With your support over the last two months, LEAP has turned to online programming and provided a wide range of support to families, including delivering computers, food and rent assistance.

As the state slowly reopens, we are determining the path forward for our summer program. With counsel from the City, State, and public health experts, we are simultaneously considering in-person, virtual and hybrid summer programs. We have surveyed LEAP parents: about two-thirds want an in-person program and one-third want a virtual only program this summer. All are concerned about both safety and the emotional toll staying at home is taking on their children.

There are no perfect answers, but we know we are stronger as a community. Indeed, one thing the virus can take from us, if we let it, is our sense of being one people.

I am proud to see in the young people who work for us that LEAP remains a community, a shining city on a hill. None of what we are doing, the new path we are forced to blaze, would be possible without them. Nor would it be possible without you – the donors, supporters, partners and volunteers – who also make LEAP happen every day.

Thank you for standing with LEAP!

Sincerely,

Henry Fernandez, Executive Director

LEAP’s COVID-19 Response So Far

LEAP Sprang Into Action So Our Community Could Bounce Back

LEAP remains committed to serving New Haven families—rain, shine, or global pandemic. Thank you all who donated to our COVID-19 Emergency Fund! With your support, LEAP sprang into action to find innovative ways to safely continue providing services, right when families needed help most.

Following school closures on March 12th, LEAP quickly transitioned to an all-virtual format, where our student counselors lead one-on-one and group mentorship sessions with children. Counselors provide homework help so kids don’t fall behind in school during the quarantine, and they provide social-emotional support to help kids deal with the huge disruption COVID-19 is having on their lives. LEAP is also giving technology, food, and rent assistance to families in need, and organizing a weekly virtual meeting with dozens of New Haven youth-serving organizations to share useful resources.
With Everything Changing, LITs Still Feel at Home and Supported

Kaiden McIntosh is an LIT and an 8th grade student at Elm City Middle. She credits LEAP for inspiring her dream of becoming a lawyer. “LEAP opened my eyes to so many careers,” she says.

Getting used to the quarantine has been rough for Kaiden. “I want to go to places with my friends and just be able to see them in person,” she says. “But since this whole corona outbreak, we’ve just been having to talk virtually all the time. Now I’m scared to give people hugs, I’m scared to touch people too much, because the corona is no joke!”

The LIT virtual program helps her decompress. “Every day, the counselors ask us, ‘How are you? Like, mentally how are you doing?’ I have resources at home, but to know that other people care about my mental state, it helps. I feel really comfortable talking to my counselors about stuff, and they’re just so accepting. It’s like a welcoming home.”

Super Moms Need Super Help Sometimes Too

Some days it can feel like our world has stopped, but for mothers like Madison, it keeps on spinning…fast. Her responsibilities include a full time job, her two growing boys, and her mother. She’s the glue of her family, feeling the strain of a pandemic. That’s where LEAP comes in.

“They called me when the pandemic first started because they wanted to see how they could help me with the initial adjustment,” Madison continues, “Once we were situated they said ‘okay, now we are going to provide homework help and more.’ Now they are helping my sons at least three times a week.”

“They [her sons: Romel and Romaine] love their counselors and you know how kids are…it’s great to have people they actually want to listen to. They also gave us a $200 gift card for groceries which…was hugely helpful. After all of that, LEAP continues to call us, making sure that we are okay.” LEAP will always be there for families like Madison’s to help them in the ways that matter most: with food, health and education.

Thank You to Our Recent Grantors Who Supported LEAP’s Unprecedented Needs During the COVID-19 Crisis

• B Foundation • Barnes Foundation • Carolyn Foundation • CHEFA • City Missionary Association of New Haven • Community Foundation for Greater New Haven • Cyrus M. Quigley Foundation • First Book • First Niagara • Friends of Kang Yun Foundation • George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation • International Association of New Haven • Jane and William Curran Foundation • Julia Rusinek Memorial Fund • Lewis G. Schaeneman, Jr. Foundation • Liberty Bank Foundation • Mara W. Breech Foundation • MFUNd • New Alliance Foundation • New City Foundation • New York Life Foundation • Orchard Foundation • Pincus Family Foundation • Ranis Family • Seedlings Foundation • TD Charitable Foundation • Verizon Foundation • Wells Fargo Foundation • William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund • William C. Graustein • Yale Community for New Haven Fund
“LEAP has done a really great job of making sure that everyone involved – participants, families and counselors – are getting the support that they need,” says Elizabeth Kinnane-Smith, Senior Counselor. Elizabeth faced sudden adjustments as her other job was no longer feasible. It was welcome news that LEAP would continue to employ her as she was already making it a priority to stay in contact with her LEAP children and families.

Having a source of stability and support has been really important to Elizabeth, and it enables her to go the extra mile as a counselor.

In addition to meeting with her students three times each week to help them with homework and read together, Elizabeth sends hand written letters and portraits to LEAPers who could use some extra attention. This touching act led to her latest idea: a hand crafted coloring book of prominent women of color who have made or are making history. She will print and mail them to her LEAP children to enjoy at home.

“A poem gives me a chance to have an encounter with a feeling, with an experience, with a wish, with an idea.”

Alicia Cobb Centers Families Everywhere Via LEAP’s Facebook Live

“First and foremost I want to say LEAP is an organization I have loved for years,” starts Alicia Cobb, Owner of Art Simplicated and enrichment class instructor for LEAP for seven years now. Alicia herself grew up in the projects of Stamford where she did not have the same access to resources as many of her peers.

There were not a lot of quality after-school programs for her and her three brothers to choose from and so the value and impact of LEAP is not lost on her.

“That is so many of these kids’ stories…and knowing that they have this safe haven to come to where they get quality programming from all different facets…I just think it’s great what LEAP is doing for the kids of New Haven and I’m glad to be a part of that.”

Art has always been a therapeutic resource for her, which is why she knows how beneficial it is for children and families right now. “Kids right now more than ever need to be able to express themselves,” she explains.

It is important to Alicia that participants express themselves without restriction. “Art is about self expression and so I love being able to work in programs like LEAP where I come in and say to the kids, ‘Here is what we’re doing today,’ and then they have the freedom to do it how they want.”

Alicia has received incredible feedback from grateful parents emphasizing how much her art resource means to them and their families. “I get messages from the parents saying ‘You have no idea how helpful this has been to me,’ ‘You have reignited my love of art,’ and ‘This finally gives me and my child time to sit together and be creative.’ ”

Join these recurring Virtual Art Classes! They occur every Friday at 3pm, when Alicia goes live on LEAP’s Facebook page: @Leapinc
You Saw Us Spring Into Action… Now We Plan For Summer!

For decades, LEAP’s free 6-week summer camp has been a safe and exciting space for children and youth in New Haven to grow, play, and learn. A normal LEAP summer includes out-of-state field trips, swimming lessons, visits to museums, and overnight camping. Unfortunately, many of these activities will have to be cancelled or altered significantly this summer to protect the community’s health. But our goal remains to open children’s horizons with educational opportunities, and to prepare children to succeed when they return to school in the fall.

Despite these challenges, LEAP is committed to having a free summer program and is making plans for both virtual and in-person versions that may include outdoor, neighborhood-based activities for children to exercise and explore. We have surveyed our families and the vast majority need childcare as they return to work, though they remain concerned about safety. In response, LEAP will continue to employ and train 100 LEAP counselors to serve as mentors and role models for children. We know we will still have a strong literacy focus. Due to extended school closures, children are at risk for dramatic learning losses this summer, particularly the low-income children we serve who have fewer at-home resources than wealthier peers. LEAP children will participate in an intensive daily literacy curriculum, either in-person or virtually, where they will read culturally relevant, age-appropriate books and we will send home several more to build their home libraries.

As the situation with COVID-19 develops, LEAP is continuing to work with the state, education experts, local youth-serving organization leaders, parents, and counselors to design a summer program that safely addresses the needs of LEAP’s children for learning, interaction with peers and mentors, outdoor activities and fun.

Will you join us in making LEAP's summer amazing?
Your gift will make free summer camp possible for New Haven's kids!

During the COVID pandemic, we have additional costs including PPE, thermometers, extra cleaning supplies, technology platforms, and emergency food and rent support for families. Please contribute at www.leapforkids.org/donate. We need your support now more than ever!

As the LEAP community continues to come together to serve families despite unprecedented challenges, LEAP honors the memory of Louise Endel, who connected us and gathered the strength of our community together to make it better for us all.
To add to a video memorial tribute, please contact Louise's daughter Susan Kerner at kerners@montclair.edu.

LEAP Board of Directors

Co-Chairs
Ann Baker Pepe and Ed Cleary

Treasurer
Susan Biel Kerley

Co-Founders, Past Chairs
Roslyn Milstein Meyer and Anne Tyler Calabresi

Emeritus
Honorable William Dyson and Jerome Harris Meyer

Vice Chair
Stephen Wizner

Secretary
Cynthia Mann

Directors
Sharon Brooks, Marcus McFerren, Tai Richardson, Ken Russell, Alexis Smith, and Deloris Vaughn

Executive Director
Henry Fernandez

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