

"I know that my hard work is for a reason and in the end, I am helping others, the community, and families that need food. I'm really helping and sparking change in the world. It really makes me feel good about myself."

- Alay'za, Youth Crew Member



YOUTH - EQUIPPING FUTURE LEADERS

25 Youth Hired

75% Youth chose to continue on into leadership positions with additional responsibility and focus

92% First Year Youth improved their leadership skills

84% First Year Youth improved their workforce skills (excellence, efficiency, teamwork)

FOOD - FEEDING OUR COMMUNITY

91 Households participated in farm share program, receiving weekly produce and partner farm products

100 Farm share boxes of fruits and vegetables distributed to combat food insecurity

600 Farm fresh meals prepared by the youth crew and distributed to hunger relief partners

573 jars of preserves made by youth



COMMUNITY:
EDUCATING &
EMPOWERING

12

raised bed gardens
built in the community

35

home garden starter
seedling kits
distributed in the
community

51

Households participated
in chef-led virtual cooking
classes with local
ingredients

2,812

People watched
gardening and cooking
instructional videos
prepared by youth



LEAF WAS BUILT FOR THIS

LEAF was launched in 2013 in the aftermath of the largest financial crisis of our lives up until that point. In the midst of that scary moment, our youth were being left behind. As adults took jobs traditionally staffed by teenagers, the opportunity for youth to work, and the accompanying skills and connections developed in first jobs, quickly disappeared. During that time, youth employment was at an all time low - only one in four youth would have a job before the age of 21. National and regional business leaders still cite the lack of youth employment after the financial crisis as a significant obstacle to workforce success and productivity today.

LEAF was successful because we partnered with our youth's untapped potential and provided youth with a rare opportunity - to do meaningful work which made a direct impact within their communities. Since then, we've hired more than 100 youth into year-round positions who've fed and educated more than 20,000 individuals.

Now in the midst of a pandemic, our youth are experiencing unprecedented interruptions in their schooling, cancellations of many important life events, and a sense of disconnection that is resulting in profound mental health challenges. At the same time, there has been a significant struggle to meet the needs of the growing ranks of food insecure people in our region.

LEAF was built for this - since our model was initially created to cultivate youth leaders in the meaningful work of feeding our community, we are equipped at this time to do just that. During this past year, while many of our peer programs across the country had to shut down, we realized we had two unique resources available to us - our spacious farm location and our employment model. LEAF formed a COVID task force with medical professionals, board, and staff members to make sure we could operate safely in an in-person capacity. We adapted the program top to bottom with best practices (including masking, distancing, health screenings, and flexible work schedules as needed), and built infrastructure so all youth could be outside at all times. The result was one of the most meaningful programs we've ever run, our most productive farming season ever, zero transmission of the virus, and new partnerships in our community.

LEAF has ambitious plans in 2021 to cultivate the new generation of youth leaders while working to build a more equitable and accessible local food system. Please join us in cultivating hope.