



FALL/WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

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Executive Director's Note

The fall semester was an opportunity for a true "return to normalcy" for the young people LEAP works with. While COVID-19 remains with us, it no longer disrupts children's and teens' daily academic and social development.

But much remains to do to address the gaps the last few years have wrought. That's why LEAP is working on a big scale, including phonics instruction for young kids,

new full-time social work support, and college tours for teens. We are also ensuring kids have the social and athletic opportunities they need, reflected in our partnerships.

There is also excitement in our future. With support from Member of Congress Rosa DeLauro, LEAP secured a \$1.9 million grant to renovate the over 100-year-old Roslyn Milstein Meyer LEAP Community Center on Jefferson Street. We recently hired architect Ken Boroson and look forward to a creative design that makes the

building more efficient, accessible, and fun for kids. We also hope to raise quite a bit more to ensure the building is a safe haven for another century.

As always, LEAP is only possible because of supporters like you. As we enter the holiday season and new year, THANK YOU from all of us at LEAP!

Henry Fernandez

Executive Director



29th ANNUAL LEAP YEAR EVENT

**THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 29, 2024**

Additional Dinners on March 2 & April 4

**In-person Reception & Book Signing
5-7 p.m. • Dixwell "Q House" Community Center**

Followed by an elegant evening of fine dining and conversation

This cherished event will have in-person and virtual options to meet everyone's needs! For more information about the event, visit www.leapforkids.org/lye. If you have any questions, please email Alison Bonds at abonds@leapforkids.org.

**FORMAL
INVITATION
TO FOLLOW**

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

**HONORING
TONY
SCILLIA**

GUESTS OF HONOR

- Crystal Feimster
- Philip Galanes
- Josh Geballe
- Jacob Hacker
- Christopher Hawthorne
- Rachel Kauder Nalebuff
- Horacio Marquinez
- Monk Youth Jazz
- Michael Morand
- Marcella Nunez-Smith
- Alan Organschi & Lisa Gray
- Kaari Pitkin
- Carl Safina
- Mark Simon
- Andrew Solomon
- A. Douglas Stone
- Paul Sullivan
- Stephanie Wiles & John Gordon



Halloween Spooktacular at the Q House

LEAP hosted its annual Halloween Festival at the Dixwell Community “Q” House! Over 500 children and families joined us for this fun-filled event. We saw so many amazing costumes ranging from zombies and monsters to superheroes and princesses. The Q House gym was full of tables where kids played games, got candy from local businesses, and participated in exciting activities like tarot card readings and face painting. Across from the gym, the Q House’s conference room was transformed into a spooky escape room. Outside on the plaza, families gathered for mesmerizing performances by Gammy Moses, Latino América Unida, Sigma Gamma Rho, Proyecto Cimarrón, and our Leaders in Training, with additional activities such as a drum circle and a gaming truck. Kids also got a chance to take home books from our book giveaway. The children closed out the night by following a trick-or-treating trail through the Dixwell neighborhood, thanks to the generosity of those who live in the community.



LEAP’s Fall Enrichment Adventures

Over 600 LEAPers and Leaders in Training joined us for this year’s fall component. Alongside their counselors, LEAPers explored a variety of enrichment activities promoting holistic wellness, creative thinking, and playful exploration with peers. Students delved into the beauty of classical music through violin lessons, connected with counselors through youth talk, and explored science through experiments like the “egg drop.”

Our counselors collaborate with enrichment activity providers to ensure LEAPers get the most from their after-school experience. Beyond educational and wellness activities, students engaged in

activities like basketball, flag football, hip-hop dance, and yoga, celebrating successes like scoring field goals or making 3-point shots.

Cameron, a LEAPER from the Hillsouth site, expressed his love of participating in group activities. His favorite part of LEAP is talking with his counselors and engaging in hands-on activities after the curriculum.



Cameron, 13, Hillsouth site



Children get ready for trick-or-treating



Child gets fortune read at Halloween Festival

Meet Chantalle Martin: A New Chapter in Mental Health Support

With a deep-rooted connection to LEAP and a passion for mental health advocacy, Chantalle Martin brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to her new position as Clinical Coordinator. Driven by a desire to make a profound impact on the lives of LEAP children, Chantalle embarked on a career in social work. Her decision was fueled by personal experiences working as a LEAP counselor and recognizing the need for mental health support among program participants. "I can remember being a little kid or being a LIT and having so many kids in our groups who had traumatic backgrounds or were living in traumatic parts of their lives, and just thinking [to

myself], 'Wow, what would that look like if they had somebody to talk to.'"

As the full time Clinical Coordinator, Chantalle is pivotal in ensuring that LEAP children and staff have access to the mental health resources they need. Her passion for her work is evident in her eagerness to build meaningful connections with LEAP children and families. With her dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment to mental health advocacy, Chantalle Martin is an invaluable asset to LEAP. Her new role marks the beginning of a new chapter in her journey of empowering New Haven children and families to thrive.



Chantalle Martin



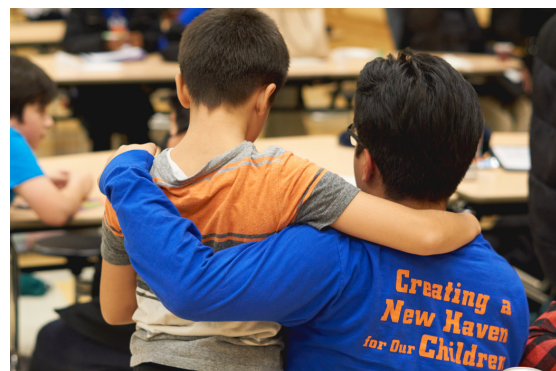
JCs and LITs on tour at Johnson & Wales University

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LEAP Opens College Access Doors

To prepare students for college, LEAP offers college access programming where counselors engage in college writing workshops, job fairs, and free college tours around the East Coast. In November, our Junior Counselors (JCs) and Leaders in Training (LITs) visited three Rhode Island colleges: Johnson & Wales University, Brown University, and Bryant University.

Junior Counselor G'Asija, who's been a part of LEAP since she was seven, says: "LEAP has been very

helpful for me because I'm a sophomore, and a lot of times schools will only take seniors [on tours]." For sophomores like G'Asija, it's a chance to explore options early on. Her sister Nyree, a Wilbur Cross High School junior, found the tour eye-opening, appreciating the diverse college communities. Despite aspiring to be an EMT, visiting Johnson and Wales sparked her interest in detective work. LEAP remains a valuable resource for counselors pursuing their goals.



Pictured left to right: Nyree and G'Asija



JCs and LITs at Brown University

Creating a New Haven for Our Children

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