

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

LEADERS
EDUCATION
— FOUNDATION —

Making Lives Better, **TOGETHER.**

Leaders Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, founded in 2019, as a mission-driven organization dedicated to uplifting communities across West Tennessee through education. Guided by its core mission to “Make Lives Better, Together,” the Foundation invests in the future by supporting students, educators, and educational initiatives.

At the heart of the Foundation’s work are scholarships and educator grants that empower individuals to pursue academic and professional growth. These programs provide critical financial support and recognition to those who are shaping the future through learning and teaching. The Foundation champions educational initiatives that foster innovation, leadership, and community engagement. Through partnerships and programs, it provides resources that make a meaningful impact in schools and neighborhoods.

We believe in empowering our community for good.

GIVEFORWARD

Message from the President



As President of the Leaders Education Foundation, I am proud to share a reflection on a year defined by growth, generosity, and a deepened commitment to our mission of Making Lives Better, Together. Throughout 2025, the Foundation continued to expand its reach across West Tennessee by investing in students, educators, and community-driven educational initiatives that strengthen our region's future.

One of our most meaningful areas of impact remains our scholarship programs. In 2025, the Foundation awarded \$26,000 in collegiate scholarships to graduating high school seniors and provided an additional \$42,500 in post-year-one support to returning scholarship recipients. Since launching the collegiate scholarship program in 2020, our giving has remained strong, ensuring students who demonstrate academic achievement and leadership continue to receive the support they need to pursue higher education.

In addition to collegiate scholarships, the Foundation continued to invest in workforce readiness opportunities through our partnership with Georgia-Pacific Dixie®. In 2025, this collaboration resulted in more than \$30,000 distributed through Workforce Readiness Scholarships, supporting students pursuing career and technical education pathways that lead directly to in-demand jobs across our region.

Beyond scholarships, we are proud of the breadth and depth of our community partnerships. During the year, the Foundation supported 13 educational programs throughout West Tennessee, investing more than \$54,000 to strengthen access to learning, literacy, the arts, and workforce development. These efforts included support for Ballet Arts through its school performance program, as well as the Jackson Arts Council's Art Box initiative, bringing creative experiences into elementary and middle schools.

Meeting Agenda

April 27, 2026

Call to Order
and Invocation

Approval of
2025 Meeting Minutes

President's Report

Nominating
Committee's Report

Closing Remarks and
Adjournment

Board of Directors



Ron Hill
Board Chair



Eddie Hayes
Vice Chair & Secretary



Karen Taylor
Treasurer



Yvette Blue
Board Member



Greg Hammond
Board Member



Stephanie Riley
Board Member



Linda Rizzuto
Board Member



Stanley Sanders
Board Member



Britney Ward
Board Member

Educators remain at the heart of our mission. Through the expanded L.E.A.D.S. Grants program, the Foundation awarded \$35,000 to educators across West Tennessee. These grants supported classroom innovation, professional development, and teacher appreciation, all with the goal of helping educators to inspire students to Learn, Experience, Advocate, Dream, and Serve. Each grant represents not only financial support, but also confidence in the educators shaping the next generation.

Literacy and early learning continued to be a focused priority. In partnership with Imagination Library chapters in Gibson, Crockett, and Madison Counties, the Foundation launched the "Imagine the Possibilities" campaign, resulting in a collective donation of \$4,980 to support local Imagination Library programs. We also continued our five-year commitment to The READ Team, including support for Words on Wheels, ensuring children across West Tennessee have access to books and reading encouragement.

The Foundation was also proud to support new and emerging programs in 2025. Investments were made in Dreamers and Makers Art Club, the Boys and Girls Club of the Hatchie River Region's Workforce Warriors program, and two projects from the Leadership Jackson Class of 2025 that focused on school improvement and family engagement. Each initiative reflects our belief that education extends beyond the

classroom and is strengthened through creativity, workforce readiness, and community involvement.

Looking ahead, we are excited to build on this momentum. Planning is underway for our second annual EmpowerEd fundraising event, featuring author and inspirational speaker, John O'Leary. EmpowerEd will allow us to further expand scholarships, educational grants, and community programming, while also recognizing exceptional administrators, volunteers, and educators through the EmpowerEd Educator Awards.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our volunteer Board of Directors, the commitment of our staff, and the generosity of our sponsors, members, and donors. In 2025 alone, over 4,900 new members joined the Foundation, each one helping amplify our impact across West Tennessee.

As we move forward, we remain steadfast in our mission and grateful for the collective support that makes this work possible. Thank you for partnering with us to give forward, uplift education, and create lasting change through the Leaders Education Foundation.

Kind regards,

LEIGH ANNE BENTLEY
President

Officers and Staff

The leadership of the Leaders Education Foundation is comprised of a volunteer board of directors, officers, and staff donating their time, talent and treasures. The Foundation is grateful for their service and commitment to help provide resources and opportunities to help launch educational opportunities for community members.



Leigh Anne Bentley
President



Leigh O'Neill
Vice President



Kelly Barger
Assistant Secretary



Taylor Risley
Assistant Treasurer



Shea Brown
Director of
Community Impact



Amy Mallette
Program Manager

Corporate Sponsors





In 2025, Leaders Education Foundaton awarded \$35,000 to West Tennessee educators through the L.E.A.D.S. Educator Grant program. Grants were awarded for professional development, teacher appreciation projects, and classroom initiatives.

Professional Development Grants

Teacher Appreciation Grants

- Kristin Backus**
Fayette Academy
- Matt Davis**
Collegiate School of Memphis
- Amy Howard**
Fayette Academy
- Katrina Ware**
Bartlett High School
- Brandi Welch**
West Chester Elementary and
Jacks Creek Elementary
- Sharon Clark**
Sunny Hill Intermediate School

- Chontel Bridgeman**
North Parkway Middle School
- Sharon Clark**
Sunny Hill
Intermediate School
- Tisa Day**
Nova Early Learning Center
- Jody Hinson**
Rutherford School
- Natalie Lax**
Chester County
Middle School

- Chris Lownsdale**
Obion County Central
High School
- Holly Peale**
Huntingdon Primary School
- Carrie Regalado**
Lake County High School
- Jeanna Rice**
Thelma Barker Elementary
- Tiffany Silvers**
West Bemis Middle School



Classroom Grants

Nieta Austin

Northeast Middle School

Lindsey Barnes

Community Montessori School

Julie Cartwright

South Gibson County
Elementary School

Hillary Clift

Carroll County Technical School

Bridgette Cobb

Tennessee College of
Applied Technology Northwest

Cheryl Currie

Isaac Lane Elementary

Samantha Ellis

South Gibson County
Elementary School

Rebecca Holloway

Union University EDGE Program

Katie Howard

Houston Middle School

Cacey Jones

JCM-Early College High School

Laura LaPorte

Elmore Park Middle School

Eugene Clark

Jackson Central-Merry
Early College High

Elizabeth (Libby) Lynch

Humboldt Junior Senior
High School

Kimberly McNeal

Denmark Elementary School

Jenna Patton

Central High School

Rita Perry

Jackson Central Merry
High School

Erin Piefer

West Bemis Middle School

Katilyn Rushing

Arlington Elementary School

Morgan Shaw

South Gibson County
High School

Danielle Shaw-Jones

North Side High School

Janet Sweeney

South Elementary School

William Thierfelder

Union University

Jessica Watson

Central High School

Christopher White

Freed-Hardeman University

Kimberly Woodard

Stigall Primary

Collegiate Scholarships

Leaders Education Foundation awarded \$26,000 in scholarships, ranging from \$1,000–2,500, and included a video submission scholarship that focused on the financial well-being of students. Other scholarships were determined based on financial need, community service and academic achievement.



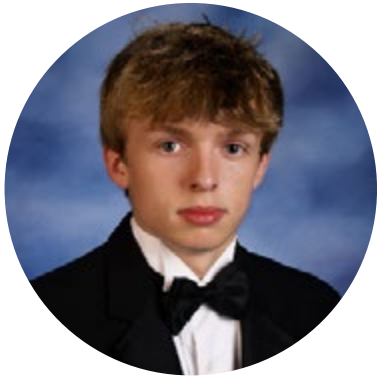
Trinity Jones
\$2,500 Financial Wellness
Video Scholarship



Ethan Williams
\$2,000 Financial Wellness
Video Scholarship



Devin Wagner
\$2,500 Leaders Credit Union
Martha Britt Scholarship



Bo Dodds

\$2,000 Leaders Credit Union
Martha Britt Scholarship



Chase Taylor

\$1,000 Impacting Communities
Scholarship



Boyan Xu

\$2,500 Ellis Insurance Agency
Academic Achievement
Scholarship



Samuel Latham

\$2,000 Ellis Insurance Agency
Academic Achievement
Scholarship



Kellyn Smith

\$1,000 JMCSS Founders
Scholarship



Kennedy Hill

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Dyer County

Collegiate Scholarships



Matthew Exline
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Gibson County



Nathan Finch
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Obion County



Liam Moore
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Shelby County



Santiago Aguirre
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Isaiah Coleman
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Ryan DeSpain
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Halle Holyfield

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Caylee Knott

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Jocelyn Romines

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Je'Delle Ross

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Ella Stephenson

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Kamari Stokes

\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee

Workforce Readiness Scholarships

presented by **DIXIE**

Leaders Education Foundation awarded scholarships to support West Tennessee students who are enrolled in Workforce Readiness programs or are pursuing industry certifications through West Tennessee community colleges, Moore Tech, or the Tennessee College of Applied Technology.

Antrice Robinson
TCAT Jackson

Baltazar Ramos
TCAT Jackson

Chase Stout
Jackson State
Community College

Collin Raburn
TCAT Memphis

Devin Davis
Moore Tech

Hailey Wilkerson
Southwest Tennessee
Community College

Ishea Bond
TCAT Jackson

Kelonta Cole
Jackson State
Community College

Owen Hinton
Moore Tech

Shantae Key
Jackson State
Community College

Jamesha Cantey
TCAT Northwest

Cesar Chame
TCAT Memphis

Walter Ellis
TCAT Jackson

LeAndrew Ellison
TCAT Jackson

Lakan Evans
Jackson State
Community College

Darrell Nash
TCAT Northwest

Mikah Ruff
Moore Tech

Fajona Sneed
Jackson State
Community College

Gabriel Truesdell
TCAT Northwest

Kamryn Whitmore
Moore Tech

Wyatt Jones Jr
TCAT Memphis

Tralyn Oliver
TCAT Memphis

Chasity Scranton
Jackson State
Community College

Aniyah Pharms
Jackson State
Community College

Johnathan Glass
TCAT Northwest

Jullianne Hatchett
Jackson State
Community College

Stephanie Austin
Southwest Tennessee
Community College

Marvin Leon Garcia
TCAT Jackson

Precious Jones
Jackson State
Community College

William DeSpain
TCAT Northwest

Nominating Committee Report

In accordance with our Bylaws (available upon request), this notice serves to inform the membership that three (3) Directors' terms will expire and one (1) vacated Director's term must be filled at the Leaders Education Foundation's seventh annual meeting in April 2026. The new terms for the three (3) Directors with expiring terms shall be for three (3) years each. In accordance with Section 4.06 of our Bylaws, the term for the one (1) Director filling a vacancy shall be for the remainder of the vacated term.

In accordance with the Foundation's Bylaws, Section 4.03, the Chair shall appoint before each annual meeting at least two (2) Board members and three (3) members from the general membership to serve on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall submit to the full Board and membership a list of nominees not later than thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting.

Board Chair Ron Hill appointed Stan Sanders and Stephanie Riley from the Board and Spencer Pratt, Seth Rudd, and Karen Freeman from the general membership to serve on the Nominating Committee for 2026. Board Chair Hill appointed Stan Sanders as the 2026 Nominating Committee Chair.

The Nominating Committee has completed its responsibility of providing the following as Director Nominees to be presented to the membership.

Eddie Hays
3rd Term
April 2026–April 2029

Greg Hammond
2nd Term
April 2026–April 2029

Ron Hill
3rd Term
April 2026–April 2029

Judy Renshaw
1st Term
April 2026–April 2028

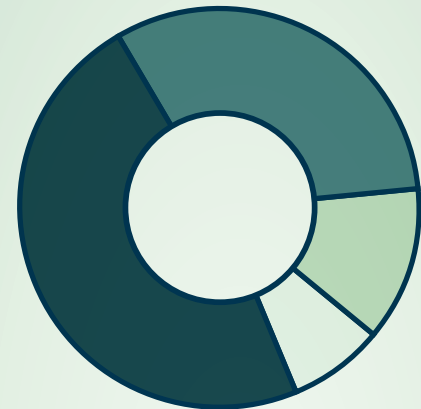
Thank you for allowing us to serve as your 2025 Nominating Committee.

Stan Sanders
Spencer Pratt
Stephanie Riley

Seth Rudd
Karen Freeman

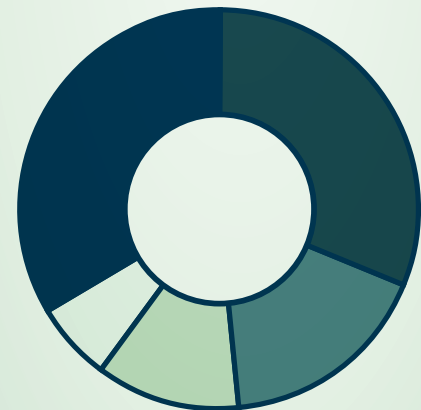
2025 Financial Performance

Revenue



- 48% Donations and Sponsorships
- 32% Fundraising
- 12% Membership Fees
- 8% Other Income

Expenses



- 34% Collegiate and Trade Support
- 31% Fundraising Expenses
- 17% Program Support
- 12% Educator Support
- 6% Operating Expenses

6th Annual Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2025

President Leigh Anne Bentley called the 6th Annual Membership Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. at the J. Walter Barnes Conference Center in Jackson, TN. She explained that all business conducted during the meeting, including voting, would be decided through in-person votes cast by individual Foundation members present. She stated that the 2024 Annual Report was available at the meeting's check-in and was posted on the Foundation's website at leadersgives.org.

President Bentley led the invocation. She then called upon Secretary Eddie Hays to determine whether a quorum was present. Secretary Hays confirmed that a quorum was present.

President Bentley called for the reading of the minutes of the 5th Annual Membership meeting held on April 16, 2024. A motion was made to dispense with the reading of the minutes, as they were included in the 2024 Annual Report. The motion carried and the minutes were approved as presented.

President Bentley introduced the Foundation Board Members:

- Mr. Ron Hill, Chair
- Mr. Eddie Hays, Vice-Chair and Secretary
- Mrs. Karen Taylor, Treasurer
- Ms. Yvette Blue
- Mr. Greg Hammond
- Mr. Stan Sanders
- Ms. Stephanie Riley
- Mrs. Eddie Mae Pirtle

Before presenting the President's Report, President Bentley thanked the Foundation Board for their service and leadership over the past year. She stated that fulfilling the mission of Leaders Education Foundation is a heartfelt endeavor that relies on the collective effort of a dedicated community, volunteer board, and volunteer staff. Together, we are affecting meaningful change, empowered by the generous support of our sponsors, members, and donors. With each contribution of time, talent, and resources, the Foundation is enabled to Give Forward and make a tangible impact in our West Tennessee Community.

President Bentley then reported on the Foundation's initiatives in 2024 including:

- Awarding \$30,000 in partnership with Georgia Pacific-Dixie of workforce readiness scholarships

- Awarding \$25,000 in collegiate year 1 scholarships to West TN high school seniors
- Providing \$29,500 in post-year 1 collegiate scholarships to qualifying previous (year 1) collegiate scholarship winners
- Partnering with the Jackson Grown Leaders Fellowship in its mentorship and support of Jackson-Madison County School System (JMCSS) juniors and seniors who might otherwise be overlooked
- Providing funding for Ballet Arts and the Jackson Symphony Music Academy to provide educational opportunities for students
- Sponsoring the Hub City Innovation Cup prizes for high school teams from the Jackson-Madison County area
- Sponsoring Teacher of the Year awards for two deserving educators within the JMCSS
- Sponsoring 15 seventh and eighth grade students from West TN to participate in the FutureStar Youth Summit at UT Martin
- Sponsoring the 2024 WestTeach Program, which included educators from 17 school districts across 12 West Tennessee counties
- Awarding \$35,000 through the L.E.A.D.S. Grants program, including classroom, professional development, and teacher appreciation grants

Before presenting the 2025 collegiate year 1 scholarships, President Bentley reported that the Board formed a Scholarship Committee in accordance with the Bylaws to review the applications and video submissions. The committee consisted of Board Members Linda Rizzuto and Yvette Blue, along with community members Mr. Mark Cancia, Mrs. Amy Floyd, and Mrs. Lisa Hurd. She then individually recognized each 2025 scholarship recipient in attendance and stated that a full list of the recipients has been included in the 2024 Annual Report.

President Bentley next reported on the Foundation's initiative to raise awareness of the Foundation through new members who wished to also support participating chapters of the Imagination Library, which provides one book each month to a child from birth to age five. The 2024 "Imagine the Possibilities" campaign resulted in the Foundation making a collective donation of \$4,980 to the participating chapters in Crockett, Gibson, and Madison Counties. President

Bentley presented the donation to the participating chapters in attendance.

President Bentley announced that the Foundation had partnered with the Jackson-Madison County School System and adult education providers for the JMCSS GED Graduation Program. She then individually recognized each of the 10 graduates and congratulated them on the successful completion of their GED.

President Bentley announced that the Foundation is actively planning the Foundation's inaugural fundraising event called EmpowerEd which will be presented by West Tennessee Healthcare. The event will be held on August 14th and feature keynote speaker Dr. John Delony, a #1 bestselling author and Ramsey personality. Event proceeds will support the Foundation's scholarships, educational grants, and other program support that promotes lifelong learning in our West Tennessee community.

Before presenting the 2025 Nominating Committee's report, President Bentley recognized the Committee members: Mr. Ron Hill, who served as Committee Chair; Mr. Stan Sanders; Mr. Spencer Pratt; Mr. Seth Rudd; and Mrs. Karen Freeman. She then reported that, with Board approval, the Nominating Committee was submitting the following slate of nominations for the Foundation's Board of Directors:

- Ms. Stephanie Riley
3rd term (April 2025 – April 2028)
- Ms. Karen Taylor
3rd term (April 2025 – April 2028)
- Mrs. Britney Ward
1st term (April 2025 – April 2028)

As there were no further nominations, a motion and second were made to accept the slate. The motion carried unanimously and President Bentley thanked the 2025 Nominating Committee for their service.

President Bentley then thanked the members for attending the 6th Annual Membership meeting. She also thanked all the Foundation's sponsors, volunteers, and donors, and encouraged everyone's continued support and involvement in the Foundation. With no further business to be discussed, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Eddie Hays
Secretary

Ron Hill
Chair



LEADERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION'S

EmpowerEd

An evening with **JOHN O'LEARY**

presented by



September 17, 2026

Join #1 bestselling author and *Soul on Fire* inspiration **John O'Leary** at **EmpowerEd**, presented by EPlus Broadband, for an intimate dinner experience that feeds both body and soul. Your sponsorship does more than reserve a seat. It directly supports scholarships, educator grants, and lifelong learning across West Tennessee through the **Leaders Education Foundation**, while also honoring **five deserving educators** who are making a meaningful impact in our region. This is more than a night of inspiration. It's an investment in our community's future.

Learn more at leadersgives.org/events



BECOME a member

When an individual or organization chooses to give to the Leaders Education Foundation, their impact could last a lifetime.

Becoming a member of the Leaders Education Foundation means you will make an impact in your community. As a member, your contribution gives you the unique opportunity to participate in the Annual Meeting of the Foundation's membership, as our volunteer Board of Directors outlines how we plan to Give Forward. You will be updated through our newsletter and social media with how your membership is directly impacting your local community. You will also have direct access to share the Foundation's scholarships and grants to students or educators who would benefit from these valuable opportunities.

To become a member of the Leaders Education Foundation, visit leadersgives.org and select "Give."

Donations of all sizes are appreciated, and you automatically become a member with a one-time \$10 donation. Donations over the \$10 membership fee may be given in honor of or in memory of a loved one.

"Always walk through life as if you have something new to learn, and you will."

— Vernon Howard

LEADERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

LEADERSGIVES.ORG
info@leadersgives.org



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