

Annual Report 2018

Lynn Economic Opportunity (LEO) works to alleviate the immediate impact of poverty while providing pathways to financial stability for individuals, families, and for the benefit of the community of Lynn and its surrounding towns.

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Dear Friends,

We know we're playing the long game. Some claim the economy is booming, the war on poverty is over. But there is ample evidence every day at LEO to dispute that. Families working minimum wage jobs, upended juggling rent, food, transportation, and child care. Seniors on fixed incomes making a dangerous choice between heat or medication. LEO provides a safety net of services that stabilize them for the short term, while we invest in a two-generation approach to education that promotes economic independence and upward mobility.

So who have we helped today? Victory (5) and Louis and Marilyn Fantasia (10) are benefitting from the services that improve their situations in the moment. Our cover photo is "long game" success. Carlos Gonzalez was a LEO Head Start preschooler in 1999, and has lived through the social barriers our clients experience every day. After graduating from college, Carlos is choosing to devote the first year of his professional life to LEO (3). He's selflessly using his education, skills and talents to be a catalyst for change.

Real change requires an investment from the community to ensure all residents are able to achieve success and give back.



BIRGITTA S. DAMON
Chief Executive Officer



JIM HIGGS
Board President



Spotlight on Gina Cordy, Policy Council President

Meet Policy Council President, Gina Cordy. Policy Council is the governing committee made up of Head Start parents and community members who are responsible for the direction of our Head Start programs.

Gina is a master's level social worker for the Commonwealth and the proud Early Head Start parent of 19-month-old daughter, Aaniya Rose. Gina has hit the ground running for LEO, and has so much she wants to accomplish in her time as President.

"I would like to see more parents, especially males, involved in Policy Council. I want to encourage more socializing. I would like to facilitate a community resource event to inform parents of the services and programs available to them at LEO and around the city."

Gina Cordy, we are excited by your vision and honored to have you on board. Nothing but great things ahead!

LEO's Recipe for Success

By providing educational opportunities, health and wellness guidance, and services that promote the safety and well-being of individuals and families, LEO demonstrates that it is possible to break the cycle of **poverty** and journey towards financial stability. LEO promotes success through a two-generation approach, keeping children nurtured and safe while the adults in their lives pursue employment opportunities.

DUCATIO

- Head Start Early Education (birth-age 5)
- Early Intervention Services
- School Readiness
- Parent/Child Workshops
- Job Skills Training
- ESOL Classes
- Parent Leadership & Governance

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- Vision & Hearing Screenings
- Individualized Nutrition Plans
- Monitor **Immunizations**
- Referrals to Doctors & Dentists
- Nutrition & Portion Control
- Movement & Fitness for Families

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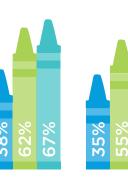
- Home Heating Fuel Assistance
 - Food Distribution for Seniors & Families
- Repair & Replacement for Outdated ETY Heating Systems
- 正 Emergency Funds for Rent & Utilities

School Readiness as an Indicator of Success

The Head Start approach to school readiness means that children are ready for school and families are ready to support their children's learning. LEO assesses our Head Start preschoolers three times per year to determine the percentage of children who meet or exceed school readiness standards. We then work closely with Lynn Public Schools for a smooth transition into kindergarten. This year, we graduated 115 from Head Start, all having made significant improvements in school readiness — an indicator that is linked to lifelong learning, school completion, skills development later in life, and nonacademic success.







Language & Literacy



Cognitive



Perceptual, Motor & **Physical**

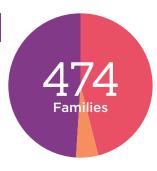


Approaches to Learning

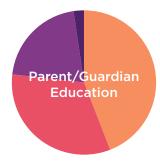
Early Education by the Numbers

66 of 483

Children enrolled experiencing homelessness



Two-parent Family, 49% Single Parent, Female, 46% Single Parent, Male, 5%



Bachelor's or Other Advanced Degree, 2%

Associate Degree or Some College, 21%

High School Graduate or GED, 33%

Less than High School Education, 44%

Carlos' Full Circle Journey



Join us in welcoming our newest AmeriCorps VISTA, Carlos Gonzalez. Carlos joined LEO and our urban planning collaborative, Impact Lynn, in the dual role of Community and Volunteer Engagement Leader. He received a bachelor's degree in Economics and Finance from Bentley University in May of 2018. As a native of Lynn, Carlos has lived through some of the same social barriers that our clients experience every day. To magnify his authentic relatability, we are proud to share that Carlos and his family were enrolled in LEO Head Start in the 90s, when he was a child. **Carlos offers full circle knowledge, first as a client and now as both an advocate and provider.** He believes Impact Lynn will make a positive change in the lives of Lynners. Carlos looks forward to building a system that can increase the participation of local residents to contribute to the larger goals of the community.

Q&A with Cilda Gomez: Mother of Carlos Gonzalez

Why did you choose LEO for Head Start?

I was a teen mom and I did not know anything about raising a child. I was looking for an organization that was willing to teach me how to be a good mom and how to care for my child. I chose LEO because I was told it was a program for people who lacked resources and that it was a help to the community. LEO gave me parenting skills and taught me the importance of engaging with Carlos. LEO does not discriminate and they put their clients first.

How did Head Start change motherhood? Carlos' life?

I was very young when I had Carlos. While I was out finishing high school and working, I was confident that my son was in good hands. Head Start taught me the importance of participating and volunteering at the center. I would read books to the students and help with classroom activities. The teachers and I were a team responsible for Carlos' development. I am now a mother of four. The experience I had with LEO put me in a better position than I was in 19 years ago.

At LEO Head Start, Carlos learned how to read and listen. He was ready for kindergarten. He was a very shy boy but Head Start pushed him out of his comfort zone to make friends in the program. As he got older, his confidence grew and I think that it helped him to achieve his goals at an early age.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of LEO Head Start. Thank you to Ms. Diane and Ms. Dale, classroom teachers in 1999. They were important in our lives.

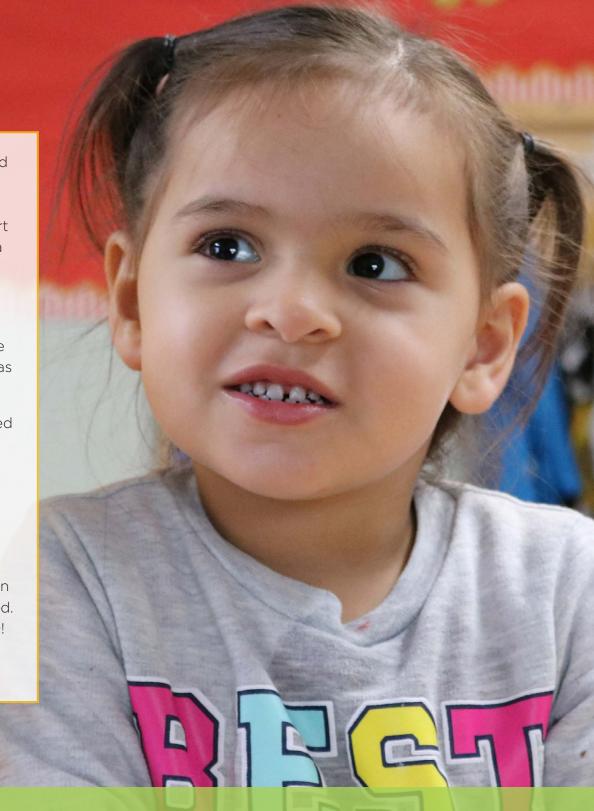
Ruth on the Rise

When Ruth Ayala began Early Head Start she struggled with attendance. Her mother, Maria, frequently kept Ruth home because of stomach issues. In an effort to better care for Ruth, LEO expanded her net of support to include her teachers, a Family Service Worker and a Health Advocate. All agreed Ruth should be evaluated by a physician.

A doctor put Ruth on a lactose-free diet, but that didn't resolve her issues. Ruth's health and attendance continued to decline; her temperament also suffered as she was frequently agitated by the bloating and pain.

Our Health Advocate was insistent Ruth be reevaluated by a new doctor, assisting in a referral, attending appointments with the family, even speaking on their behalf during visits. New testing revealed Ruth was both gluten and oat intolerant. Her family changed her diet at home while our dietitian and kitchen staff accommodated her diet at school.

Today, Ruth is happy and healthy at our Jack Robinson Child Care Center. Her attendance is markedly improved. Recently, Maria accepted a classroom position at LEO! These are the small successes possible when all parts of our LEO team work in full harmony.



The Thrill of Victory



"We decided on the name Victory before he was born. His father loved it, I was skeptical. When my water broke and I had him at 24 weeks, I knew then Victory was the perfect name." Ebere Onyeador, BSN, RN



Victory Okunbor was born at just 24 weeks. He spent the first $4^{1}/_{2}$ months of his life as a patient at Mass General Hospital. Victory was diagnosed with GDD (Global Developmental Delays). When he arrived at Early Head Start at 2 years old, he was only crawling, had no vocabulary and all of his foods needed to be pureed as he had difficulty with chewing and swallowing.

Over the next year, EHS worked intensely with the family and a talented Early Intervention team to support Victory's needs and the family's goals. At 3 years old, Victory was reevaluated, and prepared for a full-time transition into the Lynn Public School system. A year later, he is now walking, jumping and successfully eating all foods.

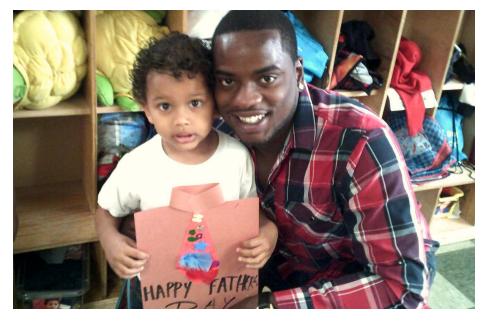
Victory is on the move, physically pushing each day beyond what is comfortable and what was expected of him given his diagnosis. He is a happy guy, laughing and bright, singing his ABCs, counting to 20 and reciting Nursery Rhymes. Perhaps it's something in the name, destined to win.

Snapshots of a Great Head Start Year



▲ Mother's Day Photo Shoot: This spring we had the joy of inviting our Head Start moms to the center for a free professional photography sitting to honor Mother's Day. We had tremendous participation, almost 80 families. Our moms received prints in time for Mother's Day!





▲ Building Blocks for Father and Father-Figure Involvement:

Our Male Involvement Nights have been a huge success, welcoming dads, uncles, grandfathers, trusted friends—any male figure who dedicates himself to the love and nurturing of a child—into our Head Start Program. We have painted seashells, held open dialogue on community and safety issues, and enjoyed read alouds and music circles. Children who grow up with an involved father figure are more likely to thrive.

■ Murals: Inspired by the dedication our children observed by watching the Beyond Walls murals created in their city, they gave it a try themselves. This was a wonderful hands-on activity, and a great practice in cooperative learning. Not to mention lively discussion on street art and artists.

Food for Thought



42 LEO children are on nutrition plans.
Children under the age of 3 are particularly impacted by food insecurity.

They see doctors more frequently, experience developmental and

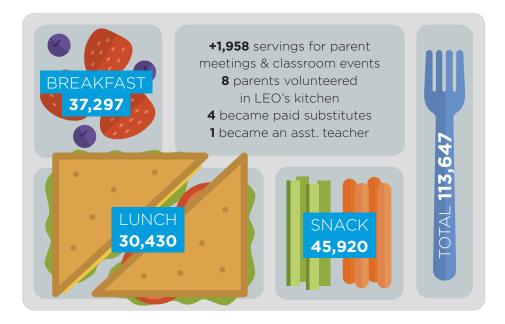
cognitive delays, exhibit disruptive social emotional behaviors, and often have issues related to texture, chewing or swallowing. Nutrition affects so much more than just height and weight assessments.

LEO provides caring experts to safeguard our children from the long-term effects of hunger, including a nutritional expert, an RN, a health/mental health director, and health advocates. Together they coordinate Early Intervention services and identify strategies that guide children to age-appropriate behaviors. They work with families on portion control and preparing meals using fresh, whole foods.

LEO's everyday heroes are our kitchen chefs (above), who manage food preparation and delivery for classrooms at four locations, thanks to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP provides aid to child care and other institutions to provide nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth and development of young children, and the health and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired disabled persons. LEO is an equal opportunity provider.



Thank you, **Sidekim Foods**. Our children loved the healthy breakfast you catered for them last winter. Sidekim is a wonderful neighbor and an asset to our community. Your donation brought these smiles and provided the nutrition children need to learn and grow.



Getting out into the Community





This spring we took to the streets in a door-to-door literature drop in the Sagamore Hill/Oakville-Minot neighborhoods, dropping bags with information on the services available at LEO and other Impact Lynn partners. This was a targeted effort, the result of months of research in the area to find homes that are both underserved and in the most need. This proactive community effort was funded by CSBG (Community Service Block Grant) dollars, and reached over 3,000 households. There is no questioning the effectiveness of this type of canvassing—a man came in for fuel assistance, teal bag in hand, just two days later. He was the first of many new clients.



Fresh off the success of the spring drop, we were thrilled to welcome first year students from Salem State University to participate in a summer canvassing effort. Students also worked on readying our Head Start classrooms for the August start of the school year, unpacking books and classroom supplies, labeling common items and cubbies. We would not have been ready without them! Thank you President John Keenan (center front); *Moving Forward, Giving Back: First Year Day of Service* truly makes a difference.

Partnerships and Affiliations

Action Inc.

American Red Cross Mobile Food Truck

Aspire Developmental Services

Bridgewell

Catholic Charities

Centerboard

Citizens Energy

City of Lynn

Community Giving Tree

Cradles to Crayons

275 LEO families benefited from:

- Diapers, underwear and socks
- Coats and warm clothes
- Backpacks and school supplies

Element Care

Elliott Community Human Services

Emergency Food & Shelter National Program

Enough Abuse Campaign

Family & Children's Services of Greater Lynn, Inc.

First Jobs

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)



Provided 904 bags of groceries to seniors

Average value per bag: \$65.52 = \$59,230.08

Average weight per bag: 39 lbs. = 35,256 lbs annually

Healing Abuse Working for Change (HAWC)

Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de los Ultimos Dios

Impact Lynn

Justice Resource Institute

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)

KIPP Academy

Latino Support Network

La Voz

Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce

Lynn Community Health Center

Lynn Continuum of Care

Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development (LHAND)

Lynn Public Library

Lynn Public Schools

Lynn Rapid Response Network

Lynn Shelter Association

Lynn YMCA

Lynnfield Council on Aging

MA Association for Community Action (MassCAP)

MA Association of Early
Education & Care (MADCA)

MA Coalition for the Homeless

MA Dept. of Children & Families (DCF)

MA Dept. of Transitional Assistance (DTA)

MA Dept. of Youth Services (DYS)

MA Head Start Association

MA Immigrant & Refugee
Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)

MassHire North Shore Career Center

Ministerios Vision Christiana

Mission of Deeds

My Brother's Table

Nahant Council on Aging

New American Center

North Shore Community College

North Shore Housing Action Group (NSHAG)

North Shore Women Infants and Children (WIC)

Northeast Justice Center

Pathways

Project COPE, an affiliate of Bridgewell

Salem State University

Salvation Army

Saugus Senior Center

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

St. Joseph Parish

Swampscott Council on Aging

Toys for Tots

Wakefield Council on Aging

Warmth Is a Necessity



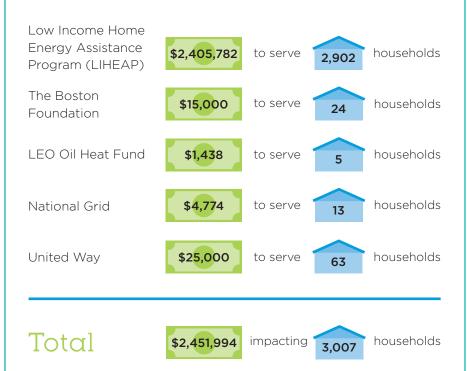
Louis (94) and Marilyn (86) live in a cozy lakeside cabin they purchased together in the 60s. Louis, a Veteran of the US Navy, and Marilyn, a retired registered nurse. Both career professionals, now living as most seniors do, on a fixed income. Louis came to learn about LEO's fuel assistance program through his local senior center. When he brought the news home to Marilyn she was less

interested. "I am a proud person, and believe we should all be responsible for ourselves."

With the rising cost of fuel, and all the other personal and household line items to budget, it became clear a bit of help would ease their burden. Today, they live simply but comfortably, and they don't make dangerous choices with how and even if to heat their home. They also feel grateful for the support. Louis offered, "Here's what I know about fuel assistance: When the stack of bills comes, and you open one and it reads 'PAID,' well that is a good feeling."

LEO prides itself on delivering this same support to individuals, families, renters, homeowners, employed, or unemployed. We serve so many, but are standing by to serve so many more. Let Louis and Marilyn serve as inspiration; a couple of satisfied clients.

In New England, warmth is not a luxury, it is an issue of public health and safety. LEO's Fuel team tries to lessen the worry about heating homes on a low or fixed income. The obligation to protect families from the debilitating effects of prolonged cold prompted regional philanthropy giants The Boston Foundation and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley to grant \$40,000 to LEO, supplementing our \$2.4 million allocation of federal funds. What was the impact?



New Energy in Weatherization and Conservation

Weatherization and Conservation serve as the safeguards to your home. Through energy audits, our professionals are able to see where your home can become more efficient, and offer free fixes to lower your energy bills.

In 2017, we invested in additional staff for this department. We hired **Isander Beauchamp as an AMP Specialist**. Applying his background from the healthcare field, Isander brings high-level attention to detail and a cool temperament in stressful situations. Isander surpassed his yearly goals within 6 months of being hired.



Andrea Harkness (pictured) was hired as an Energy

Auditor, and brings a breadth of practical knowledge from her previous work in this field. If we can brag, Andrea passed her Energy Auditor test with a 91%, the highest grade in her class. She has a strong understanding of buildings, and safeguarding measures.

Our new hires are assets. Their contribution broadens our outreach, allowing us to serve more clients. As we project the needs of the agency into the future, our goals are not only about sustaining, but about **growing the positive impact we have throughout southern Essex County**.

Adding up the Impact:



AMPS (Service Calls/ Household Visits)



Homes Weatherized



Heating Systems Repaired



Heating System Installations



Fuel Storage Tanks Replaced



Fuel Lines Replaced





Asbestos Abatement
Treatments



Fiesta de LEO

Is there a more important word than THANK-YOU? In light of **Fiesta de LEO**'s swinging success, we will say GRACIAS! To our sponsors, friends, guests, vendors, volunteers, and host venue, we are so grateful. Fiesta de LEO was not only a creative, interactive event full of games and light-hearted revelry, it was a proud nod to our culturally diverse community. We raised \$35K to support crucial programming here at LEO. Can't wait for next year!

Special thanks to the following sponsors:

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Rogers & Gray Insurance
Salem Five Charitable Foundation

VERDE LEVEL

AllWays Health Partners
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AMIGO LEVEL

All Care VNA
Aspire Developmental
Services
Bob DeLeo,
Speaker of the House
Bridgewell

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Joyce Reen

Lancelot Janitorial & Paper Products Laredo & Smith LLP

Laredo & Smith LLF

LHAND

Lisa McFadden

Lynn Shelter Association

Procopio Construction

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Financial Support

LEO completed FY 2018 in a strong position, successfully supporting our core programs in education, health and wellness, and the services that ensure the safety and well-being of at-risk individuals and families. We accomplished this through prudent fiscal management in a funding environment that is increasingly challenging.

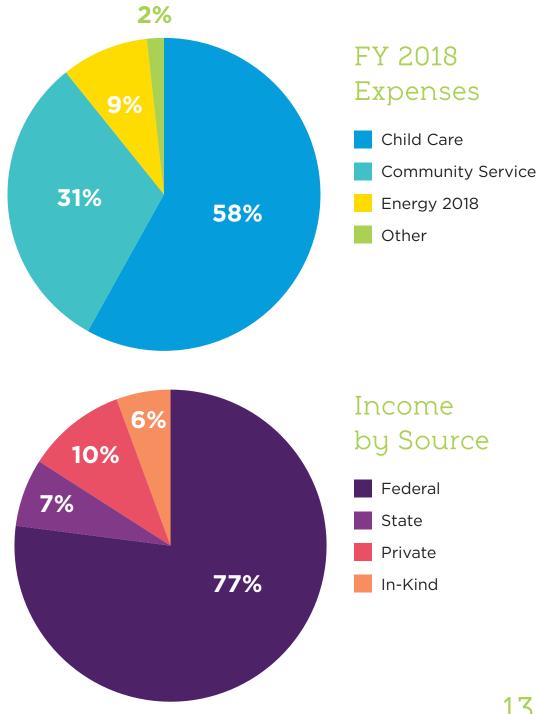
LEO's primary revenue continues to be from federal grants, supplemented with state grant awards, which provides operating funds for early education and care, home heating assistance and energy solutions, and emergency services. Government grants are particularly competitive and, like private foundation grants and individual donations, they are never guaranteed. To that end, we continued our efforts to build a modest operating reserve, advocated for by the agency's financial auditors and Board of Directors, which would allow programs and services to weather a short interruption in federal or state funding.

LEO has invested in hiring diverse, qualified individuals who represent the face of the agency within the communities we serve. Sound financial management allowed us to encourage and support staff pursuing relevant education credentials, whether in the field of early education and care or energy auditing. Merit-based increases, although modest, helped us retain dedicated teachers to mentor our class of new hires.

LEO also began strategizing to build a base of annual donors who can provide sustainable private investment in the agency to bridge the gap between the cost of good and exceptional programming for our community.

\$11,546,043 Revenue: \$11,408,049 Expense:

Change in Net Assets: \$137,994*



^{*}Intentional surplus for general operating reserve

Gifts in Kind(ness)

Over the past year, we have experienced a new kind of generosity: the donation of new goods. When we have a need beyond our capacity, we take to social media looking for generous souls. Our requests are answered tenfold. Diapers, formula, clothes, backpacks, too many to list. This kind of generosity brings humanity full circle. Giving feels good, receiving lightens a perpetual burden. Here are a couple highlights from a great year.



A family of five arrived to LEO fleeing domestic violence. They secured an apartment, but had no possessions. We took to social media. In 24 hours what took place can only be described as an "Avalanche of Love." Donations poured in. **Stacy Palombo** was a big part of that movement. Her generosity was not a one-time event. Stacy gives every time we express a need; generously and with no desire to be recognized. "I am a paramedic from Lynn. My

village of do-gooders are police, paramedics, firefighters, teachers and nurses. We see the negative

ways poverty affects families every day. When I found LEO and saw a way to give in Lynn, it was a no brainer. We really went to work around the holidays. We didn't want kids to lose faith in the season! We all live paycheck to paycheck, but my group steps up in a crisis." Last holiday season Stacy assembled 30 elves who donated \$10K in

new clothes and cold weather gear. They single handedly supported our entire Home Visitors' caseload. LEO is forever grateful for this overwhelming generosity.





Kecia Rideout runs the "Chase the Chill" project, a group of talented knitters out of the Lvnn area who work on cold weather items to be donated wherever there is need. Last year her group donated urgently needed cold weather items to our Head Start Program. This year. Chase the Chill started creating for LEO in the summer, with the goal of making their donation large enough to cover all of our children. "In a heatwave I like to imagine little bits of sunlight getting trapped inside the fibers

of my yarn, saved up for winter use." Chase the Chill meets at Land of a Thousand Hills Coffee on Saturdays throughout the year. They chat, laugh, exchange tips, and work with the goal of keeping our children warm. We are honored by their talent, dedication and generous hearts.

Philanthropic Support

\$20,000 - \$50,000

United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

\$10,000 - \$19,999

The Boston Foundation

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Essex County Community
Foundation

\$1,000 - \$4,999

AllWays Health Partners

C.L. Hauthaway & Sons Corp.

DiPietro Heating • Cooling • Plumbing

Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation

John's Oil Co.

The Law Offices of James J. Carrigan⁺

Lisa McFadden†

Rogers & Gray Insurance

Salem Five Charitable Foundation

\$500-\$999

All Care VNA & Hospice

Aspire Developmental Services

Bridgewell

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Birgitta † & Scott Damon

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[†]LEO is especially grateful for donations from our staff and board members, who also contribute generously of their time and talent.



