



# LEAF 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



# MEET OUR STAFF



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I can remember the exact day when the word “essential” began to take on a new meaning, for me, for LEAF, and for our whole community. The pandemic lockdown landed right as the farm was gearing up in the spring rush. I was looking at an overwhelming list of farm tasks written out on the whiteboard by our post harvest area, and just then I got a text from a LEAF youth alumni who was sent home from college offering to volunteer on the farm. Then the texts, calls, and messages from past and present youth crew members started pouring in. We quickly got our COVID-safe protocols in place, and the next few weeks were an amazing ballet of youth coming one at a time to caretake the farm and caring for themselves in the process.

Over the next few weeks, I kept turning the word essential over in my mind. The experience of the pandemic has compelled LEAF, and each of the youth who work here, to regularly evaluate what is essential, and what truly matters. As we geared up our production to meet the growing need for reliable, local food, I understood at a new level how essential our youth’s connection to this

land and to each other really is. I saw their desire to touch the earth, to feed their community, and to be a part of the solution. That in itself was essential.

Working alongside the 2020 youth crew was one of the most inspiring things I have ever done. This amazing group of young people chose to work with LEAF when everything around them was being cancelled, from proms to graduations, to entire sports seasons. You will read about their remarkable accomplishments through this report - how they fed 91 households per week with the produce they grew and created a makeshift outdoor kitchen to meet growing hunger relief needs in our community. They built powerful relationships across masks, distancing, and the polarized political moment they are living through. The work of these young people is essential.

*LEAF’s mission is to cultivate young leaders from diverse backgrounds through meaningful work in the food system.*



# YOUTH



Two years ago, we met Serena when she was one of the remarkable young leaders who applied to be a part of the 2019 youth crew. She came to us heart wide open and ready to emulate her father's strong work ethic. Over the past years, Serena has stepped into real responsibility and leadership positions in our program and driven herself and others to meet high expectations. We asked Serena to share about her experiences at LEAF and the importance of our work:

"I work at LEAF because I truly love the culture of meaningful work, leadership, and relationships there as well as the people I've created that culture with. I want people to know that LEAF is a very hardworking yet fun environment. There is equal opportunity for both work and play, and we make sure to invest everything into each. It is such a special opportunity to learn about the food system and learn more about who you are. We are open to everyone, and we want to come together as teens and staff to help educate others on the importance of sustainable agriculture and finding the leader within you. Our work is meaningful in almost every way. That's what makes it LEAF. I think the most meaningful thing about our work is being able to gain ownership. With farming, we plant seeds, nurture them as seedlings, and help them grow into fruitful plants. When holding that vegetable you help grow and care for, you gain a sense of accomplishment and ownership from your

own efforts. It gives you purpose and it shows just how capable you are of completing something you put your heart into. It's also very important to be able to give back to our community. Our goal is to be a direct food source to those in our community through sustainable farming. Another big part of our work is that it is majorly done by teens. There are plenty of ways teens can make impacts, and our approach of feeding the community is less talked about yet most essential. Pride is one word that comes to mind when thinking about our impact on the community. The ability to feed families through our own hard work is mind-blowing and powerful. Previously, I would have never thought I'd be on a farm growing food for others. I feel proud to be part of an effort that helps give back to those in our community. I am proud of how far I've come in terms of self-growth, especially in confidence and sociability. I cherish all of my coworkers and relationships with them at LEAF. I can proudly say that I made those relationships with my own efforts. I used to be anti-social, never talking to anyone, much less getting to know them. I pushed myself hard out of my comfort zone with the help of staff and got to where I am today. I will never regret that push I made."



## LEVEL ONE

The youth are introduced to agricultural, culinary, and leadership skills through a variety of workshops and tasks.



## SPECIALIZED TEAMS

Youth grow in their skills of interest by joining a team with a specialized set of tasks and responsibilities.



# GROWTH

Isaac's grandparents were farmers but he used to feel disconnected from the work they did. After working at LEAF for a year, he loves farming and never thought in a million years that he would be farming alongside his peers. If you got to know Isaac, even for a moment, his statement on why he applied to LEAF, "I wanted to experience something new," would feel really on brand for him. Isaac is now in his second year with LEAF and is taking on real responsibility in welcoming in the new cohort of LEAF. He's someone who clings on to every word you say during a conversation, cares deeply about understanding his impact on others, and pushes himself to become excellent and efficient in all of his farm tasks. When we asked Isaac what he was proud of so far during his time at LEAF, he said:

"I know that I've grown and others have seen it in me. I used to hold things against myself and I work really hard to not do that anymore. I've begun to open up more and my sense of humor has shifted. I've created a better mindset for myself." Isaac would also tell you that he's felt challenged to do his best and hustle. He loves to look up and see all the work the team has put in and recognize all that can be accomplished when the crew is working towards the same goal. In the summer of 2021, Isaac will be an assistant crew leader, a peer leadership position that allows him to help others build confidence, teach others skills that he's learned, and create a community that he feels proud of. We asked Isaac what he really wants people to know about LEAF and this is what he said: "It's not just farming. It's leadership development, caring for plants, and growing yourself. LEAF has taught me that you can learn a lot about someone just by working side by side with them!"



## TAKING LEADS

Youth further develop their knowledge and skill set by becoming a team lead, mentoring their peers and taking charge of their specialized skills.

Youth can be farm, culinary, program, or outreach leads.



## FELLOWSHIP

Youth can enter a fellowship in which they take on a position that can help them jump start their career goals and interests.

They work alongside staff to establish responsibilities and outcomes.



## EQUIPPING FUTURE LEADERS

- Built **12** raised garden beds in the community
- 35** home garden seedling starter kits distributed
- 51** households participated in chef-led cooking classes using local ingredients
- 2,812** people watched gardening and cooking videos prepared by the youth



## FEEDING OUR COMMUNITY

- Fed **91** households through farm shares
- 100** farm share boxes distributed to combat food insecurity
- 600** farm fresh meals prepared by the youth crew were distributed to hunger relief programs
- 573** jars and preserves canned by youth



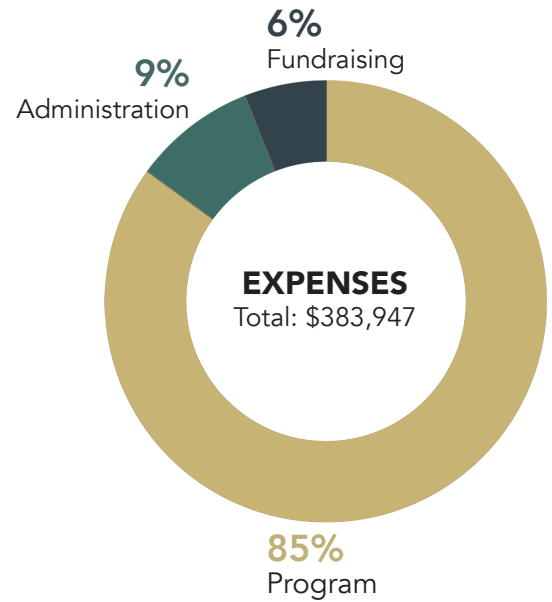
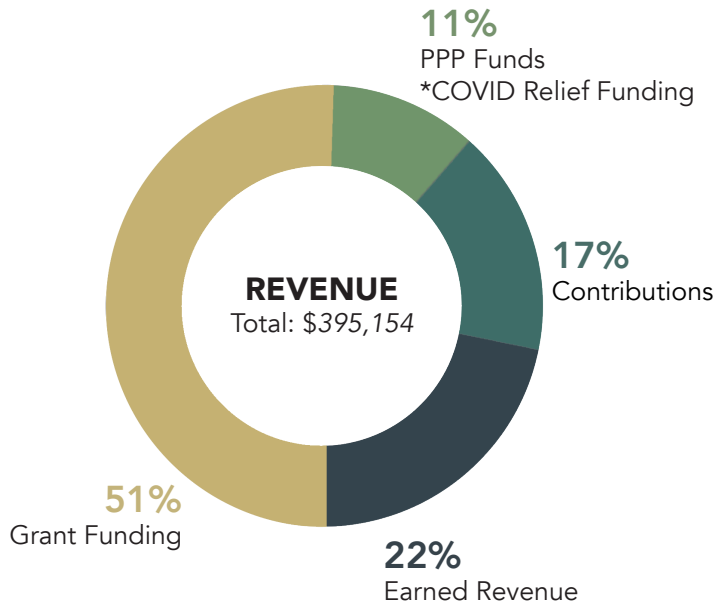
## EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY

- 25** Youth Hired
- 75%** of youth chose to continue on into leadership positions with additional responsibility and focus
- 92%** of the first year youth improved their leadership skills
- 84%** of first year youth improved their workforce skills in excellence, efficiency, and teamwork





# ANNUAL FINANCIALS



## SCHOLARSHIPS

LEAF believes in the power of young people. We have created two scholarships named after two of our young leaders, who have, through 5+ years of commitment to LEAF, become colleagues and co-authors in building this organization from the ground up.

### The Dailah Mial Excellence in Craftsmanship Award

Dailah began working with LEAF in 2016 and found a passion for farming and food system work. Dailah has shown a great love for the land that she cultivates and has enthusiastically shared her kindness and knowledge while mentoring the level one youth. She worked extremely hard to manage the systems that help grow our youth, plants, and organization. The recipients of this award will have shown a great deal of attention to detail and care for the landscape they tend.

### The Elizabeth Lynch Redefining Leadership Award

Elizabeth began working for LEAF back in 2015. Throughout her time at LEAF, Elizabeth has consistently demonstrated a powerful version of leadership, from her early roles in farm leadership to her fellowship in LEAF marketing and communications. Elizabeth has a quiet presence that uplifts others, hears everyone, and is committed to creating beauty in the world. The recipients of this award will have shown tremendous growth in their unique version of leadership.





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