



LEAP Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2019

Donate Today: www.leapforkids.org/donate



This holiday season is a great time to remember all the wonderful people who are LEAP. Obviously, our high school and college student counselors, staff and board members make LEAP happen. And, our LEAP family would be unimaginable without our thousands of donors. But I also want to recognize all the people whose work for LEAP is not so visible.

There is an expression I heard decades ago from the recently passed away civil rights legend Dorothy Cotton who worked with Dr. King desegregating southern public accommodations in the 1960s. "In organizing," she said, "we build a fire and good people come around it to get warm."

That is a lot of what we do at LEAP. We create a space where people who care can use their talents to make our city better for our children. People like our LEAP neighbors on Lyon and William Streets who open their homes every year for hundreds of children to trick-or-treat during our Halloween Festival. Folks from the New Haven Land Trust who built a beautiful pergola in LEAP's garden to provide shade when our kids are learning about planting and harvesting. Bill Aselyne and Jeff Stryker who donated tickets for our teens to see the movie *The Hate You Give* as they read the book. Our friends at Barnes & Noble North Haven who have set up a holiday book drive for LEAP.

LEAP is a program, a place and an idea. We strive to run excellent after school and summer programs for kids. We make great use of our 100-year-old community center, pool, gym, classrooms and dance studio. Most importantly we stand for the right of all children to be raised by a community that loves them.

Thank you for joining us in making LEAP possible and we wish you and your family a happy holiday,

 Henry Fernandez, Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE LEAP Year Event Thursday, February 28, 2019

Heath Commons, Hopkins School
986 Forest Road, New Haven

Formal invitation to follow
Reception and Book Signing 5-7 p.m.

Followed by An Elegant Evening of Fine Dining and Conversation

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LEAP's Thankful Dinner: An Annual Tradition



There was much to be thankful for on November 20th at LEAP's festive Thankful Dinner held at James Hillhouse High School. Over 375 kids and 50 counselors and LITs enjoyed a delicious Thanksgiving meal together. Several LEAP children told the crowded room what they are thankful for this year. One LEAPER shared: "I'm grateful I was born and I'm grateful for how beautiful I am. I am grateful that I am in the program at LEAP and I am grateful for the amazing counselors I have in LEAP." Everyone enjoyed the speeches, food, and dancing. We thank our

board members, volunteers, staff, and Eli Whitney Vocational Tech High School for helping to prepare and serve the delicious food, and for making what we do at LEAP possible.

Will you make a special end-of-year donation to ensure kids and teens can be part of LEAP?

- Give **Online** at leapforkids.org/donate or send a **CHECK** made out to LEAP— All donations are **TAX DEDUCTIBLE**.
- Donate **Appreciated stock, Bonds, or Mutual Fund Shares**— When you transfer securities to LEAP's broker, your donation is **TAX DEDUCTIBLE** and you **AVOID CAPITAL GAINS**.
- Contribute from your **IRA**— **Reduce your Adjusted Gross Income** by donating a portion of your required minimum distribution.

Give Locally to Change the World!

LEAP's Tax ID: 22-2906547

LEAP Celebrates 10th Annual Halloween Festival!

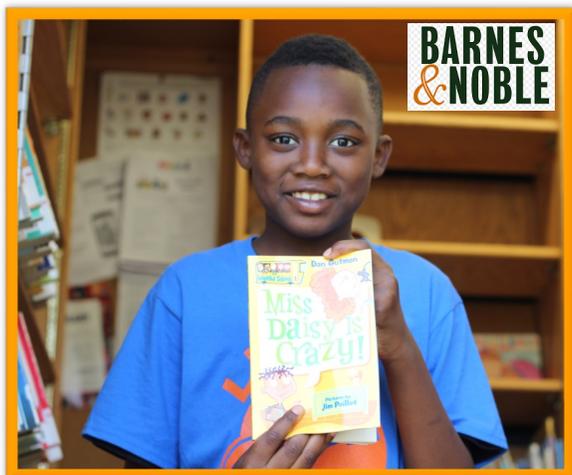
On Friday October 26th, over 300 children and their families congregated at the LEAP Community Center to celebrate LEAP's 10th annual Halloween Festival. Kids rushed from one exciting activity to another, gathering candy and having fun. From fortune telling to pumpkin painting to a haunted house, LEAP was transformed into a Halloween hub of delight and laughter.

The night ended with an hour-long trick-or-treating adventure along Williams and Lyon streets. Our neighbor, Holly Drinkuth said, "For me, the neighborhood event gives us an opportunity to engage with the families who come to LEAP. It gives us a way to participate. LEAP is there—I see all the kids when I go and return from work every day—but it's nice to be able to have this moment, this intersection, when the kids come into the neighborhood and we are able to do something fun for them."



Thank you to everyone who made this evening possible! A special thanks to the New Haven Police and Fire Departments, Melillo's Greenhouse and General Store LLC in North Branford, our neighbors, volunteers, donors and LEAP Staff. Thank you for helping us **Create a New Haven for our Children!**

Barnes & Noble Partners With LEAP this Holiday Season



Buy a book for a LEAP child at **Barnes & Noble North Haven** from now until New Year's Eve in this year's **Holiday Book Drive!** With your help, every kid at LEAP will get new, exciting books to fall in love with and take home. Plus, this fall LEAP started the first ever LIT Book Club, where young teens read and discuss selected YA novels. The first book on their list was *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Thanks to a generous donation, LITs got to watch the movie version before reading the book. **Alayjah Ford** loved it. "[*The Hate U Give*] is my number one movie now, because I feel like that movie is really inspiring," she says. "The girl in the movie [Starr] went through a lot at the time, but she still pushed through and tried her best to fight for justice." After watching *The Hate U Give*, she couldn't wait for the book club and started reading it at home. Now it's her favorite book.

Pipeline for Teens to Become Lifeguards

LEAP is proud to launch the LIT Lifeguard Pipeline initiative this year. Black children in America are five times more likely to drown than white children. To address this inequality, LEAP provides *free* swimming lessons to over 350 children living in New Haven's low-income majority-Black neighborhoods every year. Our Lifeguard Pipeline will give children the opportunity not only to learn to survive in a pool but also to become highly skilled LEAP lifeguards and swim instructors. Three young women in our Leaders in Training (LIT) program already have their sights set on becoming lifeguards.



Keilanny Colon says she wants to become a lifeguard "so that kids don't have to go through what I went through." She never learned how to swim when she was younger, so she nearly drowned in a swimming pool in sixth grade. Last year, she joined LEAP and

has become a powerful swimmer. She says: "When I first started going to LEAP, I used to complain *a lot*. I didn't like to swim at all. But now I do. I don't have to worry about drowning."



Tenysha Torres, on the other hand, has been swimming since she was three and wants to join a swim team in college. "I want to be top in the world, the ultimate Olympic swimmer," she says. "And I'm going to give LEAP credit." She says she wants to teach kids how to swim so "they can enjoy their time in the water without being scared that they're going to drown or that something will happen." In addition to being a lifeguard, Tenysha also wants to become a Junior Counselor. "I like working with kids," she says. "It's a good way to work with the next generation and try to show them what we know—what society is now, and how they can make it better."



Anysha Torres says the best part about learning to swim at LEAP is making friends. "You can do it alone, but it's better with people," she says about being a lifeguard. Together with Tenysha and Keilanny, she has begun training for the lifeguard certification test. They are on track to become swim instructors by next year.



Thanks to the Community Fund for Women & Girls and all those who donated this #GivingTuesday! You can continue to support the Lifeguard Pipeline by donating at LEAPforkids.org/donate.

Creating A New Haven For Our Children

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