



SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Spring is here and summer is right around the corner. In LEAP seasons, that means we are finishing up our afterschool program and planning for our 31st year of summer camp.

It also means that we are installing a new irrigation system at our community garden, that our evening swim classes have ramped up, and that many of our high school students are now choosing which college they will be attending in the fall. Our partnership with the Q House is going strong, as the Pop Smith Little Leaguers move from playing

ball inside the gym out into the warm weather, and our young dancers with the New Haven Ballet look forward to their upcoming performance at the Shubert Theater.

This summer will be special as we ease the restrictions of recent years. We will return to overnight camping, even more children will learn to swim, and we will bring back long trips for children to experience a city over 100 miles from New Haven.

It feels like we are turning a page. While it's glorious to look ahead, we would not have made it to this moment without all of you. Thank you for all you do for LEAP.

Sincerely,

Henry Fernandez



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GET READY FOR SUMMER!



800

IN THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

100

LEADERS IN TRAINING

160

LIFEGUARDS, JUNIOR AND SENIOR COUNSELORS EMPLOYED

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LEAPers read with their counselor.



LEAPER practices phonics with his counselor.



Two counselors attend the career fair.

Taking a Big LEAP: College Tour 2023

Counselors & LITs visit D.C. and Georgia

In April, 41 Leaders in Training (LITs) and counselors took a week-long trip to visit colleges in Washington D.C. and Georgia.

Students visited nine colleges including 6 HBCUs: 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.

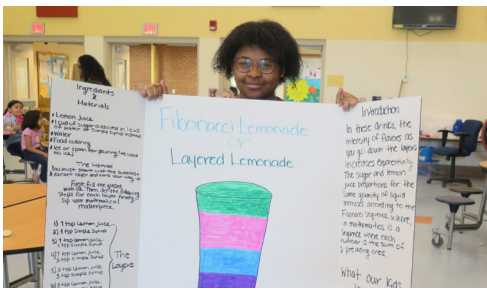
For many students, it was their first time visiting an out-of-state college. Reflecting on her experience at Morris Brown, Junior Counselor Rayonna says: "The students were very friendly. You can tell they care a lot about their students." A rising junior at Hill Regional Career High School, Fatoumata says Clayton



LITs swim in the pool at Jefferson Street.



Khyrie poses with the sock puppet he made.



Bailee shows her science experiment for EXPO.

University excited her the most. She was interested in how many different extracurriculars they offered.

Also during the college tour, students visited historical sites including the National Museum of African American History and Culture as well as the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Georgia.

The college tour is one part of the college access work at LEAP. Counselors engage in sessions to help with résumés, personal statements, interviewing practice, and more.



Visiting Clark Atlanta University.

Revamped Aquatics Program Makes a Splash

Evening swim for children & adults

Earlier this year, Ryan Rooks, a long-time swimming enthusiast, joined LEAP as the Aquatics Program Director. After hiring LEAP's largest team of certified lifeguards and swim instructors since the COVID-19 pandemic, Ryan quickly got to work on bringing back LEAP's reduced-cost swim lessons for adults and children. The first session of evening swim classes has helped over 30 members of the community learn the basics of swimming and offer life-saving skills.

Ryan emphasizes the importance of LEAP's swim program, especially for youth of color who are disproportionately at risk of drowning. Sebastian and Brunniel came to the LEAP swim program not knowing how to swim. Ryan and her team started off by helping them get comfortable in the water with the help of pool noodles. Now several weeks later, both boys are able to tread water and swim without assistance.

The revival of LEAP's evening swim program has changed the lives of children like Sebastian and Brunniel and helped make swimming accessible to young people in LEAP's free programs and the community alike.

LEAP Launches New Phonics Pilot Program

Read all about it!

A new chapter of LEAP's literacy program has bloomed into season at three LEAP sites this spring. 7- and 8-year-olds at sites in the Hill, Newhallville, and Quinpiac Meadows neighborhoods enjoyed the arrival of LEAP's Phonics Pilot Program, which is intended to supplement ongoing efforts in New Haven Public Schools to help children read using phonics-informed methods.

As part of the program, children at the three sites are improving their literacy skills by focusing on the relationship between word sounds and letters in small group and individual settings, getting personalized attention from LEAP counselors and community volunteers with LEAP-provided phonics training. Zalma, LEAP's Curriculum and Training coordinator, notes the



Counselor works with a LEAPer on phonics.

“kids [have been] surprised at how much they enjoy” the new curriculum and are “very invested,” partly because of its use of Reading Eggs, an online phonics program that gamifies the process of learning to read. Summer, LEAP's Director of Curriculum and Training, also reports that LEAP counselors have enjoyed the opportunity to undergo intensive phonics training and get outside their comfort zone to learn a new way of teaching their students. Going forward, both Summer and Zalma look forward to continuing to expand the new phonics-informed curriculum to all seven of LEAP's school-based sites this summer. Thank you to Bruce and Susan Ackerman for their support for the phonics program.



LEAPers at Fair Haven West read.



The new aquatics lifeguard team.

Revisiting the Black History Month Showcase

Historical & contemporary Black role models

This past Black History Month, LEAPers highlighted influential figures and contemporary role models. Boys ages 7-8 created puppets representing historical figures they learned about, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Langston Hughes. Through these puppets, the boys were able to bring these figures to life and share their accomplishments with the audience.

On the other hand, girls ages 9-10 reflected on modern female role models who have made significant contributions to society. They chose to highlight musicians Rihanna and

Beyoncé, who have both made an impact not only in the music industry but also in other areas of business.

The showcase displayed their creativity and knowledge, as well as their understanding of the importance of black history and representation. By showcasing these historical figures and modern role models, the children were able to demonstrate the lasting impact that these individuals have had on society, and how their legacies



LEAPers present Black role model posters.



LEAPers explore painting.



LITs dance at the Q House.



A speaker performs at Q House Open Mic.

Julia's Run for Children

100 runners race through the rain

We had a blast at this year's 24th annual Julia's Run for Children in honor of Julia Rusinek who passed away unexpectedly in 1999 at the age of 21. The run honors the values for which she lived including her passion for running and childhood education programs. The Julia Rusinek Memorial Fund gives 100% of profits from the run to LEAP.

The race was off to a rainy start. First kids took to the starting line for the 3/4 mile Kids Fun Run. Then, 100 5K runners completed the course, being sure to avoid deep puddles and muddy terrain. This was the second year the race was held at Edgewood Park. Thank you to all of our volunteers, sponsors, and counselors who helped make the day a success despite being soaked!

New at the Q

Open mic, new snack store & more!

The Q House is buzzing with free monthly programs for kids and families, weekly classes, and special all-day community events.

In February, the Q House hosted the Black History Month Entrepreneurs Festival with local businesses. The Yale New Haven Hiring Initiative hosts bi-monthly employment readiness workshops. We also had 32 kids participating in the New Haven Ballet's spring program at the Q House.

In addition to regular programming,

the Q House team has organized successful events including a spoken word open mic night and a self-care day that featured mindfulness activities, beauty care routines with free supplies, and creative activities.

We are also excited to have a new, full-time kitchens operations manager, Tony Evans, who started a low-cost breakfast program where community members can order breakfast. He also opened a snack store on Fridays. This summer, the Q House looks forward to hosting the 2nd year of the CitySeed Farmers Market running from June 14 through October 25.



The Q House lobby lined with food vendors during the Black History Month Festival.



Counselors at Julia's Run.



Runners on the course at Edgewood Park for Julia's Run.

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