

# Great Expectations 2026

LEGACY. LEADERSHIP. FUTURE

Honoring Linda Saris: A Legacy of Leadership, A Foundation for the Future.

In 1998, Linda Saris envisioned a safe, academically focused space where teens from low-income and first-generation families could learn, grow, and feel supported. After 12 successful years (1989 -2001) as an executive in the emerging cybersecurity industry, she left the tech sector to turn that vision into reality.



Greatly influenced by her coming-of-age experiences in the 60's and the call to make a difference in the community, Linda launched **Salem CyberSpace** in 2002 as part of North Shore Community Action Programs which quickly became a second home for local Salem youth. As demand grew and the programs and geography expanded, Salem CyberSpace became an independent nonprofit in 2014 and rebranded as **LEAP for Education**.

What began with just eight students now serves **600 youth annually** and has supported more than **3,000 students** across Salem, Peabody, Gloucester, and Lynn. LEAP alumni are today thriving in fields including government, healthcare, STEM, criminal justice, education, the arts, human services, and business. Since its independence in 2014 and under Linda's leadership as Executive Director and Founder, **LEAP has quintupled its revenues and students served.**

Over the 24 years at the helm, her impact has extended throughout the region through service on numerous community boards and advisory groups, including Root NS, Power of Place Learning, Latinos for Education, Bertolon School of Business Advisory Board, New Liberty Innovation School (founding member), the North Shore Technology Council, The Boston Club, the Commonwealth's After-School and Out-of-School Time Advisory Board as well as strategic planning committees in Salem and Lynn public schools. She has also served on two private sector boards – Beverly National Bank and Beverly Bank.





This year's Great Expectations event is especially meaningful as we celebrate Linda's decades of vision and leadership ahead of her retirement in June 2026. In her honor, we are launching the **New ERA Fund** — a bold initiative to ensure Linda's legacy lives on through transformational, measurable workforce development efforts that prepare the next generation for success.

