



LEAP Newsletter

Summer 2021

Donate Today: www.leapforkids.org



LEAP's 2021 summer program was a unique combination of getting back to "normal" and dealing with the realities of COVID-19. We ran a large 5 week summer camp for over 550 children and young teens in 6 neighborhood sites. We employed an additional 120 teens and young adults to work as counselors and instructors. We reopened our pool and our computer learning center.

We ran as much programming as possible outside, kept everyone masked indoors, and mandated full vaccination for anyone working for us whether a 16 year old high school student or full time staff member. We did not do any overnight camping or transport children via buses to visit the great resources across New Haven. Instead, they got to experience more in their neighborhoods, completing walking tours, discovering parks and gardens, and taking part in arts and cycling projects.

I am extremely proud of our team's commitment to maintaining the protocols necessary to ensure that children, counselors, and staff remained safe.

I am equally proud of the work we did to get children ready for school in the fall. Most of our kids have not been in a classroom setting for a year and a half. At LEAP, they sat around tables with other kids again, participated in our literacy programs, wrote essays, discussed literature, and each received 10 books to take home for their family libraries.

As always, this was only possible because of the full LEAP village, from kids, to parents, to counselors, to staff, and to donors, partners, and friends. Thanks to you for always making LEAP possible.

Sincerely,

Henry Fernandez, Executive Director

LEAP SUMMER PROGRAMMING 2021



After going virtual last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAP was excited to restart in-person programming this summer. Our kids looked forward to beginning enrichment activities again, where they got to have new experiences and expand their vision of what is possible for themselves. With classes like swimming, computer coding, gardening, African and Latin dance, chess, photography, art, cooking, yoga, and much more, LEAPers and their counselors dedicated these afternoons to developing new skills, de-stressing, and bonding. One highlight was our pilot partnership with the Bradley St. Bike Co-Op. The Co-Op, Devil's Gear Bike Shop, and LEAP supporters donated bikes and helmets for our children, which they used to learn about bike safety and complete a bike ride from Dixwell to the Co-Op and back. Thank you to our partners for spending their summers with LEAP!

REFLECTIONS ON AN IN-PERSON RETURN



This past summer, LEAP was thrilled to resume in-person summer programming at full capacity. After a year of virtual LEAP programming and remote schooling, this summer was an especially important time for counselors and kids to reconnect, in-person activities to resume, and young people to receive the academic and social-emotional support they need.

A Junior Counselor, Therese, said, “I get to make more personal connections with my kids rather than not being able to...see their actual personalities besides on the screen.” One LEAPER, Kamal (11), said that being in-person has “been fun because we get to do more stuff and we don’t have to be online, talking and unmuting, and pressing buttons. Now we can actually have some activities and meet new people while we’re here.”



One of the in-person activities that LEAP resumed was aquatics. After a year of closure, LEAP reopened its pool to provide swim lessons to our Leaders in Training, who are 13-15 years old. Many of our LITs started this summer not knowing how to swim, so LEAP was excited to be able to offer them the opportunity to learn a life saving skill. We hope to reopen our swim lessons to all LEAPers as well as community members in the coming year.

THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT GRANTORS

Bank of America Charitable Foundation • Barnes Foundation Inc. • Brzezicki Family Foundation • Carolyn Foundation • City Missionary Association of New Haven • City of New Haven • Community Foundation for Greater New Haven • Jack Kent Cooke Foundation • Jane and William Curran Foundation • First Niagara • Mabel Burchard Fischer Grant Foundation • Joe & Cindy Goldberg Family Foundation • Ethel & Abe Lapides Foundation • George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation • Nellie Mae Education Foundation • Henry E. Niles Foundation • Cyrus M. Quigley Foundation • Sassafras Foundation, Inc. • Seedlings Foundation • TD Charitable Foundation • United Way of Greater New Haven

LITS “LEAP” BACK IN

LEAP’s Leaders in Training program offers mentorship, leadership development, literacy support, and fun activities like cooking, swimming in LEAP’s pool, and coding in the LEAP computer lab, for young adults aged 13 to 15. LITs repeatedly name LEAP as their favorite aspect of the summer and are especially happy to be back in person.

Over the last 5 years, Jermaine has grown from a LEAP kid to an LIT. He described how LEAP has been “something sturdy...[that] really helped” in his personal development. He specifically named the coding practice and swimming as the most impactful since he did not know how to do either before his time in LEAP. Another LIT, Kaiden, spoke about the support she receives from her counselors, expressing that “we’re just a big happy Brady Bunch.” With this support, many LITs go on to become our Junior and then Senior Counselors, with LEAP continuing to support them in planning for college and careers.



VOLUNTEERS PROMOTE LITERACY AT SMALL-SCALE READ-IN



The 2021 annual Read-In on the Green(s) took place on July 16th, a sunny day filled with reading and joy. This year, due to the pandemic, the event was held at five different LEAP sites. We are grateful for the volunteers from all over Connecticut who came out to read to over 400 LEAPers!

Some of our favorite books read included *The Proudest Blue* and *Don’t Touch my Hair!* Guest musicians from New Haven Symphony Orchestra joined to play musical excerpts while reading music-themed books to the children. Thanks to State Representative Pat Dillon for volunteering and sharing her passion for reading.



A special thank you to Elm City Market for providing snacks to help keep our volunteers nourished and energized throughout the event! In spite of the challenges of the pandemic, we are so thankful to everyone who came out to the event and made the day so special!



GRANT FUNDS CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING FOR LEAPERS

With our global curriculum this summer, our young people had the opportunity to learn about diverse cultures and communities. In our programs, we strive to foster curiosity in our youth about the greater world around us.

Counselors were given the opportunity to design their own curriculum, so they often chose topics that they are passionate about, incorporating different modalities like sports, arts, film, and language. Juan, a Junior Counselor, said, “I taught about Jamaica. I’m actually Jamaican myself, so it was great teaching the kids about something I love. There’s actually a Jamaican store right down the street...and when I brought up the topic of Jamaica, [the kids] said ‘I like their food...Mr. Juan, have you ever been there?’”

The focus on global cultures this summer included scheduled activities that LEAP kids participated in daily. Some of the highlights included Latin dance, African drumming, and international art. These activities were taught by local instructors that LEAP partners with and are made possible with support from the International Association of New Haven.



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



@LEAP, Inc.



@leapforkids



@LEAPforkids

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New Haven, CT
Permit No. 442

Return Service Requested

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 Clifton Watson

Executive Director

Henry Fernandez

Save the Date for LEAP's 27th Annual LEAP Year Event (with In-Person and Zoom options) Thursday, February 24, 2022



We hope you can join us on **Thursday, February 24, 2022** for a wonderful evening of learning and conversation.

LEAP Year Event 2022 will have over 20 in-person and virtual dinner options to choose from, each with fascinating guests of honor and generous hosts!

To be a LEAP Year Event Sponsor, please contact **Rachel Kline Brown**, Director of Development and Communications, at rklinebrown@leapforkids.org.