



LEAP Newsletter

Spring 2021

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The last year has been one of tragedy and hope. We lost so many to the horrific pandemic, but also saw community charity help our neighbors. We have seen violence by police against unarmed African Americans, but also witnessed a racial justice movement joined by people of all backgrounds. Attacks on Asian Americans have climbed, but in response Congress passed a strongly bipartisan bill to address hate crimes.

I am reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s reflections on the violence he faced in his life:

As my sufferings mounted, I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation — either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.

I am proud that LEAP responded to the last year with creative force. This summer, we plan to return to an in-person camp serving over 550 children and employing over 100 local young

people. We will do much of our work in creative ways: operating outside, wearing masks, and vaccinating staff and counselors. We will focus on fun educational activities and emotional health to get kids ready to return to school and address the isolation and social gaps they have faced.

LEAP's creative force is possible only because of your support. Your commitment makes it possible for us to change how we do things while never changing the values we hold dear. Please consider once again supporting LEAP with a donation as we gear up for our summer program.

Please stay safe, get vaccinated and encourage your friends and family to do the same.

Sincerely,

Henry Fernandez, Executive Director

LEAP COVID Emergency Relief Fund launched March 2020

- Meeting Essential Needs:** LEAP gave out **250+ grocery gift cards** and made **144 rent payments** to landlords. (Icons: house, milk carton)
- Happy Holidays!** This holiday season, LEAP youth and families took home **turkeys, toys, masks and books.** (Icons: open book, turkey) Thank you Marcum, Hometown Foundation & United Way!
- Addressing the digital divide:** We distributed **123 laptops and computers** to help LEAP kids and counselors participate in online school. (Icon: laptop)
- Fresh food!** LEAP partnered with #GiveHealthy to give out **36 bags** of fresh produce and pantry staples like rice and beans. (Icon: apple)
- In total, almost \$175,000 given to New Haven families.** An additional round of aid is planned for the summer. **April 2021**

LEAP's COVID Emergency Relief Fund Explained

When the virus shut our city down last March, LEAP created an emergency relief fund for the first time in our 28-year history. The fund has focused on food, rent, and technology assistance to support families' basic needs during the economic turmoil of this past year.

Thanks to the support of partners such as the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, the Yale Community for New Haven Fund, the Carolyn Foundation, the Yale Black Men's Union, and many community members, LEAP has been able to distribute 123 computers and almost \$175,000 worth of grocery gift cards and rent support. We have also hosted a holiday giveaway and distributed bags of fresh food and produce.

Thank you to all of our partners – this wouldn't be possible without you!



Growing with LEAP: Naz, From an LIT to Aquatics Program Director



Nazair Peters came to LEAP at 13 years old, not yet knowing it was the start of a decade-long journey. He joined the Leaders in Training (LIT) program where he got to know his counselors, volunteered with younger children, and built leadership skills.

Upon completing the LIT program at 15, Nazair joined LEAP's aquatics team where he proved himself to be an instrumental part of the program. Nazair consistently earned promotions; from swim instructor, to lifeguard, to head lifeguard.

Now, Nazair is graduating from UCONN, and will return home to LEAP once more. This time he will lead in his biggest role yet, as LEAP's Aquatics Program Director! Reflecting on his path and purpose, Nazair shared, "I want kids to have that same journey that I've had. I feel it is important for them to have role models and see the good that comes out of LEAP. My being that person to them is the most important thing."

Thank You to Our Recent Grantors

4-CT The Connecticut COVID-19 Charity Connection • Carolyn Foundation • Elizabeth Carse Foundation
Costco Wholesale • Franke Family Charitable Foundation • Friends of Kang Yun Foundation
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund • International Association of New Haven • Jana Foundation, Inc.
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Petit Family Foundation • Pincus Family Foundation • Scripps Family Fund for Education and the Arts
Skye Foundation • Smart Family Foundation of New York • Spring Glen Church • Whole Foods Market
Winokur Family Foundation • Yale Community for New Haven Fund • Youth Violence Prevention Initiative

Thanks to Outfront Media for donating space for LEAP billboards all around New Haven!

Superstar Program Staff Shout-Outs



Serving 1,000 children every year, across five sites and one community center, is no easy feat, though seeing our incredible Program team in action could convince you otherwise.

That is our model in 'normal' times. Imagine crafting a resourceful and enriching virtual program during a pandemic and launching it within weeks. Imagine aligning with the waves of change to consistently offer the highest quality programming possible: virtual or hybrid with extensive sanitation and strict

adherence to safety guidelines. That's what our Program team has done, and we want to recognize and express gratitude for their immeasurable resilience, hard work, empathy, and dedication.

Thank you: Paris, Youth Development Coordinator, for designing an astonishing STEM curriculum; **David**, FHS Coordinator, for joining the team and strengthening partnerships during a pandemic; **Maithé**, FHN Coordinator, for aiding in the organization of family resource distribution; **Jasmine**, DK Coordinator, for organizing child recruitment initiatives; **John**, DX Coordinator, for unifying community resources; **Cody**, HS Coordinator, for initiating virtual morale challenges.

Thank you: Zalma, Curriculum and Training Coordinator, for organizing all COVID-19 resources, testing and vaccine scheduling; **Frankie**, Counselor Development Manager, for organizing community-based scholarship opportunities for our counselors; **Jaala**, Counselor Development Coordinator, for incredible counselor newsletters; and **Albert**, LCLC Director, for enhancing the python coding program.



Snapshots of Spring Curriculum

Faith Ringgold art Project



LEAP's 2021 Spring Component kicked off on January 11th with an intensive one-week counselor training program. In this training, counselors discovered their roles and responsibilities, reviewed the counselor manual, discussed the importance of mentoring and modeling, and learned about group management and conflict resolution. With training complete, we were ready to open our virtual doors to LEAP children to receive homework help, literacy work, engaging activities, and social and emotional connection.

February's curriculum centered around Black History Month. At the end of February, there was a showcase for LEAPers to present their favorite influential figures they learned about in their lessons on Black history. Many children explored projects on artists such as Faith Ringgold, Jacob Lawrence, and Clementine Hunter. Counselors discussed civil rights leaders like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. with their students at length as well. LEAPER Naveah reflected on her favorite part of the special curriculum, "I liked watching videos about the inventors and their inventions."



March's curriculum also had a special focus, this time in honor of Women's History Month. Lessons and projects encouraged children and counselors to gain more knowledge of the women's movement throughout the United States and beyond. Paris Jones, Youth Development Coordinator, organized a Girl's Tour Conference for the young girls in our Leaders in Training program. This was a very special opportunity for them to hear from successful, inspirational women leaders, including LEAP's Chief of Staff and longtime LEAP affiliate, Yakeita Robinson.

Thanks to the beautiful weather and safety procedures, LEAPers have been able to begin Saturday in-person programming. Children and staff gathered at neighborhood parks for an exploratory and safe outdoor classroom experience. LEAPers enjoyed the safe time outdoors together by flying kites, making sidewalk art, taking nature walks, and more!



College Scholarships for Stellar LEAP Counselors

Four exceptional counselors were awarded our annual college scholarships, made possible by the generosity of our donors. We love rewarding their hard work!

The Regina Winters Scholarship was awarded to Nile Lee, Senior Counselor at Hill South, and Martha May, Senior Counselor at Dwight Kensington. These counselors were chosen because of the quality of their applications as well as their embodiment of the elements that made Regina Winters-Touissant a remarkable individual: her dedication, creativity, scholarly pursuits, and big heart.

The second scholarship is the Stiefel Williams Scholarship. Winners Eemonie Moore, former Junior Counselor at Dwight Kensington (*her photo to right*), and Briana Gaines, Senior Counselor at Dwight-Newhallville, wowed with their applications as well as their commitment to both their own academic success and to community service.

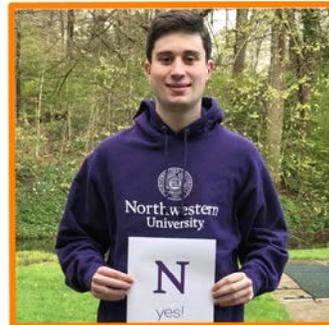


LEAP Junior Counselors Celebrate College Commitments

We are proud to share that, once again, 100% of all Junior Counselors who are seniors are graduating on time from high school in 2021! That is 26% percent higher than the average New Haven public high school graduation rate for Black and Latinx students.

Though the college application and admission process is far from over for many seniors, we do have exciting news to share from those who have confirmed their plans!

Eduardo Cienfuegos, Junior Counselor at Fair Haven South (*his photo to right*) has committed to Northwestern University. Tiatiana Jones, Junior Counselor at Dixwell, has committed to Eastern Kentucky University. Natalia Gregg, Junior Counselor at Hill South, and Therese Cisse, Junior Counselor at Dwight Kensington, have both committed to UCONN. We are so excited to hear about the rest of the college commitments over the next few months!



LEAP's Vaccine Education & Return to In-Person Plan



More than a year into the pandemic, it's become clear that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on Black, Latinx, and other minority communities. In New Haven, the neighborhoods that LEAP serves - Dixwell, Dwight, Fair Haven, the Hill, and Newhallville - have been especially affected by both the virus itself and the economic impacts of the pandemic. As vaccines roll out and the country begins to recover, LEAP is committed to making sure our communities are not left behind.

LEAP has been hosting vaccine education conversations for our counselors, staff, and families, facilitated by doctors in our community. Drs. Channelle Carr, Elana Cook, Cynthia Mann, Jessica Malcom, Marietta Vázquez, and John Nwangwu have offered live vaccine Q&As, with a bilingual option available, for LEAPers to express their concerns and have their questions answered.

Beyond hosting these crucial conversations, LEAP started as soon as vaccines became available to make it easy for counselors and staff to be vaccinated. We are always looking to make our organization as safe and secure as possible, which is why we are taking a strong pro-vaccination approach with staff.

After a challenging year, we are excited to announce that our 2021 Summer Program will return to our full capacity of serving over 550 children and young teens. Our 5-week free camp will take place in person, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4 pm from July 5th until August 5th. LEAP is, of course, continuing to take extreme caution with strict adherence to the recommended sanitation and safety guidelines. There is still a long road ahead to get back to "normal," but we are thrilled to take this crucial step to help the children and families of our communities on the road to recovery.



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