



SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER

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Executive Director's Note

Exciting renovations and community commitment shape LEAP's future

Dear LEAP family,

We are thrilled to welcome children back to our after-school programs at seven neighborhood schools and two community centers. We are enthusiastic about upcoming LEAP traditions, like our Halloween festival in October and our Thankful Dinner in November.

We are also excited about the preliminary design of the renovation of our Roslyn Milstein Meyer LEAP Community Center, just completed by local architect Ken Boroson. Over 100 years ago community members built the Jefferson Street center for city youth - and it is feeling its age.

Renovation will cost about \$4 million, and we have already raised half of that. The design includes more classroom spaces, a new library, art room, black box theater, and beautiful dance studio with mirrors, wood floors and lots of

natural light. We will expand our teaching kitchen and renew our pool and gymnasium. We also plan a new rooftop deck for meetings and community events. Finally, the building, which was built long before the Americans with Disabilities Act, will add an elevator, accessible bathrooms, and pool access.

LEAP reflects the New Haven community's commitment to its children, especially children of color from low income neighborhoods. We are proud to represent so many of our neighbors who support LEAP and make our past, present and future work possible.

Henry Fernandez

Executive Director



ConGRADs to Our Counselors



Scholarship Recipients: Chris Llacxaguanga, Shadore Davenport, Kaiden McIntosh, and Adrel Brenes

The annual Scholarship Ceremony celebrated the exceptional achievements of LEAP's students.

The first award, named in honor of longtime LEAP Secretary Mrs. Annie Veale, was presented to Adrel Brenes, who will be attending Dean College in the fall. The Jay Bolvisky Scholarship was awarded to Shadore Davenport, who will be attending Virginia Commonwealth University, and the Regina Winters Scholarship was awarded to Kaiden McIntosh and Chris Llacxaguanga, both of whom will be attending the University of Connecticut.

The atmosphere was electric as LEAPers cheered for their peers, celebrating the collective accomplishments of these future leaders. This ceremony serves as a reminder to these students that LEAP will always support them.



Counselors develop archery skills.



LEAPers show off their new Book Fair books.



LEAP's Annual Read-In Returns to the Green

Volunteers from all over read to hundreds of New Haven kids

Over 60 volunteers joined almost 800 LEAPers at our annual Read-In on the Green. Last year's event was moved indoors due to rainy weather, but this year, we were lucky enough to hold the event back at its original location on the New Haven Green under clear, sunny skies.

We kicked off the morning with energizing LEAP chants and heard from important community figures including Mayor Justin Elicker, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, and Senator Martin Looney who gave inspiring speeches and reminded our campers about the importance of reading. Volunteers chose from hundreds of books provided by LEAP or brought their own, covering various topics from family life to self-identity to dreaming big. The kids also had the chance to learn about and even play some instruments brought by Elaine Carroll of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra.



LEAPers Go On Adventures Through Nature and Science

Learning happens on forest trails and museum exhibits for these students

New Haven youth spent part of their summer exploring Connecticut's state parks through LEAP's outdoor program. LEAPers observed the plants along the trails of Sleeping Giant and camped overnight at Kettletown and Black Rock. Through activities like hikes, dance battles, football games, and campfires, LEAPers created lasting memories and gained a deeper appreciation for nature, illustrating the positive impact of the outdoors.

Inside New Haven, LEAPers took a journey into the past and explored the Yale Peabody Museum. Many students, like Amier, visited the museum for the first time. He says, "I've never seen dinosaur bones this big before. It's cool to learn about how old they are."



LEAPers hike at Sleeping Giant State Park.



Volunteer Heidi Bauer reads to LEAPers.



Students in awe of the echinoderm fossils at the Yale Peabody Museum.



Jasmine Chen of the New Haven Symphony reads to LEAPers.

High Schoolers Get a Taste of College Life Through Summer Dance Program

Partnership with David Dorfman Dance mixes arts and academics

“The week made me really see how college will be,” reflected one of the 20 Leaders in Training who experienced attending Connecticut College for a week this summer through a partnership with professional dance company David Dorfman Dance. These teens took Modern, West African, and Afro-Caribbean dance classes, Poetry, Forensic Psychology, Digital Art classes and more. Fifteen-year-old Blessed loved the Marine Biology class, “where we were inspecting mussels and clams because it was a really hands-on experience, which was much more fun than just reading about them.”

Beyond their classes with Connecticut College professors, they ate in the dining hall, slept in the dorms, and even went on trips to the New London waterfront to try out kayaking and sailing. The week culminated in a showcase of the dances that students helped choreograph based on their reflections from their college experience. In her reflection, a student said, “I felt proud and confident when I finished the whole dance without forgetting it. I also know that I can handle going away to college.”

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LEAPers fill the Q House gym for basketball clinic.

Q House's Summer of Fun

*Community thrives in the
Dixwell Neighborhood*

The Dixwell Community "Q" House has been a hub for activities all summer long, offering a variety of programs and events that cater to all ages and interests.

Community members enjoyed stopping by the Q House on Thursday nights in July to catch outdoor screenings of movies like "Soul," "Selma," and "Crooklyn." The Q House also hosted events such as the Volleyball Clinic which was led by Taneha Edwards. Their first session was at max capacity, showing the high demand for

sports programs in the Dixwell community. Additionally, roughly 140 LEAPers from the Dwight-Kensington and Dixwell sites got to partake in the Centennial Basketball Clinic. The Q House collaborated with Tai Sullivan's camp and Coach Bobby B led sessions alongside volunteer coaches.

CitySeed's Farmers Market returned for its third summer at the Q House Plaza. In addition to providing access to fresh, local produce, the Farmers Market recently held a "Food Business Showcase," where local food entrepreneurs such as Momma Kiss Kitchen Cuisine brought flavors of the world to New Haven.



Kids line up to try fresh produce from the Farmers Market.

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