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## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **LEAP FOR EDUCATION WRAPS UP ITS VIRTUAL SUMMER WORK PROGRAM**

#### ***Nineteen Gloucester Students Completed the Program Earning A \$500 Stipend***

GLOUCESTER, MA —LEAP for Education is pleased to announce that nineteen students from Gloucester High School (GHS) recently wrapped up paid virtual summer internships. These 6-week internships required each student to work with a career mentor to define and complete a summer project which was presented at a Zoom forum on August 11<sup>th</sup>. Students also were required to attend 10 hours of workshops that were designed to develop workplace skills needed to be successful in a career.

Some examples of internship placements included music production with music instructor and performer, Tami Papagiannopoulos, website development with Raincastle Communications, healthy cooking with chef and author Nina Simonds, video production with Danvers Local Access TV, program development with the Sawyer Free Library, and museum management with Cape Ann Museum. Zoom workshop topics covered effective workplace communication, financial skill building, and college and financial aid research. Students earned \$500 stipends upon successful completion of their project.

“I went to LEAP for the opportunity to participate in this program. Being thrown into an environment where nine hours of work is expected every week really helped me to develop good

work habits that I know I will need for the rest of my life. I also learned how to use digital tools to produce music,” said Gloucester High School student Ella Young.

Like many organizations and businesses, LEAP had to adapt in the wake of COVID-19. While a predominantly virtual program had its challenges, there were significant benefits to this shift. Students that previously had limited experience using technology have been able to boost their computer skills, particularly with Zoom meetings and computer tools. Additionally, virtual internships allowed students to participate who might not have otherwise been able to due to health concerns, transportation issues or schedule conflicts.

“Students with anxiety and other social issues that desperately need support were able to engage thanks to the virtual nature of the program. This was also a great opportunity to engage a wider community of professionals who were eager to help students with their projects,” stated program coordinator JoAnn Leavitt. “And, in turn, students gained important professional connections.”

The internship program was made possible through generous support from individual donors and institutional support from Clark R. Smith Foundation, Institution for Savings, Brace Cove Foundation, and the Applied Materials Foundation.

“We believe that now, more than ever, students need access to high-quality, hands-on learning opportunities that equip them with the skills and confidence needed for the future. We are proud to support LEAP’s career exploration programming that introduces students to a variety of career options through real-life work experience,” said Michele Walker-Moak, manager with the Applied Materials Foundation. With these investments, students were still able to earn stipends despite a decrease in teen work options due to COVID-19, which provided critical income to families in financial crisis.

### **About LEAP for Education, Inc.**

*LEAP for Education ([www.leap4ed.org](http://www.leap4ed.org)) has as its mission to empower underserved students to pave their own way to social and economic mobility through an informed educational plan that*

*leads to a successful career aligned with their values and interests. We accomplish this through programs that provide impactful support in academic enrichment, social-emotional development, post-secondary and career readiness, and social-capital building. LEAP runs programs for students in middle school, high school and college in Lynn, Salem, Peabody and Gloucester. LEAP is an acronym for: Learn, Explore, Aspire, and Pursue.*

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