

## LEAP Inc.

United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) is honored to have so many incredible partners throughout the community such as LEAP, Inc (Life Enrichment Advancing People). LEAP is a non-profit organization devoted to enabling individuals with developmental, cognitive and intellectual disabilities to thrive in small groups, and individualized apartments or homes and through a variety of community supports. The fundamental operating principle followed by LEAP in providing services is to strive for everyone's fulfillment of physical well-being, self-expression, and experiences of joy. LEAP's programs include small group and individualized residential services, adult case management, and the DREAM respite program. DREAM (Diversified Respite Enrichment Activities) supports individuals in shared living environments once per month. The program allows families of the individuals to have personal respite time so they can grocery shop, do home maintenance without worrying about the person, and attend medical appointments. Individuals from the DREAM program go out and meet with their peers and enjoy time with each other within the community at local and regional events such as a Sea Dogs game.

LEAP has been receiving funding from United Way for their DREAM program for more than ten years. The UWTVA funding is the only source of income for the DREAM program which is considered their overall budget for the year based on what is given. "Without the UW funding, the DREAM program would not exist. LEAP runs defense interval budget, and all the funds LEAP make in profit goes to this budget," said LEAP staff person and DREAM administrator Loretta Crockett. If LEAP was to close their doors the next day, they would only be able to maintain their group homes for three months with pay to their employees before they would have to completely shut down. One struggle that LEAP had this past year was the fight for Bill LD 967 which was an emergency bill to "ensure access to community services for person with intellectual disabilities or autism." It would also raise the Medicaid reimbursement rates for providers like LEAP in order to fund group homes, and community support as well as being able to pay for their employees. The Executive Director Darryl Wood, LEAP and other providers in the State of Maine had fought for this bill. Luckily through the struggle, the bill was passed for a one-time reimbursement increasing making the budgets not so tight while providing employees with an increased wage which made it above the minimum wage mark.

LEAP has been serving our community for more than 30 years and has some ambitious goals. One goal is to continue to grow and be able to support more individuals in the local area through different ventures. Recently, LEAP ventured into providing case management services and this has grown immensely fast for the company. Another goal for their Farmington office was to move their DSP (Direct Support Professional) training center in Wilton to the same place as the central office. "This goal is coming into fruition now as LEAP is expanding the central office, adding a training center and offices so all trainings and events can occur in the same place," said Crockett. One goal and program change they would like to do would be to increase the number of DREAM participants. Currently, they support about 20 separate individuals and between 6-10 individuals during a specific event. With the UW funding, it currently provides enough for one paid volunteer who can send out notifications of events, drive the individuals, and staff the

events. If the DREAM program received more funding, the program could potentially provide a second paid volunteer so that more individuals who want to go to a certain event can participate. It would impact so many more shared living providers and the people they support in the Greater Franklin County area.

Loretta Crockett is from the Turner LEAP location. She was only 18 years old and working at a grocery store when she decided she wanted to do something else with her life. During the time and still present day, her mother, Loriann Crockett, works for LEAP. She had described how much she loved her job and suggested that Loretta should apply. Loretta first started out as a DSP and worked at the same home supporting individuals for a couple of years. During a period, she had gone away for college where she majored in the field as a program administrator for different companies until a program administrator position opened at the Turner LEAP location. Since then Loretta has been working for LEAP for over two years now. She said “coming back to LEAP where my mother still works, felt like coming back home. The only true job that I was truly happy at doing was when I was a DSP for LEAP and now as a Program Administrator in Turner.”

When it comes to a job that you love to wake up and go to everyday there are opportunities to have “favorite moments” that just go with you throughout life. “My favorite part of LEAP is that we promote joy, it says so in our mission statement. As a program administrator and DREAM supervisor, my main goal is to make sure that the individuals we support have quality experiences of joy,” said Crockett. LEAP strives to make sure that everyone is supported experiencing moments of joy through the program. Most of these are met by supporting big goals that individuals may have like going to Disney World in Florida or learning how to drive a car or the experiences can be considered small things like sitting outside and enjoying the fresh air, having their family over for a BBQ they cooked for, or taking pride in their home. “Joy comes in all forms and is different for everyone, but it is a pleasure to work for a company like LEAP that’s make this their mission,” said Crockett.

If interested in learning more about the DREAM program or ways to volunteer for LEAP call (207) 500-3131 or email [ldcrockett@leapcommunity.org](mailto:ldcrockett@leapcommunity.org). You can also visit their website at [leapcommunity.org](http://leapcommunity.org) to learn more about the other programs that they serve for the community.