LEAP for Education

A NEW ERA

2026 ANNUAL REPORT



"LEAP helped me feel more prepared for my future by teaching me about different career options and helping me improve my communication and professional skills." - **LEAP High School Student**

EDUCATION ★ RESOURCES ★ ALLIES

LEAP Staff and Board of Directors



LEAP's work is made possible by a dedicated community. As we enter a new chapter, we build on the relationships, expertise, and leadership that have shaped LEAP for nearly 25 years.

ADVANCEMENT

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Jess Casolari, Marketing & Communications Coordinator
Brittany Hadzy, Volunteer & Partnerships Specialist
Yuri Martinez, Donor Engagement Specialist
Mira Riggin, Grants Coordinator

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Francheska Rosario, Expanding Horizons Site Coordinator
Wanntha Sim Chanhdymany, School Year Manager
Giscar Smith, Dream MORE Site Coordinator

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Alazá Merrill, Community Resource Manager
Jet Alouidor, Work-Based Learning Manager
Mariel Nunez, Community Resource Coordinator
Lara São Pedro, Career & Education Mentoring Coordinator
Erica Waters, Career and Education Mentoring Associate

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Stef Crockett, People & Culture Manager
Elizabeth Grella, Interim Operations Manager
Kathleen McMahon, Accountant
Brandon Sungy, Data Specialist

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Ariel FitzHugh, Senior Director of High School and Post-Secondary Programs
Hilary Kopp, Senior Director of Middle School Programs
Andrew Spooner, Director of Strategy & Innovation
Amanda Thompson, Director of Advancement

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FOUNDER EMERITA

Linda Saris

Looking Back. Thinking Bigger.

Building on legacy to expand opportunity in new ways.

Dear friends,

This has been a year of meaningful progress and important transitions for LEAP for Education. Our founder, Linda Saris, retired after 24 years of dedicated leadership. We are deeply grateful for her vision and commitment, and for the people and partnerships that helped build LEAP's strong foundation. Together, we are honored to carry that work forward for the young people we support today and those who will follow.

For nearly 25 years, LEAP has helped young people in Salem and Lynn discover their strengths, explore new possibilities, and build pathways toward their educational and career goals. At the heart of this work is a simple belief: talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Too often, a young person's future is shaped not only by their potential, but by the education, resources, and relationships available to help them realize it.

The stories and outcomes in these pages show what becomes possible when those opportunities are within reach. This year, LEAP engaged 583 young people across our middle school, high school, summer work, and post-secondary programs. Students discovered new interests, developed skills and confidence, built relationships with caring adults and mentors, and took important steps toward their futures. Over time, those experiences add up, as evidenced by our sustained post-secondary enrollment and graduation rates that are more than twice the state averages for low-income students.

But the work of this year has not been limited to what we can measure and celebrate today.

As LEAP enters its "New ERA," we are building on this foundation while thinking more intentionally about how to expand opportunity for young people throughout our communities. Strong programs remain at the heart of our work, but we also see an opportunity to connect the people, institutions, and resources around young people in more coordinated and meaningful ways.

That means strengthening our partnerships with schools, creating more opportunities for young people to learn from and work alongside local employers, engaging alumni and community members as mentors and allies, and making better use of the many assets already present in Salem and Lynn. It also means continuing to strengthen LEAP itself so we can deliver on these ambitions for years to come.

This work is taking shape at a consequential time. Public funding for youth development and employment opportunities is increasingly uncertain, while the educational and career landscape continues to evolve rapidly. These realities challenge all of us to think creatively about how we support the next generation. They also reinforce our belief that lasting opportunity is built through shared effort.

An annual report is naturally a look back, but we hope these pages also offer a glimpse of what's ahead. We are proud of what LEAP and our young people accomplished this year, energized by the plans already in motion, and grateful to the community helping make both possible.

Thank you for being part of LEAP's story and for helping build a future in which more young people can discover their potential and find the pathways to pursue it.

Warmly,

Kayla Dorst

KAYLA DORST,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Connie Grayson

CONSTANCE RUDNICK GRAYSON,
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



LEAP by the Numbers

Our FY26 community at a glance.

580+
YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED

SALEM & LYNN
OUR HOME COMMUNITIES

301
MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH

254
HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

28
POST-SECONDARY YOUTH

145+
LOCAL EMPLOYERS INVESTED

150+
VOLUNTEERS & MENTORS ENGAGED

YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

79%
LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

79%
YOUTH OF COLOR

31%
MULTILINGUAL OR FORMER MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

76%
FIRST-GENERATION-TO-COLLEGE

Our Work, Their Futures

LEAP for Education is a youth education nonprofit with 24 years of impact, offering free, year-round programs from middle school through post-secondary that expand opportunity and advance equity for young people historically underrepresented in higher education and the workforce.

Our North Star

Preparing young people to navigate, adapt, and thrive in a rapidly changing world of work.

Young people may revisit awareness, readiness, and immersion at any stage of their education or career.



> ***Partners like LEAP are essential to creating meaningful career development experiences. Young people deserve opportunities that provide not only real-world experience, but also the guidance and support they need to build confidence and independence. LEAP's unique model allows us employers to do just that."***
>
> - Tina McLoughlin, Director, Community Health, Salem Hospital



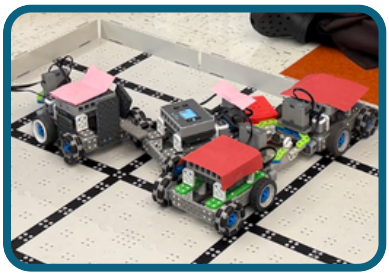
Middle School

- ★ PROJECT-BASED LEARNING
- ★ BUILDING ACADEMIC MINDSETS & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HABITS

Where curiosity becomes confidence

LEAP's free middle school programs help youth discover their interests and talents, build confidence, and strengthen academic and social-emotional skills. Offered in partnership with Salem and Lynn Public Schools, these programs use hands-on projects to introduce career possibilities while developing 21st Century skills. Supportive relationships with peers and caring adults help prepare students for high school and future opportunities.





Meet Michael D.

Grade: 8 • Program: Dream MORE

FINDING THE COURAGE TO TRY

Michael joined Dream MORE as a 6th grader because he wanted to try something new. Robotics quickly became a favorite, especially building robots and competing in robot soccer matches. Along the way, he found something just as important: caring staff members he could count on. "I can trust them, go to them, and they're always there for me."

Last summer, Michael challenged himself in dance. Initially shy and nervous around unfamiliar peers, he found the courage to perform in the front row of the final showcase. The experience helped him realize what he could accomplish by stepping outside his comfort zone. Now, he's excited about the possibility of becoming a LEAP intern, gaining work experience and serving as a mentor and role model for younger students.

> *"I have learned that facing your fears can be scary, but the outcome can be better than the fear."*
>
> — Michael D.





CONNECTING LEARNING TO COMMUNITY

Through Books with Purpose, students wrote and illustrated stories, exchanged feedback with peers across Salem and Lynn, and shared their books with younger children. The project connected hands-on learning to communities, showing students how their creativity could make a difference beyond the classroom.





PARTNERSHIPS EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

In partnership with “Save the Harbor, Save the Bay”, students from both cities explored George's Island, from fishing and discovering marine life alongside MIT students to touring historic Fort Warren. Experiences like these connect students with people, places, and opportunities they might not otherwise encounter.

BUILDING CAREER AWARENESS

Before and after program participation

+37%

more middle school students feel confident sharing their interests and values

+44%

more middle school students aware of career possibilities

Nationally, 93% of middle school students say they need more exposure to different career paths.

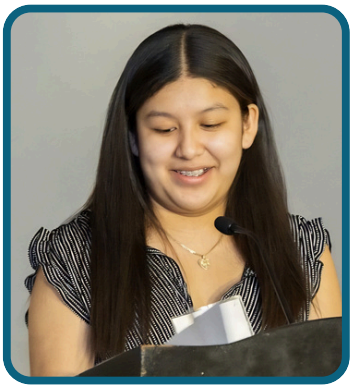
[Discovery Education, Education Insights 2024–2025]

High School

- PROJECT-BASED + WORK-BASED LEARNING
- BUILDING + APPLYING ACADEMIC MINDSETS & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HABITS

Where exploration becomes direction

LEAP's free high school programs in Salem and Lynn help students connect their interests and strengths to education and career possibilities. Through hands-on projects, career exploration, paid work experiences, and relationships with caring adults and professionals, students build confidence, develop workplace skills, and begin shaping their futures. Growing partnerships with local employers are creating more opportunities for students to apply their skills in real-world settings.





Meet Karla G.

Grade: 12 • Programs: Dream MORE, Lynn Career & Education Center and Summer Work Program

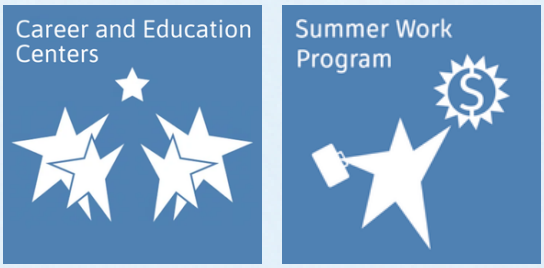
FROM EXPLORATION TO PURPOSE

When Karla joined Dream MORE in middle school, she found more than academic support. New to the country, she discovered a welcoming community where she felt safe, supported, and encouraged to try new things.

Karla continued through LEAP's high school programs, got paid work experiences, and returned to Dream MORE as a mentor and junior group leader. Leading a healthy foods project sparked a new interest in medicine and nutrition, helping her see another way to make a difference in her community.

Today, Karla looks toward her future with greater confidence, new skills, and a growing sense of purpose.

> *Through LEAP programs, I became more comfortable and confident in speaking English and I am no longer afraid to try new or different things."*
>
> — Karla G.



LEVERAGING COMMUNITY ASSETS

LEAP drew on the expertise of our community to introduce students to new skills and career possibilities. MIE brought programming in entrepreneurship and esthetician careers, LynnLabs provided hands-on science experiences, and guest speakers, including MA Attorney General Andrea Campbell, further enriched career connections.





EXPANDING EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

LEAP piloted a new hybrid internship model through the Summer Work Program, placing 11 students with local organizations in fields aligned with their interests. Students split their time between workplace experience and LEAP's career programming. Partnerships with employers like Salem Hospital help young people build professional connections, apply their skills, and discover new possibilities.

BUILDING CAREER READINESS

Before and after program participation

+71%

more high school students reporting clarity about careers that align with their interests and strengths

93%

of Summer Work Program participants reported developing new professional skills

Nationally, 71% of high school students do not feel very prepared to enter the workforce.

[American Student Assistance, 2025]

Post-Secondary

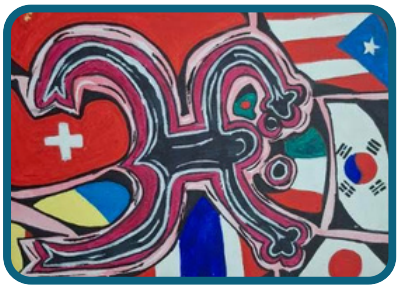
- ONE-ON-ONE MENTORSHIP & COACHING + WORK-BASED LEARNING
- APPLYING ACADEMIC MINDSETS & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HABITS



Where aspirations become achievement

LEAP's free post-secondary advising program helps young people navigate education and career pathways with personalized support from caring, trained mentors. Through one-on-one guidance, financial aid and scholarship assistance, and support with internships, employment, and further education, young people build confidence, overcome challenges, and take meaningful steps toward achieving their education and career goals.





Meet Liudismar R.

Grade: College Junior • Programs: Expanding Horizons, Salem Career & Education Center, Summer Work Program, and Post-Secondary Success

BUILDING A PATH FROM COLLEGE TO CAREER

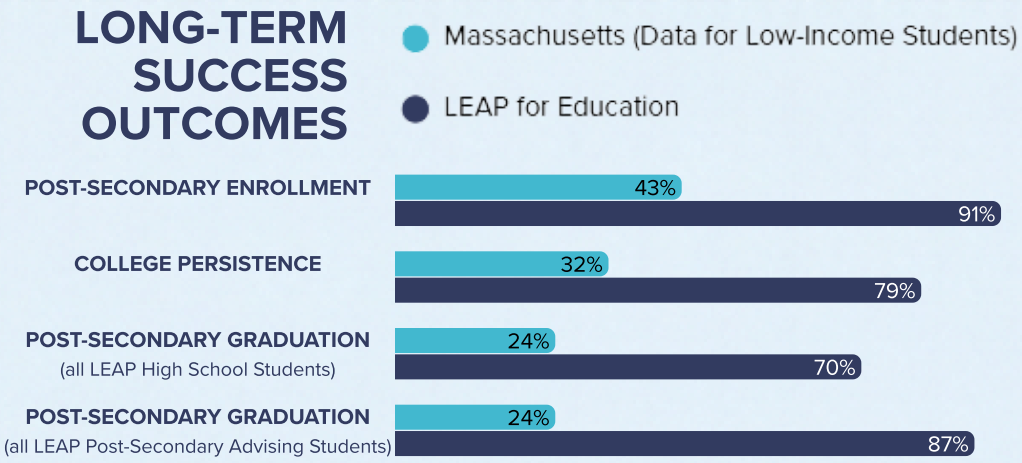
After moving from Puerto Rico to Salem, Liudismar began her LEAP programming journey as an 8th grader. Now a junior at Salem State studying art and graphic design, she is gaining relevant work experience while giving back to her community.

As a junior group leader with LEAP, she helped younger students explore Salem's immigrant history through art with the Peabody Essex Museum. She has also supported voter registration and served as a translator at the polls.

LEAP continues to help Liudismar navigate challenges, stay on track with her education, and build confidence in pursuing a career as an artist.

> *"Through LEAP I've received guidance and advice that I use in my everyday life. As a first-generation college student, LEAP support has helped me better understand what it means to be a college student."*
>
> — Liudismar R.

LONG-TERM SUCCESS OUTCOMES



Alumni

FROM LEAP STUDENT TO BOARD MEMBER

Sia-Linda Lebbie has returned to help shape the organization's future as its newest Board member. Preparing to graduate from her MBA program debt-free and begin a career at Microsoft, Sia-Linda credits LEAP's community of mentors and supporters with helping her reach goals she once only dreamed of. Among them is fellow Board member Lydia Smyers, whose years of support and encouragement reflect the lasting relationships at the heart of LEAP.



> ***Full-circle moments hit differently. I am proud to share that I have officially joined LEAP for Education's board of directors, giving back to the very organization that helped shape my journey!"***
>
> — Sia-Linda Lebbie
> Incoming PMM @ Microsoft |
> MBA'27 Candidate at Notre Dame

LEAP alumni pledged a record-breaking $67,000 in FY26!

Great Expectations 2026

Honoring a Legacy, Investing in the Future









We are deeply grateful to Linda for building an organization that never stops asking what more is possible for young people. Her vision, generosity, and commitment to innovation continue to inspire us to think bigger, do more, and build on the foundation she created. **Introduced at Great Expectations in honor of Linda's legacy, New ERA carries that tenacious spirit forward.**

LEAP's **New ERA** Vision builds on our strong core programs, which remain hubs for innovation, while expanding our role in creating lasting, community-wide solutions. We're moving beyond programs that address gaps in a fragmented system toward building a connected network of **E**ducation, **R**esources, and **A**llies that can outlast any one program.

Scan to watch the New ERA Intro Video

Our New ERA In Action

EDUCATION • RESOURCES • ALLIES

New ERA is moving from vision-setting into implementation in several ways:

EXPANDING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT THROUGH REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS



LEAP is helping shape a regional approach to youth employment, supported by partnerships and funding from the MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The pilot demonstrated how shared responsibility can make internships more accessible to teens and employers. With LEAP providing preparation, coaching, and problem-solving support, employers could focus on mentorship and meaningful workplace experiences. **Through continued collaboration and shared learning, partners are working toward a more sustainable model that makes it easier for employers across the region to create meaningful, paid opportunities for young people.**

MASSHIRE NORTH SHORE WORKFORCE BOARD

Mass General Brigham Salem Hospital

Lynn Community Health Center

BUILDING PATHWAYS INTO EDUCATION CAREERS



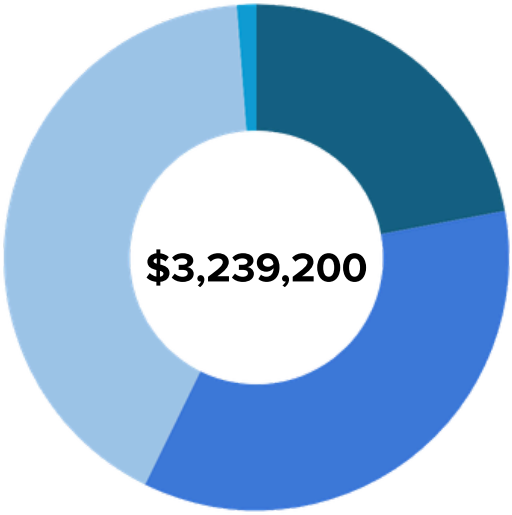
LEAP has been coordinating with partners to develop an Out-of-School-Time (OST) Educator Certificate Program. Together, we are tackling shared challenges in recruiting, onboarding, and training youth workers while creating clearer pathways into education careers and opportunities for professional growth. **Through joint grant applications and shared planning, partners are laying the groundwork for a community-driven solution that strengthens the regional workforce and professionalizes the field.**

Your Investment At Work

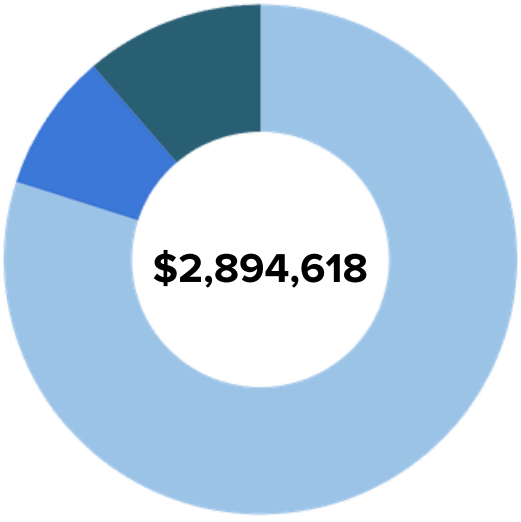
Fiscal Year July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Revenue

- **Community Contributions**
  $1,343,446 | 41%
- **Foundations & Trusts**
  $1,140,676 | 35%
- **Contract Revenue**
  $714,429 | 22%
- **Interest Income**
  $40,649 | 1%



Expenses



- **Program Services**
  $2,313,718 | 80%
- **Management & Administrative**
  $253,934 | 9%
- **Fundraising**
  $326,966 | 11%

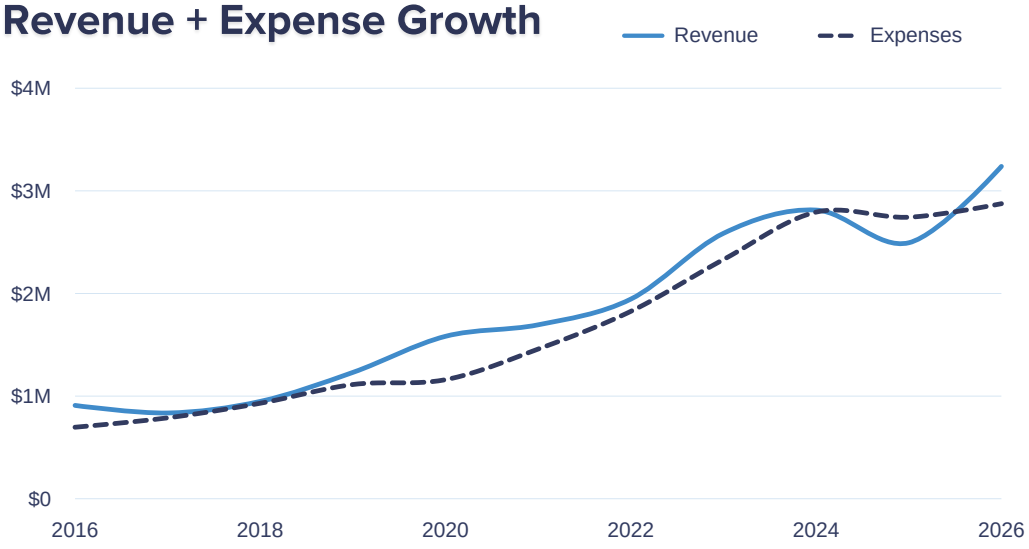
INVESTING IN LEAP'S FUTURE

FY26 revenue includes more than $300,000 in generous multi-year pledges, reflecting donors' confidence in LEAP's direction and providing critical stability as we invest in our New ERA.

Balance Sheet Details

	2026	2025	2024
CASH	$1,482,116	$1,399,067	$1,669,237
TOTAL ASSETS	$2,208,657	$1,638,805	$2,021,281
TOTAL LIABILITIES	$625,431	$383,294	$512,790
NET ASSETS	**$1,583,226**	**$1,255,511**	**$1,508,491**

Revenue + Expense Growth



A decade of growth and a strong financial foundation position LEAP to expand opportunities for young people in the years ahead.

> ***"As a longtime partner, TruNorth Bank has seen LEAP turn community investment into meaningful opportunities for young people. Their thoughtful stewardship and clear vision for the future give us confidence in our continued support. Investing in LEAP means investing in the future of our communities."***
>
> — Mike Wheeler
> President, TruNorth Bank



Balance Sheet

10 Year Growth

Our Supporters

Every gift helps possibility grow.

Thank you to the individuals, families, businesses, and foundations whose generosity supports LEAP's young people.

Individuals & Families

Mary and Joel Abramson
Sarita Ago
Mary Alice Alexander
James Andersen
Dan Anderson
Mary Jo and Bryce Anderson
Mercis Arias
Jenny and Michael Armini
Constance and James Armstrong
Barrie Atkin and Helen Tieger Charitable Fund
Adele Fleet Bacow and Dr. Lawrence S. Bacow
Maja Badzak
Michelle and David Baer
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Jessica Bailey
William Bailey
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Vineet Banga
Celine Barakat
Sandra Bargainnier
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John Beccia
Barbara Bennett
Hadee and Kayla Benoit
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Lynn and Michael Ciuchta
Alison Freed and Michael Clayton
Hildete and Paul Clayton
Kenneth Clayton
Michael Cleary
Jean Cocuzzo
Nina Cohen and Craig Barrows
Susan Cohen
Linda Jane Coleman
Deury Collado De Jesus
Ana Colmenero and Hoyt Van Otterloo
Lisa and John Colucci
Jacqueline Comeau
Hannah and Kenmore Commoss
The Consalvo Family
Elizabeth and William Coombes
Kathy and Andy Cooper
The Coppola Family
Beth Anne Cornell
Alice M. Cort and Bruce D. Walker
Cynthia and Thomas J. Costin
RoAnn Costin
Brendan Crighton
Manny and Vanessa Cruz
Victor Miguel Cruz
Matthew Curran
Carol Cushing
Philio Wigglesworth Cushing
The Dana Family
Elizabeth Darragh
The Dart Family
Breno de Medeiros
Drs. Mary and Neal DeChillo
Audrey Y. and Thomas V. Deloffi
Claire Dembowski
The Deschenes Family
Ann and Andy Devereaux
The George Dhionis Family
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Hannah Diozzi
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Kevin Dorst
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Rebecca and Laurence Ehrhardt
Jennifer Ellingwood and Jeremy Kraft
Faith and Chris Emerson
Eric Emerton
Holson Escalazy
Dr. Martha C. Farmer and Steven C. Carhart
Sarah Faude
Wendy and Stan Finger
Linda Finn
Fallon and John Fitzgerald
Val and Steve Fox
Beth Francis
Alan Freeman

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Nicole McLaughlin and Ben Waxman
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Kathleen McSweeney
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Miguelina Mesa
Leslie Meyer and George Dean
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Mary Frances Milburn
Lucia Miringu
Marnie Moore
Patricia Moore and Wayne Sheridan
Jesus Morales
Albrecht Moritz
Karen and Dan Mosman
Deborah-Rae Murphy
Meagan Murphy

"Reflecting on what we have built together, I am filled with gratitude for every one of you who has championed LEAP's mission. My retirement changes my title, but not my dedication—I remain fully committed to this work both as a donor and volunteer. Please join me in continuing to give our students the connections, confidence, and opportunities they need to achieve their post-secondary and career goals."

— Linda Saris
Founder Emerita



Cheri Grishin
Stephanie Kermes and Thomas Gschwendtner
Nitika Gupta
Laurie Hamill
Paige and Doug Hamilton
David Hark
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Heather Parry and David Pabich
Dominick Pangallo
David Pekarski
Paula Perry
Kim and Tom Peterson
Kathleen and James Picone

Individuals & Families • Continued

Dr. Michelle Pierce
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Kelly A. Quinn
Marcel V. Quiroga
Domingo Quiroz
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The Ross Family
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Sachs Family Charitable Fund
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Jurelis Santos
Lara São Pedro
Linda E. Saris
“Linda's little brother”
Dr. John Scarborough
Pamela Scott
Celia and Kate Segel
Marisa Segel and Matthew Thaler
Segel Family Fund
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Mark Shapiro
Robert N. Shapiro
Allan Shwedel, PhD
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David Silva and Bruce Mueller
Jo Ann Simons and Chet Derr
Smith Teel Family Fund
The Smullin Family
The Smyers Family
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Betsy Spiess
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Terri and Alan Spoon
Susan and Wayne Stelk
Marcia Strouss
Marilyn and Charles Stuckey
Diane Sullivan
The Demuth-Sullivan Family
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Lenny Tejeda
Frey Tesfaye
Shelly Thomas
Amanda and Kane Thompson
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Ricardo Villanueva
Barbara Vinick
Vivian Vitale and Rocky Brown
Julianny Vittini and Jherderson Rosario
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Marjorie and Ben Wittner
Catherine and Gene Wong
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Cynthia Bakon and John Worrall
Jessica Yurwitz
The Yusupov Family
Patricia Zaido
Dr. Stephen Zrike

“Success is not measured only by how far I have come. It is also found in the love I give my family, the care I offer others, and the courage to keep moving toward my dreams. I hope every future LEAP student finds this success.”

— Lucia Miringu
LEAP Alumna + Donor



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Together, we can turn possibilities into pathways.



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Sustain the advising, learning experiences, and practical support that help young people take their next steps.



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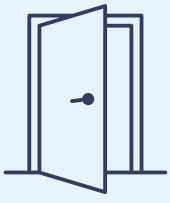

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LEAP for Education supports youth in their personal, educational, and career growth by partnering with the community to increase opportunities and advance equity.

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