



# LEAP Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2020

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Happy Holidays from LEAP! Please know how much you and your family mean to the LEAP family and all the families we serve.

I have been pondering two quotes from former Senator and Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The first is, "All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity."

2020 has been a year like no other. Many of us have lost loved ones. All of us have lost access to experiences we hold dear. With the arrival of vaccines, it looks like 2021 will be very different – filled once again with visits to friends and family and a renewed desire to not put off those things that in prior years seemed they could wait a little longer.

We look forward to working with children face to face again, having switched to virtual programs in November as COVID climbed in New Haven. I miss the casual unplanned conversations with teenagers that provide opportunities to share guidance or see excitement about college acceptances.

We have rebuilt our programs repeatedly as what is safe and useful for children has changed. We have learned to work remotely and experimented with new partnerships. We spend more time addressing issues of mental health and for the first time in our history distributed food, rent support and laptops to our families.

Bobby's second quote is, "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation." Our recent election gave us our first woman, first African American and first Asian American vice-president. Millions of Americans took significant risks just to vote, waiting in lines amid the global pandemic, and together changed history.

Every time you support LEAP, you also write the history of this generation. And without you we would not be able to do what we do in this peculiar year or be able to plan for a much brighter future.

Henry Fernandez, Executive Director

## SAVE THE DATE

26th ANNIVERSARY  
VIRTUAL  
**LEAP YEAR  
EVENT**

**THURSDAY,  
FEBRUARY 25, 2021**

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATIONS ON  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021

We are committed to continuing this cherished event, which is why it will take place virtually this year! To keep the tradition alive and support our local businesses, a dinner option will be available. For more information about the event, visit [www.leapforkids.org/lye](http://www.leapforkids.org/lye). If you have any questions, please email Rachel Kline Brown at [rklinebrown@leapforkids.org](mailto:rklinebrown@leapforkids.org).



## GUESTS OF HONOR

Ziad Ahmed & Esi Eggleston Bracey  
Emily Bazelon  
Dr. Khalilah L. Brown-Dean  
Jennifer Clair, Home Cooking NYC  
Karla Cornejo Villavicencio & Kica Matos  
Christina Swarns & Miriam Gohara  
Jack Hitt & Jake Halpern  
Alasdair Neale with Musical Excerpts from  
Members of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra  
Marcella Nunez-Smith  
Asha Rangappa  
Elisabeth Rosenthal  
Mark Simon, Centerbrook Architects  
Frank Snowden  
Jason Sobocinski  
Rory Stewart & Shoshana Clark Stewart  
Stephanie Wiles & Roksana Filipowska

## Gratitude and Giving Back



Every Thanksgiving, LEAP has an annual Thankful Dinner when LEAPers young and old gather together, share a potluck meal, and give thanks for each other and the food we share. This year, although we miss our usual traditions, our attention has shifted to making sure no family goes through the holidays without having their basic needs met. Thanks to the generous donation of Marcum LLP, 80 LEAP families went home with a turkey this Thanksgiving. LEAP also gave out masks and 160 age-appropriate books for children to take home. In December, LEAP gave over \$27,000 for rent and groceries directly to families in need, in addition to the \$88,000 already distributed since March. LEAP will also distribute additional food, books, turkeys, masks donated by United Way of Greater New Haven, and toys donated by the Hometown Foundation during our Holiday Giveback.

### Monthly Donors, the Gifts That Keep On Giving!

LEAP is grateful for our monthly donors, who made the commitment to give to LEAP every month! No matter the amount, knowing that we can count on your support makes a big difference. A big thank you to:

Rotem Aboody • Paul and Carole Bass • Vanessa Bittner • Josiah Brown and Sahar Usmani-Brown

Catharine Duman • Leticia Echevarria • Henry J. Fernandez and Kica Matos • Ify Nwokoye and James Forman

Douglas Hausladen • Sara Johnson • Delando Pugh • Jay S. Readey and Lisa D. McGill

Philip Rubin and Joette Katz • Karen Wang • Robert and Marie Weltzien

### Jasmine Williams Forges New Forums for Expression



LEAP's amazing high school and college student counselors are who make LEAP possible and represent the future of our community. That's why LEAP dedicates a large portion of our time and resources to making sure their needs are met too.

In addition to the college access workshops and regular professional development sessions, LEAP created Youth Talk, inspired by the need for connection during the pandemic. Youth Talk is a weekly Zoom meeting on Wednesday evenings open to our Junior and Senior Counselors that serves as a safe space and outlet for honest dialogue and connection. The sessions are led by none other than our own Dwight-Kensington site coordinator, Jasmine Williams. Jasmine has been at LEAP for over 3 years and has been the perfect person to lead Youth Talk – her charisma, creativity and dedication are obvious from a mile away, and she is able to match the energy of the youth counselors she works with while building an open, trusting environment.

“The goal for Youth Talk is personal development,” says Jasmine. “It allows counselors to be creative, to be young and express themselves. But they also learn about things that apply to them.” Each session revolves around a topic such as love languages or presidential debates. In the beginning, Jasmine chose the topics to discuss, but recently counselors have been offering their own topics of interest. The last few sessions this fall will focus on investing and finding careers.

Therese, a Junior Counselor and Youth Talk regular, reflected on the realizations that the conversations helped her come to about friendships and relationships. “I like Youth Talk because it allows me to be a normal teenager. It lets my opinions be heard. It helps me create a better relationship with other counselors through the pandemic when it's hard for us to communicate in the same space.”

Thanks to Jasmine for making this possible and a big shout-out to our counselors for everything you do!

# Atticus Partners with LEAP Once Again for the Holiday Season



Atticus Bookstore and Café on Chapel Street is known for their delicious bread, soups and salads as well as their amazing selection of books. They are also a wonderful partner of LEAP's! This year, LEAP is working with Atticus to bring books home to LEAP children. When you shop at their online store, you can add a book for a LEAP child to your cart. Each book is just \$4.99 and spans a range of age-appropriate titles such as *National Geographic* and *Who HQ*.

One way that LEAP tackles the literacy gap is by building children's home libraries – distributing books for children to take home and call their own. With New Haven Public Schools being online during the pandemic, having physical books to read with family is really important. If you visit [atticusbookstorecafe.shop](https://atticusbookstorecafe.shop) for your holiday shopping, consider gifting a book to a LEAP child. It's easy, just click on "Children's Books" as seen in the preview!

## Longtime LEAP Donor Henry Lord Stands by LEAP

This giving season, LEAP sat down with Henry Lord, New Haven resident and longtime LEAP supporter to find out why he supports LEAP.

**LEAP:** How did you first find out about LEAP?

**Henry:** LEAP has been around for over 25 years now. I'm originally from New Haven and had just moved back here from DC, and my mother was a very generous supporter while she was with us. The more I read about it, I thought, this sounds like a great thing to support. The emphasis on education and mentorship is so important to me, and the fact that so many kids come year after year just made it clear that it is such a great program. As someone born in New Haven, I really want to support things that help New Haven at large. So anything I can do to support a program that will help some of these kids have a much better outcome in life is a natural choice for me.



**LEAP:** You've been really responsive to the ups and downs that LEAP has had. A few years ago, when a site had to close, you called Rachel at LEAP on your own accord asking what you could do. It's amazing that you have been so involved and celebrating LEAP's successes and standing by LEAP through challenges, because they do happen, especially this year with COVID-19.

**Henry:** LEAP has great leadership and wonderful people are on staff who work together so well and also work effectively with the range of counselors. I just think it's a life-changing program.

**LEAP:** You're someone who has made an incredibly generous multi-year commitment for the next few years. Could you talk about why you felt strongly about making that kind of commitment for LEAP's future?

**Henry:** It was a no-brainer for me, and I've done what I've pledged to do so far. The odds that these kids have to deal with, the enormous structural challenges that get in the way of achieving success and the often limited opportunities available - this is what LEAP addresses and I want to support that work. LEAP is also a benevolent program, encouraging the good in everyone. The decision to make the commitment, that was easy!

**Is a multi-year commitment a no-brainer for you?** If you are interested in supporting LEAP like longtime LEAP supporter Henry Lord, get in touch with Rachel Kline Brown, Director of Development, at [RklineBrown@leapforkids.org](mailto:RklineBrown@leapforkids.org).

# 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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