

Humanity Starts With You

2023 Leading for Children
Annual Report

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Our Vision

All children birth to five grow and learn in thriving and collaborative communities of empowered and nurturing adults.

Our Mission

Strengthen communities by advancing evidence-based approaches where adults collaborate equitably towards positive outcomes for children.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dear Friends of LFC,

At Leading for Children, our commitment to learning with and from our community has contributed significantly to our growth over the last six years. This trend continued in 2023, with exciting results. By attuning to our partners' needs, we have refined our capacity as national early learning collaborators and expanded our reach. This year, using our innovative mutual learning method, our programs impacted 1,406 adults that will result in better outcomes for more than 22,500 children.



This year, an independent evaluation of LFC's Humanity First Model affirmed what we knew all along: adults who engage in our mutual learning conversations feel like more capable agents of change, better positioned to tackle failing systems and show up optimistically for our children. With this foundation of inner strength, equitable partnerships develop that promote social connectedness and a sense of common purpose. Stronger Adults = Stronger Children = Stronger Communities.

Witnessing the warm, vibrant energy in a room where a mutual learning conversation is taking place grounds me in why I started LFC. Each of us wants to be treated with kindness, empathy, and respect. We long to feel seen, heard, and valued, and LFC creates spaces to facilitate the human connection that leads to deep learning and positive change. In conferences throughout this year, I've been approached by individuals with tears in their eyes, astonished and grateful for the feeling they just experienced, often with a table of strangers, that they haven't felt before in their careers. The potential for human connection is within all of us. It is the basis for stronger communities and better outcomes for children. Our work at LFC is simply to support communities in tapping into their own power to access human connection so that they can solve their unique challenges equitably and collaboratively.

I hope you've noticed our beautiful new look and clarity of message. This significant endeavor has successfully amplified our impact by helping people understand what's important about our work.

Looking back on 2023 at LFC, we are encouraged by how the many adults reflecting diverse roles and experiences embrace the Humanity First Model to find the courage and vulnerability to be leaders for children.

Together, let's support every child in learning kindness, empathy, and respect for others. Humanity starts with each one of us.

Warmly,

Judy Jablon
Executive Director

Year in Review



LFC's model results in adults cultivating self-empowerment, forging equitable partnerships, and together shaping thriving communities for children.



Introductory Workshops

LFC's Introductory Workshops use the Mutual Learning Method to build awareness and begin skill development around leadership and quality practices.

October 2022 - Alabama

At the Alabama Early Learning Conference, the LFC team facilitated preconference workshops on the Five Commitments and breakout sessions on equitable partnerships between teachers and coaches as well as the 11 Simple Rules. We also had the opportunity to host an exhibit booth where we engaged attendees in conversation and promoted the upcoming publication of *11 Simple Rules to Create Thriving Communities for Children*.

March 2023 - Wisconsin

Judy presented the keynote address and a conference session at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Promoting Early Childhood Conference.

April 2023 - North Carolina

Judy and Nichole presented at the 2023 Smart Start Conference where they introduced the 11 Simple Rules and engaged attendees in exploring how they look in practice and identifying strategies they could use in their own settings to apply them. Each attendee received a complimentary copy of *11 Simple Rules to Create Thriving Communities for Children*.

June 2023 - National

Judy, Nichole, and Jonathan facilitated a workshop at the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Professional Learning Institute. Attendees reflected on their own leadership practice and how the Five Commitments of Optimistic Leadership could empower them to act with intention to have the impact they desire for children and families.

Book Study Groups

LFC's Book Study Groups use the Mutual Learning Method and offer a deeper exploration of the Five Commitments or 11 Simple Rules and result in improved attitudes, skills and behaviors.

Leading for Children program leaders facilitated remote book study groups in nine states, **impacting 193 adults who in turn impact approximately 2,775 children**. Book study groups were held remotely in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, New York, and Washington.



Optimistic Leaders in Thriving Communities Learning Networks supported members in cultivating skills, attitudes, and behaviors that promote self-empowerment and equitable partnerships with a goal of creating place-based solutions. The result: thriving communities for children and adults.

For the first time we hosted a **National Learning Network** which brought a group of educators from across the country together to focus on coaching as an Optimistic Leader.

Learning Networks

LFC's Learning Networks are a year-long mutual learning endeavor leading to transformational personal, interpersonal, and organizational change.

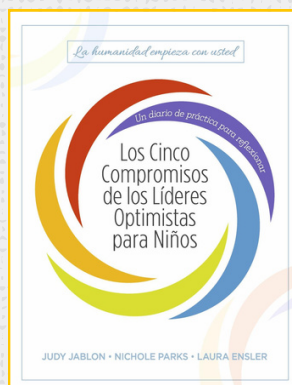
In 2023 LFC's program leaders facilitated six learning networks with partners in Pennsylvania, California, Alabama, and Mississippi.

LFC piloted its first **Leading from Strength Learning Network**. Leading from Strength was created to promote equity and advancement of BIPOC women in early learning by creating affinity groups that promote a sense of belonging, provide respite, strengthen leadership development and practice of advocacy. The pilot group was a Women of Color affinity group.

Coaching as an Optimistic Leader Learning Networks supported coaches (and others who support the professional growth and learning of early educators) in adopting an asset-based stance to nurture equitable learning partnerships where both the coach and educator use curiosity and collaboration and learn with and from each other.

Publications

In December 2022 LFC released our second book: *11 Simple Rules to Create Thriving Communities for Children*. In 2023, both *11 Simple Rules* and our first book, *Five Commitments of Optimistic Leaders for Children*, were released in Spanish.



The Leading for Children Podcast

In May 2023, we launched the Leading for Children Podcast — a monthly show where we welcome guests for conversations about ways that we are being our best for children and fostering communities where children thrive. The Inaugural season of the podcast is focused on introducing and exploring the 11 Simple Rules. Guests have included members of current or previous Learning Networks, LFC staff members, and other early learning professionals.

In the Media

Our partnership in Marin County, California was featured in **Early Learning Nation** in an article titled “Children Learn What They Live”: Building Empathy in Marin County.”



Judy joined **That Early Childhood Nerd** podcast for a conversation about our book, *11 Simple Rules to Create Thriving Communities for Children*.



In June, Judy was a guest on **The Early Link Podcast**, produced by Children’s Institute based in Portland, Oregon, for a conversation about Optimistic Leadership.



Insights from Independent Evaluation

We were thrilled to partner with the Institute for Child Success this year to deepen our exploration of impact. Our learning focused on the changes that adults experienced in their attitudes, skills, and behaviors, before and after engaging with LFC's Humanity First Model.

We learned that humanity-focused mutual learning conversations support self-empowerment and equitable partnerships in adults. They then are prepared to model these for children.

Mutual learning significantly increases the extent to which individuals credit their own strengths.

Recognizing and valuing personal strengths can lead to more purposeful and effective action.

83%

83% of members reported that, after the Learning Network, *"setting intentions and thinking impact help me see myself as an agent of change."*

Mutual learning increases adults' social emotional competence in relationships, leading to more equitable partnerships.

92.6%

92.6% of members report that they now engage in *"listening to learn"*

90.9%

90.9% report *"slowing down my thoughts so I can hear another's"*

Stories of Impact



Adriana Ruiz, *Florida*

[The Learning Network] put me in a place where I understand that I need to do the work. I need to be a leader and a manager of myself; before I manage people, how do I manage myself?

I am in education because I think it's the bullseye of making an impact in society. If we really want something to happen, I think we need to set the right things in motion for the youngest ones, for them to affect society in the future.

The Humanity First Model made me accountable for myself and the way I want to grow. In the Learning Network, I felt that I fit. It was a safe space for me. I could add something to the conversation and feel that I was listened to. I felt the capacity to reflect and relate to others, and as I'm putting it into practice, other people are also putting it into practice, so it becomes like a feedback loop.

I first felt like I was pushing into areas where I don't go into on a regular basis. We're all busy, with work and deadlines and things to do; it's like we're on autopilot. We have habits, and that becomes the way we live. The Learning Network allowed me to wait a second, slow down here for a moment, and it opened the book to myself, who I am and how I do things. It led me to reflect. It made me want to slow down and see how I relate to others, how I approach them, and how I ask questions. I felt empowered. It put me in a place where I understand that I need to do the work. I need to be a leader and a manager of myself; before I manage people, how do I manage myself? And so, I'm there; I'm practicing; I'm aware.

It's not about your words but rather how you work with yourself that affects children and their environments. They deserve our respect. I think the minute that we do that we multiply the right power. When we do that, we have a chance, humanity has a chance.

Before finding LFC, I thought I was a good teacher, but like many educators, I minimized my role and identified as “just a teacher.” I didn’t recognize that I had strengths as an individual or grasp the influence I could have with the children in my classroom. I also didn’t see how I could support families and the larger community as an educator. All of the things I’ve learned from Judy and the fantastic people that run Leading for Children truly transformed my life; they’ve supported me in recognizing my value and the power I have in my community, making me a better teacher, a better mom, a better teammate at my school, and a better human.

Deep self-reflection and mutual learning experiences guided by LFC led to a huge mindset shift. What I once saw as “MY” classroom, I now see as “OUR” classroom. I understand that for meaningful learning to happen, the underlying relationships need to be strong. As I began trusting myself and actively sharing power, inviting my students to have a say in what and how they learned and inviting families to become more involved, I began seeing a change in all of us. I now call our community my “school family” because the relationships we form are grounded in love, respect, and support. With this foundation, day-to-day classroom management challenges have lessened as we now see them as opportunities to learn and grow with each other.

In partnership with my co-teacher, I use everything I learned with LFC to create open and trusting connections with families. At the beginning of the school year, we intentionally have many honest conversations with families about who we are and where we come from; the conversations are back and forth - two way. We want to know what’s happening at home, and we want them to know what’s happening in our classroom. When parents see that we are transparent and interested in both them and their child, their protective walls fall away.

I appreciate how the Humanity First Model reinforced the importance of building equitable relationships with our parents. Together, we’re building a huge circle that surrounds and encourages our children. I have no doubt that with this foundation, they will go on to be successful humans and world changers.



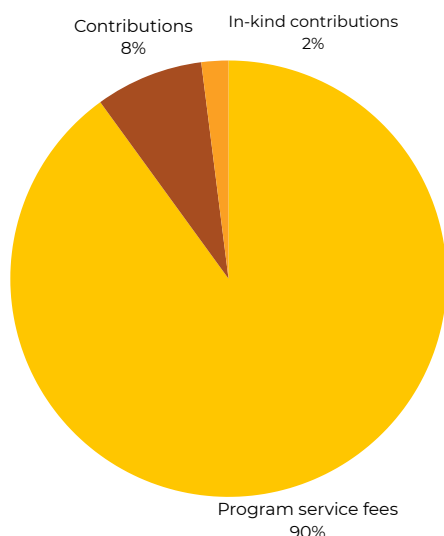
Chelsi Jones, *Alabama*

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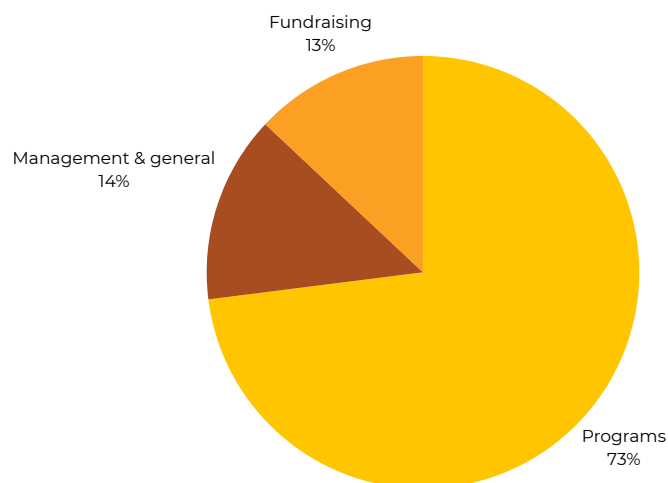
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Where Our Money Comes From



Where Our Money is Spent



Support & Revenue

(for the year ended June 30, 2023)

Program service fees	\$1,360,874
Contributions	\$117,586
In-kind contributions	\$24,000
Total Support & Revenue	\$1,502,460

Operating Expenses

(for the year ended June 30, 2023)

Program & supporting services	\$1,011,606
Management & general	\$193,101
Fundraising	\$181,149
Total Expenses	\$1,385,856

Source: Leading for Children Financial Statements June 2023 and 2022 audited by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP.

Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2023

Assets

Current Assets

Cash	\$558,634
Accounts receivable	\$194,982
Prepaid expenses	\$9,301
Total Current Assets	\$762,917

Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$90,438
Deferred revenue	\$0
Total Current Liabilities	\$90,438

Net Assets

Without donor restrictions	\$668,916
With donor restrictions	3,563
Total Net Assets	\$672,479

Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$762,917
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THANK YOU TO Our Donors and Supporters

Many thanks to the generous supporters who made significant gifts to support Leading for Children in 2023. Your partnership and commitment ensure that we are creating communities where children thrive. Together, we are elevating the humanity in us all.



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