathered the global pandemic.

For hundreds of our young people, they will remember that they were in LEAP. We managed to run hybrid in-person and virtual programs at six locations with hundreds of children, teens and young adult counselors. It was a major feat that required weekly COVID-19 testing of staff and counselors, daily temperature checks, everyone in masks all day and tents so that we could operate outside where the risk was at its lowest. Parents trusted us to keep their children safe.

Our staff developed new training and safety procedures. The New Haven Public Schools provided outdoor and indoor (for rainy days) space, custodians, and security guards. The Fair Haven Community Health Center provided hundreds of COVID-19 tests and turned around results within 48 hours. Our counselors

demonstrated creativity and courage.


In addition to supporting new PPE expenses, covered the costs for our new investments in helping families with food vouchers, laptops for children and rent support. Our long time donors stepped up in a big way, but so did new supporters, including students in New Haven African American fraternities and others on Yale's gymnastics, field hockey, softball, lacrosse and even ultimate frisbee teams.

During these difficult times, it is important to remember that we are all stronger when we come together. It's only then that we can Create A New Haven for our Children.

Sincerely,

Henry Fernandez, Executive Director

LEAP'S SUMMER 2020 IMPACT

97% 
of LITs could talk to their counselor about what's on their mind.

89% 
of parents trusted LEAP to keep their child safe.

90% 
of senior counselors felt that LEAP has prepared them to be leaders.

94% 
of LEAP children felt happier by being at LEAP.

Against All Odds, A Triumphant Summer!

This summer, both LEAP and the communities that we serve overcame a tremendous challenge: we modified our summer program to deliver a meaningful and enriching summer experience for kids and counselors alike, while ensuring that we kept our communities safe from COVID-19. LEAP successfully pioneered a hybrid in-person and virtual program, which we will use as a model for our Fall and Spring sessions.

During our outdoor in-person programming, we read and played together as always, while following rigorous sanitation and social distancing guidelines. Meanwhile, participants of our virtual sessions engaged in online literacy activities, along with counselor-designed activities such as virtual field trips and journaling. LEAP would like to give special shoutouts to our LEAPers, their families, our excellent staff, and our amazing donors for helping us put on another amazing LEAP summer!



Part of the Family



This summer has been like no other, and for many families, LEAP played a critical role. Mother, activist, and community organizer Ta'LannaMonique Miller searched for a summer program that would best serve her children. It was LEAP's commitment to safety that made her feel confident sending them to camp.

"I think that they did a good job. I paid attention to the fact that everyone had masks, and [LEAP] provided masks and did temperature checks... I appreciated that everyone was outside and in smaller groups. I paid attention to those things so I was relieved to see their safety precautions."

"They [her children: Cameron and Chloe] loved it, and I loved it too because it gave them something to do both in and outside the house. My kids made it a point to tell me, 'Please make sure you come late, so we are the last kids there.'" Through such challenging times, LEAP continues to be committed

to helping relieve the added stress on families by providing free childcare, academic enrichment, and emergency food, rent, and technology grants to parents like Ta'LannaMonique.

Thank You to Our Recent Grantors For their Generous Support

Bank of America Charitable Foundation • Carolyn Foundation • Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority • Cyrus M. Quigley Foundation • DCJ Charitable Trust • Ethel & Abe Lapidis Foundation • George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation • Henry E. Niles Foundation, Inc. • Joe & Cindy Goldberg Family Foundation • New World Foundation • Sassafras Foundation • Seedlings Foundation • TD Charitable Foundation • USTA Connecticut • Webster Bank

We are especially grateful for a three-year grant from The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

A Summer Camp Like No Other



LEAP's Leaders in Training (LIT) summer program was a huge success! LITs (teens ages 13 to 15) participated in a hybrid virtual and in-person program focused on academic support, social enrichment, and personal development. The LITs split into two groups and swapped locations each week, so while one group met at the LEAP Community Center, the other gathered via Zoom.

The hybrid model gave LITs the chance to be connected and keep up with their activities while staying safe. Thirteen-year-old Kimora explained that "For our curriculum, we read a book called *Ghost Boys* about a 12-year-old Black boy named Jerome who was killed by a white police officer. It felt important to read that story because it is similar to what is going on in the world right now."

She also enjoyed virtual programming, sharing, "It was fun because, before we would start, we would play a game so everybody had the chance to wake up. Then we had a writing assignment, or our counselor would help us set achievement goals for ourselves."

Overall, Kimora was grateful that she found a home in the LIT program this summer. "I was kind of nervous coming here; I thought that everybody was going to be together, and I was going to be the new kid. But nobody is judgmental here. We have fun together because we are all communicating and getting along with each other. I have learned to be brave and not worry about what others think about you."



LEAP Counselor Superhero: Ashley Raymond



Ashley Raymond, a graduate student at Southern Connecticut State University pursuing her master's degree in Public Health, knew that she would find a home at LEAP from the minute she first heard about the program. "LEAP's main focus is giving kids access to resources that they do not necessarily have. And I felt like LEAP was a place for me because my whole career is centered around that."

Now, Ashley has been a senior counselor with LEAP for almost two years, leading a group of 9-10-year-old girls. She recalls that, in the beginning, her LEAPers complained about how much they had to read. "But over time, they were excited to learn about the information I brought in. They would say 'Ms. Ashley, I saw what we talked about on the news!'" For me, it's about making sure they have access to information they might not have gotten in school."

Ashley brought her own passions and expertise into the LEAP classroom, despite the challenges of being virtual for half of summer programming. Her virtual lessons focused on topics ranging from Black female scientists, to hip hop, to the science behind COVID-19. Her favorite lesson was leading her girls in a discussion on the Black Lives Matter movement.

"One of the great things about this summer was that I was able to have meaningful conversations about things they had questions about. Talking about topics that the girls are living through right now, it was great. The questions they asked and the information they produced just blew me away."

Ashley credits LEAP with teaching her about both community and patience. "LEAP is a wonderful program because it doesn't just give our kids the opportunity to learn and build knowledge and experience. It also gives counselors an opportunity to figure out who they are and who they want to be."



Gearing Up for a Great Fall



As we conclude the summer and move into the school year, LEAP is planning for a free hybrid in-person and virtual program this fall. Our priorities remain: ensuring the safety and health of our young people, families, and staff while meeting a crucial need in the community for academic and socio-emotional support.

We will continue to be a stable source of income for the high school and college students we employ as counselors, who lead one-on-one or small group sessions with children.

These face-to-face sessions will focus on providing homework help, literacy enrichment, and creative activities.

We also plan to continue distributing food, rent, and technology assistance to LEAP families, making sure their needs are met. As the pandemic evolves, one thing is certain: LEAP will continue to adapt and remain a consistent source of support for our community.



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



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Save the Date for LEAP's 26th Annual LEAP Year Dinners on Zoom Thursday, February 25, 2021



We hope you can join us on **Thursday, February 25, 2021** for a wonderful evening of learning and conversation.

LEAP Year Event 2021 will be **virtual** but you can still choose from **over 30 dinners** with fascinating guests of honor and generous hosts!

To be a LEAP Year Event Sponsor, please contact Rachel Kline Brown, Director of Development, at rklinebrown@leapforkids.org.

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