

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



THE PEAK INITIATIVE



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PEAK defines leadership as understanding, developing and using your power to positively influence people and/or places. By our definition, leadership is a process, not a destination. We know that all of us, every day, make choices about how and when we step into leadership. Each time our young people decide that they are intentionally going to try to make something better, they are leading. From deciding to be kind to a new participant on their first day to suggesting community service ideas, they are showing up with the intention and effort that is the core of positive influence.

PEAK starts early and stays the course, working with young people from first grade through high school and beyond. We are not creating leaders here. We are noticing and nurturing the leadership our young people already display. And in 2022, there was so much good to notice!

After an exciting building opening in 2021, we spent this year focusing on how we can use this amazing asset to best serve our participants and community. A focus has always been on how to show up for the Midtown community, and the new building has given us the ability to open our doors and welcome in numerous organizations and opportunities for our neighbors. This year alone, we've welcomed and hosted the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, free yoga classes with MKERec, the Wisconsin PATCH program, free community dinners, Community Building Workshops, ExFabula, Teens Grow Greens, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design, Unity in Motion, and more. As we continue the work of being a good neighbor, we welcome opportunities to host programs and experiences that further our shared desire of building a strong community with young people at the center.

The stories of impact and leadership this year were endless, and this annual report is only a snapshot of the countless ways our young people chose leadership again and again this year.

You'll hear about how our LTs and alum have learned and grown at PEAK and how they continue that progression by paying it forward to our younger participants.

You'll hear about families who have been part of PEAK for 18+ years and how their young people have experienced failing forward and grown into their best selves.

You'll hear about how we've grown and adapted our pillar community program PEAK@Tief over the last four years to provide the most engaging and sought after programming possible.

These stories are a small window into how young people at PEAK are showing up as strong leaders everyday in Milwaukee and constructing the building blocks of a world class city. We're excited to move into 2023 positioned to continue progressing in our Four Beliefs and uplifting our young people.

Demetria Smith
Executive Director

THE PEAK INITIATIVE

THEORY OF CHANGE



KIDS ARE AWESOME.

OUR APPROACH IS BASED ON 4 STRATEGIES:

UNFORTUNATELY, CIRCUMSTANCES ARE NOT.

Inequity creates barriers to realizing potential for many young people, particularly African-American and Latine youth in the U.S. Lack of access to positively formative experiences as well as gaps in societal encouragement and support are contributing factors.

PEAK IS WORKING TO CHANGE THAT.

Our mission is to bring out the limitless potential in young leaders through extraordinary experiences & nurturing relationships.



POTENTIAL

Nurture potential through supportive relationships with a diverse group of positive peers and adults.



EXPERIENCE

Engage young people in boundary pushing experiences that support social emotional learning and quantifiable skill development.



ACCESS

Provide young people access to places, people, and activities that might otherwise be out of reach due to social and economic barriers.



KNOWLEDGE

Offer opportunities for young people to lead at all ages in a variety of environments, actively increasing knowledge of self, knowledge of others, and knowledge of the world. Support experience-developed skills that allow for meaningful contribution.

THESE STRATEGIES LEAD TO:

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES: MINDSET & SKILLS

As young people progress on their PEAK journey, they learn and live the Four Beliefs. Leadership In Action looks like:

WE CAN ONLY GROW WHEN WE ARE HONEST ABOUT OUR MISTAKES.

We practice this core belief by persisting through challenges, learning from experience, and exhibiting the courage to do the next right thing.

We aspire to build skills in **self-awareness** and cultivating a **growth mindset**.

THE COMMUNITY IS BETTER WHEN EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES.

We practice this core belief through community exploration, identification of assets, building connections with others, and showing interest and care for shared spaces and goals.

We aspire to build skills in **communication** and **collaboration**.

ALL LIVING BEINGS HAVE INHERENT VALUE.

We practice this core belief by identifying and appreciating the experiences, talents and skills in ourselves and others. We show up as advocates, supporting the interests of a person, group or cause.

We aspire to build skills in **empathy** and nurturing a **strengths-focused outlook**.

EVERYONE HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THEIR WORLD.

We practice this core belief by imagining the ideal future and building toward the results we want to achieve, using the resources that we have.

We aspire to build skills in **problem solving** and cultivating **resilience**.

LONG TERM OUTCOMES: ACTIONS & BEHAVIORS

As young people progress on their PEAK journey, they learn and live the Four Beliefs. Leadership In Action looks like:

SELF SUFFICIENT

Able to meet their needs comfortably with available resources.

ENGAGED WITH COMMUNITY

Promoting quality of life for self and others.

SOCIALLY & EMOTIONALLY WELL

Possessing the outlook, skills, and supportive network to flourish.

ULTIMATE OUTCOMES: IMPACT & VISION

PEAK Alumni shape their communities with poise, persistence, confidence, and character; and communities in which PEAK Alumni live and work are more equitable, harmonious, and/or prosperous as a direct result of their contributions.



EVERY LIVING BEING HAS INHERENT VALUE.

STRENGTHS FOCUS • EMPATHY

We practice this core belief by identifying and appreciating the experiences, talents and skills in ourselves and others. We show up as advocates, supporting the interests of a person, group or cause.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

This summer, local ceramic artist Muneer Bahauddeen worked with all of our Day Camp participants to create a community mural. This mural, both the process and the end product, is a perfect embodiment of this core belief. It wasn't only the kids who were "old enough" or the kids who thought of themselves as artists. Each of our 178 Day Camp participants, from six years old all the way to our incoming high school freshman, learned about the art of clay making and created a clay piece that was incorporated into the larger mural. They all added their personal spin and that is what makes the piece so rich. Each of our participants has unique value. Who they are and what they create makes PEAK what it is and this 300 pound masterpiece displayed in the entryway of our Program Center is a tangible testament to that.



PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT

Fifth grader Jairus Jones has been involved in PEAK programming for over four years now and always shows up to programs, whether Summer Camps or Leadership Labs, with a positive and empathetic disposition. He treats his peers with respect and kindness, exemplifying the focus on strengths and empathy that we encourage here at PEAK, and is always looking for ways to grow in his personal leadership development. Jairus also attends one of our school-based program partner schools and when he saw PEAK facilitating programming with younger students he advocated for himself, with the help of his parent, PEAK team, and school team, to be involved as an ambassador in the third grade leadership program. Not only is he a mentor and role model at PEAK programs, he shows up in his everyday life as well - that's what leadership is all about!



“I love PEAK for the simple fact that the staff cares and provides a safe and interactive experience for the youth. Teaching them skills they’ll use and benefit from in life. PEAK is building confidence one child at a time!”

— *Tanairi G.*, PEAK Parent





WE CAN ONLY GROW WHEN WE ARE HONEST ABOUT OUR MISTAKES.

SELF-AWARENESS • GROWTH MINDSET

We practice this core belief by persisting through challenges, learning from experience, and exhibiting the courage to do the next right thing.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

When we started PEAK@Tief, our Tiefenthaler Park activation initiative, as a small pilot program four years ago, we were stepping into unknown territory. However, we were determined to respond to community needs and that meant learning how to offer engaging programming differently. The PEAK@Tief program model is drastically different from our other programs so we've had to learn a lot. As a staff, we leaned in on this belief and embraced a growth mindset to help us continue to grow and improve this program year after year. Now, PEAK@Tief has become a pillar program during summer, serving as a drop-in space for youth and the wider community to participate in engaging and impactful activities. We are constantly working to find the right organizations to partner with us in this space. This summer we had some extraordinary partners including Milwaukee Public Museum, CirculateMKE, Kohl's Wild Theater, Artists Working in Education, Braided, Next Act, and, for the second year, the Milwaukee Ballet. The Milwaukee Ballet was a unique and exciting opportunity for the community to learn about ballet through demonstrations and interactive learning. Milwaukee Ballet dancers took the time to teach young people in the park about the art of movement, by teaching some of the skills and techniques that go into the dance. It was a joy to see more and more people pause their activities in the park and gravitate towards the performance and demos. Quite a few people tried out ballet techniques for the first time! PEAK@Tief enlivens our public park space through these delightful, free experiential education opportunities to people of all ages.



PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT

PEAK alumni are often the best mentors for current participants. They can connect to the struggles, strengths, and experiences of our youth on another level. PEAK Alumna, Demetria Williams, served as our Camper Support Specialist this summer at Lake Valley Camp. Demetria worked closely with youth when they struggled managing their emotions or participating in healthy conflict. To support participant growth, Demetria used her own skills and passion of crocheting to coach participants in emotion management. Participants could be seen all over camp working on their crochet projects or winding their yarn ball and were able to connect the skill to how it helped reduce their stress or anxiety and provide them a creative outlet. Demetria also worked with our high school students to facilitate crocheting as a tool for self-care at our monthly Youth Leadership Series. Through her innovative techniques, Demetria helped our campers develop self-awareness and growth mindset around their emotion management, giving them tools that they can use for years to come.



“My favorite mission moment was witnessing Jiselle Rivera return to LVC and THRIVE as our Equestrian Instructor. With guidance from our Equestrian Consultant, Kristi, who was once Jiselle’s Equestrian Instructor, we had a successful program. Witnessing Kristi continue to mentor Jiselle, a mentor-mentee relationship that started 17 years ago, really spoke to the nurturing relationships our staff offer our campers.”

– *Lucero S.*
Assistant Director of Camp Programs
& Expeditions & PEAK/LVC Alumna



THE COMMUNITY IS BETTER WHEN EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES.

COMMUNICATION • COLLABORATION

We practice this core belief through community exploration, identification of assets, building connections with others, and showing interest and care for shared spaces and goals.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Our Leaders in Training program consists of a Three Phase Internship to support the interests and strengths of our high school students and challenge them to advance their leadership skills. This summer our Phase 2 Interns, who made the additional commitment to spend their whole summer at LVC, brainstormed how this year's intern cohort could use their strengths to give back to the LVC community. The LTs decided to improve the camp community by building a set of four benches, to represent PEAKs Four Beliefs, and camp direction signs used to help new campers and visitors find their way around Lake Valley Camp. This project allowed all LTs to contribute through various stages of ideation, planning with clarity and intention, and project execution. Lots of hard work and sweat went into these projects, especially when the day came to start digging the direction signs into the ground. The LTs worked through the heat, showed an intense grit mindset, and dug straight through gravel and rock, motivating themselves and each other to complete something important to them and future campers. Their mentality and collaboration represents an advanced understanding of The Community Is Better When Everyone Contributes. This year's LVC LTs understood that giving back to the community is deeper than doing something solely to leave their mark on LVC, rather it's to improve the experiences of those who use the space now, and in the future.



PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT

Seeing our high school Leaders in Training (LTs) positively impact their peers and younger participants is what our LT Program is all about. Senior Willie Freeman has grown up in PEAK programming and this year spent 6 weeks at Lake Valley Camp for his internship and served as a Program Assistant for the elementary Leadership Labs. A defining moment that demonstrated the growth and leadership Willie has developed over the years was when he mentored a second grade participant through a rough moment. Willie asked questions, listened, validated feelings and supported the younger participant to regulate themselves enough to rejoin their program. When the younger participant was adjusted and happily participating, Willie said to a PEAK staff member, "I did that!" This small example was evidence of greater leadership and growth and demonstration of how we can all contribute to creating a positive community.



“PEAK is a program where young people discover undiscovered knowledge, learn to be leaders, help others and find new friends.”

– Miriam G,
Parent & Seasonal Staff



EVERYONE HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THEIR WORLD.

RESILIENCE • PROBLEM SOLVING

We practice this core belief by imagining the ideal future and building toward the results we want to achieve, using the resources that we have.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

At PEAK, it is essential that our participants feel that their voice matters and learn how to speak confidently on issues that matter to them. From asking our first graders to lead check-in questions for the group to LTs creating an entire workshop based on their passions, we strive to provide opportunities for our young leaders to develop their unique voice. Our program, Speak On It, offers high school students the opportunity to practice essential skills in public speaking and learning the power of their own voices. This year, our Speak On It participants decided to take that skill to the next level and created their own podcast with Everyday Media. Participants learned how to identify topics of interest, structure a conversation to include a variety of perspectives, engage in respectful disagreement, and more. Some of the topics covered in this year's podcasts included Being a Teen in Times of COVID, Supernatural & Beyond, and learning about the interests and preferences of others through a classic PEAK game of This or That. This teen led podcast has been published and can be listened to on our website. A powerful example of amplifying the voices of young people.



PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT

As a progressive program PEAK aims to build long-standing relationships with our participants and their whole family. Many of our current families have been with us for a number of years, and some since the very beginning! The Alanis Family has been an active family for over 18 years. Hilda Alanis' oldest daughter, Rosalba, was one of the first Pioneers to attend Lake Valley Camp back in 2004, even before there were cabins! Currently, PEAK alumna Rosalba is a Navy Hospital Corpsman, and Emma, a Pioneer and Jimena, an LT, are current participants. PEAK has worked closely with Hilda to support her children in their journey of leadership, showing resilience through challenges and working together to identify how to best meet each child's unique needs. Hilda shared, "PEAK has been my girls' second home. A place where they can be themselves, where they fit in, and where they are held accountable. PEAK has supported my girls through the mistakes they've made and celebrated the leaders they've become. As a single parent household, I cannot always do everything and be everywhere, but PEAK is an amazing support and helps my girls' straighten up and continue on the right path. My children are all so different, but PEAK fits all of them." PEAK is not a "one size fits all" program, rather we work together with participants and guardians to give them the tools they need to use their power to change their world.



“PEAK teaches young people growth, it makes them advocate for themselves without immediate advice from parents. PEAK teaches young people life skills needed to be successful and gives them independence!”

– Rochelle E., PEAK Parent



PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



RACE/ETHNICITY

BLACK	59%
MULTIRACIAL	9%
LATINE	30%
WHITE	1%
OTHER	1%

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

- UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS 383
- TOTAL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS 1007
- TOTAL DROP-IN PARTICIPANTS 1,676

GENDER EXPRESSION

MALE	46%
FEMALE	53%
TGNC*	1%

*Trans/Gender-nonconforming/Non-binary

ANNUAL STAFF, BOARD MEMBERS, PARTNERS, NEW DONORS

ANNUAL STAFF

Demetria Smith
Executive Director

Kari Nervig
Senior Director of Programs

Jason Beard
Director of Operations and Finance

Lila Weatherall
Director of Teen & Community Programs

Eve Smallwood
Lake Valley Camp Director

Haley Woods
Assistant Director of Camp Operations

Lucero Serna
*Assistant Director of Camp Programs
& Expeditions*

Beth Neuens
Youth Programs Manager

Erin Fischer
Impact & Engagement Manager

Rodney Sanchez
Operations Manager

Joshua Liston
Teen Programs Manager

Cecilia Gencuski
Community Programs Manager

Andy Voit
Facilities & Maintenance Manager

Aris Townsend
Communications Coordinator

Kathy Wallace
HR & Finance Coordinator

Maggie Kellogg
Youth Programs Coordinator

Cindy Garcia
Youth Programs Coordinator

Laura Martinez
Youth Programs Coordinator

Mason Wyland
Teen Program Coordinator

Donte Bowie
PEAK Fellow

Richard Barnes
Facilities & Maintenance Specialist

BOARD MEMBERS

Bill Kellogg (Founder & Governing Board Chair)
Retired from Kohl's

Kurt Kellogg (Kellogg Family Foundation Representative)
Retired from ACME Tackle

Peter Sommerhauser
Godfrey & Kahn

Stephanie Maney
City Year Milwaukee

Jay Creagh
Godfrey & Kahn

PARTNERS

Messmer St. Mary

Arts@Large

4-H

BloomMKE

Prince of Peace

All Hands Boatworks

Wisconsin Bike Federation

MENTOR Milwaukee

Digitunity

Tricklebee

Milwaukee Recreation

National Interscholastic
Cycling Association (NICA)

DreamBikes

Milwaukee County Parks

Midtown Neighborhood
Alliance

Artist Working in Education

Milwaukee Public Museum

Milwaukee Ballet

CirculateMKE





Lake Valley Song

By: Julian Martinez & Gilbert Bustamante

The sky is falling on the lake.
My heart is calling when I wake.

I see the highest peak, let's see how high I reach.
But I think I'll just enjoy the view for now.

I climb the earth and stone and rubble.
The terrain of life at times will give me trouble.

I'll fall and fall again, but stand up a better human.
As long as I remember what I've learned.

The trees, the sky, the hills, the lake, the valley.
We'll part ways soon, but I won't do so sadly.

Cuz I'll come back again, come back a better human.
As long as I remember what I've learned.

We'll only grow if honest with ourselves.
I've value just like everything and everybody does.

And we all have the power to change our world.
We'll build a place together and smile once it's unfurled.

I believe in you, do you believe in me?
Please believe it's true and let's believe in we.
I believe in you, do you believe in me?
We've just one thing to do. Be the change you want to see.

Written Summer 2022 at High School Resident Camp

