

A background image showing three students (two young women and one young man) sitting at a desk, smiling and studying together. They are surrounded by books, papers, and writing instruments. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

2024 Annual Report

LEADERS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



Making Lives Better, **TOGETHER.**

Leaders Education Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit 501c3 organization that Gives Forward to our community. The Foundation unites community members and organizations to bring educational resources and opportunities to educators and students of all ages in West Tennessee.

Leaders Education Foundation provides educational grants, scholarships, and resources to our community that supports lifelong learning, workforce development, and education.

We believe in empowering our community for good.

GIVEFORWARD

Message from the President



As President of the Leaders Education Foundation, I am honored to reflect on another transformative year advancing our mission of Making Lives Better Together. Throughout 2024, our foundation has expanded its reach and deepened its impact across West Tennessee communities through strategic partnerships and innovative programming.

This year marked significant growth in our scholarship initiatives. Our partnership with Georgia-Pacific Dixie® has flourished, enabling us to fully realize our commitment to doubling workforce readiness scholarships. These Workforce Readiness Scholarships presented by Dixie® have opened doors for exceptional students pursuing career and technical education

paths, complementing our established collegiate scholarship program, which continues to support academic excellence.

We've continued our support for vital community programs, including the Jackson Grown Leader Fellowship, Ballet Arts of Jackson's school performance, and local Imagination Library chapters. The READ team, WestTeach, and Future Star Youth Summit are several key partners who have remained in our collective mission to enhance educational opportunities.

We supported the Story Book Trail project through the JAG Tennessee program at Huntingdon High School. The Story Book Trail presents a children's storybook on child-height panels along a short trail to

Meeting Agenda

April 10, 2025

Call to Order
and Invocation

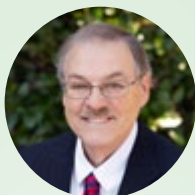
Approval of
2024 Meeting Minutes

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



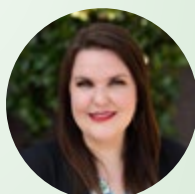
Yvette Blue
Board Member



Greg Hammond
Board Member



Eddie Mae Pirtle
Board Member



Stephanie Riley
Board Member



Linda Rizzuto
Board Member



Stanley Sanders
Board Member

promote adult-child interaction around books and nature. Each panel features a reading tip to encourage family engagement by bringing the book to life for children. This student-led project of Huntingdon High School students presented the idea to the Huntingdon City Council to seek approval for installation at the Kelley Complex across from Huntingdon High School. The project has broken ground and is scheduled for completion this year.

We joined forces with the Greater Jackson Chamber and became the official Education Connection sponsor to help engage the community in education and create opportunities for business leaders to get involved. The programs supported include Pathways2Possibilities, annual Education Breakfast, Manufacturing Day, and professional development days for local schools.

We continued the expanded LEADS educator grants program, which in 2024 awarded over \$35,000 to teachers and classrooms in West Tennessee. Our support included professional development and teacher appreciation initiatives, investing in both the educators and students who represent our region's future.

We began planning for our inaugural EmpowerEd event, featuring Ramsey Personality, Dr. John Delony, which will mark a milestone for the foundation. The event will bring together educators, community leaders, and supporters while honoring five outstanding local educators through the EmpowerEd Educator Awards. This celebration of educational excellence will exemplify our commitment to recognizing those who shape our future generations.

None of these achievements would be possible without our dedicated volunteer board, staff, community partners, and generous donors. Your unwavering commitment to our cause has enabled us to create a meaningful impact throughout West Tennessee. As we look toward the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to education and community enrichment. With your continued support, we will further expand our reach and amplify our impact in the years ahead. Thank you for partnering with us as we work together to Give Forward and Make Lives Better through the Leaders Education Foundation.

Kind regards,

L.A. Bentley
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



Shea Brown
Director of
Community Impact



Edie Whitman
Administrative



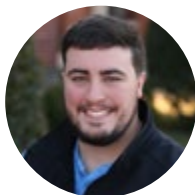
Taylor Risley
Assistant Treasurer



Kelly Barger
Assistant Secretary



Catherine Teel
Accounting



Tyler Mosely
Accounting



Scott Heit
Marketing



Ross Kyzar
Marketing



Amy Lovins
Marketing

Corporate Sponsors



CONFLUENT STRATEGIES



OpenLending





In 2024, Leaders Education Foundation 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

Kelly Williams
Lincoln Elementary School

Kimberly Woodard
Stigall Primary School

Kristin Backus
Fayette Academy

Natalie Watson
The University of Tennessee
at Martin — Selmer

Misty Lewis
Community Montessori School

Teacher Appreciation Grants

Holly Peale
Huntingdon Primary School

Jody Hinson
Rutherford School

Leslie Wolfe
Jackson Careers &
Technology School

Lisa Norris
South Carroll Special
School District —
Clarksburg School

Mary Ramey
Jackson Christian School
Early Learning Village

Michael Morris
Jackson Academic
STEAM Academy

Natalie Lax
West Junior High School

Regina DeLoach
Sherwood Elementary School

Tisa Day
Nova Early Learning Center

Valerie Sceals
Anderson Early
Childhood Center



Classroom Grants

Amy Groves

Jackson Christian School

Janet Sweeney

South Elementary School

Lauren Barker

East Chester
Elementary School

Matt Barker

Freed-Hardeman University

Lucchiaa Anderson

Liberty Technology
High School

Robin Ferguson

Denmark Elementary School

Leigh Ann Henson

Denmark Elementary School

Jennifer Burkhead

Denmark Elementary School

Joanna Willingham

Denmark Elementary School

Shannon Davis

Denmark Elementary School

Chris White

Freed Hardeman University

Missi Hardin

Community Montessori School

Lindsay Barnes

Community Montessori School

Angie Roberts

Community Montessori School

Jennifer Swanner

Elmore Park Middle School

Jennifer Hilton

Denmark Elementary School

Avrie Scott

South Elementary School

Calandra Ellison-Williamson

Liberty Tech High School

Lisa McLemore

Denmark Elementary School

Sharon Clark

Sunny Hill Intermediate School

Audrey Staggs

South Gibson County
Elementary School

Shawna Northrop

Denmark Elementary School

Whitney Hogg

Rose Hill School

Meagan Spencer

Freed-Hardeman University

Misty Lewis

Community Montessori School

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.



Reagan Jones
\$2,500 Financial Wellness
Video Scholarship



Lydia Logan
\$2,500 Leaders Credit Union
Martha Britt Scholarship



Mary Nye
\$2,000 Leaders Credit Union
Martha Britt Scholarship



Nevaeh Nesbitt
\$1,000 Ellis Insurance Agency
Academic Achievement
Scholarship



Lana Scherer
\$1,000 Community Service
Scholarship



Oscar Zheng
\$1,000 JMCSS Founders
Scholarship



Aubrey Lehmann
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Dyer County



Siler Criswell
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Gibson County



Stewart Conner
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Obion County



Braden Burdick
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
Shelby County

Collegiate Scholarships



Brayden Boyd
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Clark Burkhead
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Caden Chan
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



George Goldsby
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Allie Reese Herzke
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Izzie Jones
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



William Kilburn
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Aubree Kindle
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Georgia Lannom
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Lauren Levens
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Dillon Reynolds
\$1,000 Community Scholarship
West Tennessee



Luke Tankersley
\$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 or the Tennessee College of Applied Technology.

Jamesia Ambrose

Jackson State Community College

Brianna Anderson

Jackson State Community College

James Banks

Tennessee College
of Applied Technology

Amy Britt

Jackson State Community College

Wendy Cerna

William R Moore
College of Technology

Leah Cook

Jackson State Community College

Brittany Crawford

Tennessee College
of Applied Technology

Holly Edwards

TCAT Jackson

David Faustino

Jackson State Community College

Kanisha Fuqua

TCAT Memphis

Shyanne Garofalo

TCAT Jackson
Lexington extension campus

Owen Hinton

William R. Moore
College of Technology

Christa Holley

Jackson State Community College

Virginia Ivy

Jackson State Community College

Tracy Jones

Jackson State Community College

Shantae Key

Jackson State Community College

Hatcher Mercer

TCAT McKenzie

Madison Redden

TCAT Northwest

Analisse Rivera

Tennessee College
of Applied Technology

Chasity Scranton

Jackson State Community College

Lauren Watkins

Jackson State Community College

Hailey Wilkerson

Southwest Tennessee
Community College

Elizabeth Young

Tennessee College
of Applied Technology

Nominating Committee Report

In accordance with our Bylaws (available upon request), we are notifying our members that the Board will have three (3) currently serving Directors' terms expiring at the Leaders Education Foundation's sixth annual meeting in April 2025. The new terms for these Directors shall be for three (3) years each. Director Eddie Mae Pirtle will regrettably not be able to serve another term. We thank Director Pirtle for her leadership and service to the Foundation.

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 up to 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, has appointed Stan Sanders and himself from the Board and Spencer Pratt, Seth Rudd, and Karen Freeman from the general membership to serve on the Nominating Committee for 2025. Board Chair Hill served as the 2025 Nominating Committee Chair.

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

Stephanie Riley
3rd Term
April 2025-April 2028

Karen Taylor
3rd Term
April 2025-April 2028

Britney Ward
1st Term
April 2025-April 2028

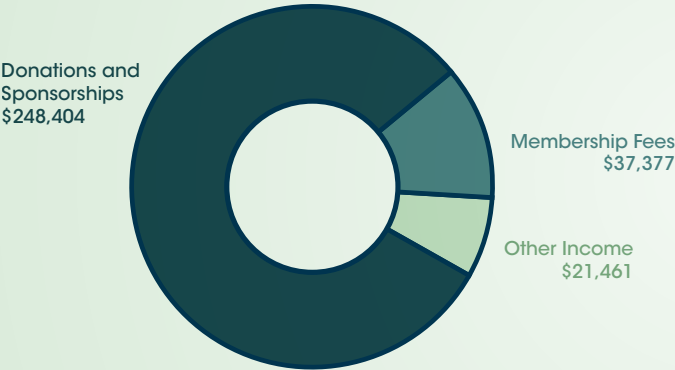
Thank you for allowing us to serve as your 2025 Nominating Committee.

Ron Hill
Spencer Pratt
Stan Sanders

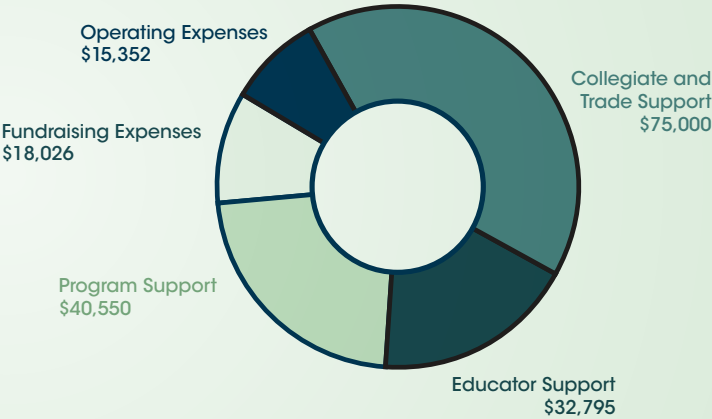
Seth Rudd
Karen Freeman

2024 Financial Performance

Revenue



Expenses



5th Annual Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2024

Chair Ron Hill called the 5th Annual Membership Meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. at the J. Walter Barnes Conference Center in Jackson, TN. He explained that all business conducted during the meeting, including voting, would be decided through in-person votes cast by individual Foundation members present. He stated that the 2023 Annual Report was available at the meeting's check-in and was posted on the Foundation's website at leadersgives.org.

Chair Ron Hill led the invocation and welcomed the students from Arlington Elementary School. The students led everyone in singing the National Anthem and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Ron Hill called upon Secretary Eddie Hays to determine whether a quorum was present. Secretary Hays confirmed that a quorum was present.

Chair Ron Hill called for the reading of the minutes of the 4th Annual Membership Meeting conducted on April 18, 2023. A motion was made to dispense with the reading of last year's minutes which are included in the 2023 Annual Report. The motion carried, and the minutes were approved as presented.

Chair Ron Hill introduced the other Foundation Board Members who are:

- Mr. Eddie Hays, who also served as Vice-Chair and Secretary
- Mrs. Karen Taylor, who also served as Treasurer
- Mrs. Mary Lou Adams
- Ms. Yvette Blue
- Mr. Greg Hammond
- Mr. Stan Sanders
- Mrs. Eddie Mae Pirtle
- Ms. Stephanie Riley

Chair Ron Hill called upon Foundation President, Mrs. Leigh Anne Bentley, to present the President's Report. President Bentley thanked Chair Hill and the Foundation Board for their leadership. She stated that fulfilling the mission of the Leaders Education Foundation is a heartfelt endeavor and one that relies on the collective effort of a dedicated community, volunteer board and staff. Together, we are affecting meaningful change, empowered by the generous support of our sponsors, members, and donors. With each contribution, Leaders Education Foundation is enabled to give forward and make a tangible impact.

President Bentley then reported that, in 2023, the Leaders Education Foundation supported West Tennessee communities through the following initiatives:

- Established a new partnership with Georgia Pacific-Dixie, enabling the Foundation to double the number of workforce readiness scholarships in 2024 and beyond.
- Awarded \$25,000 in collegiate scholarships to high school seniors
- Provided an additional \$29,500 in post-year one scholarships to prior collegiate scholarship winners
- Partnered with the Jackson Grown Leaders Fellowship to mentor and develop the skills and networks of Jackson-Madison County School System juniors and seniors
- Provided funding for Ballet Arts and the Jackson Symphony Music Academy
- Sponsored the Hub City Innovation Cup prizes for Jackson-Madison County high school teams
- Sponsored the JMCSS Teacher of the Year awards
- Sponsored 15 students from 7th and 8th grades to participate in the FutureStar Youth Summit at UT Martin
- Sponsored the 2023 WestTeach Program, which included educators from 17 school districts across 12 West Tennessee counties
- Awarded \$35,000 through the L.E.A.D.S. Grants program, including \$25,000 for classroom grants and \$10,000 for educators' professional development and teacher appreciation grants

Before presenting the 2024 collegiate year one scholarship recipients, President Bentley noted that the Board had formed a Scholarship Committee in accordance with the Bylaws to review the applications and video submissions. She then recognized the Scholarship Committee members, Mrs. Stephanie Riley, Ms. Yvette Blue, Mr. Greg Hammond, and Mrs. Linda Rizzuto, and thanked them all for their service. She then individually recognized each recipient of a 2024 collegiate scholarship, all of whom are listed in the 2023 Annual Report.

President Bentley next reported on the Foundation's campaign with Imagination Library chapters in Crockett, Gibson, Hardeman, Haywood, and Madison counties to raise awareness of the Foundation through new members who wished to support the participating Imagination Libraries. The 2023 campaign resulted in the Foundation's total donation of \$12,490 to the participating Imagination Library chapters.

The Foundation continues to support the United Way's READ Team and its WOW Wagon. President Bentley reported that in addition to its ongoing financial contribution of \$20,000 to the READ Team, the Foundation collected and was

pleased to announce it was presenting over 3,000 books for the WOW Wagon.

President Bentley then announced the Foundation would be participating through the end of May 2024 in a support matching campaign of up to \$5,000 to benefit the Jackson Arts Council's Jackson Art Box program. The program will provide Jackson Madison County School System counselors with free art supply boxes for students to use to express themselves. President Bentley informed the membership on how they could support this program.

President Bentley then introduced the 2024 Nominating Committee Chair, Mr. Ron Hill. He began presenting the Nominating Committee's Report by first recognizing his fellow 2024 Nominating Committee members, who are Mrs. Karen Taylor, Mr. Spencer Pratt, Mr. Seth Rudd and Mrs. Karen Freeman. He then reported that at this time and based on the Board's approval, the Nominating Committee submits to the membership the following slate of nominees for the Foundation's Board of Directors:

- Mrs. Yvette Blue
2nd term (April 2024 – April 2027)
- Mr. Stan Sanders
2nd term (April 2024 – April 2027)
- Ms. Linda Rizzuto
1st term (April 2024 – April 2027)

Chair Ron Hill thanked the 2024 Nominating Committee for serving. As there were no further nominations, he asked for a motion to accept the slate of nominees. A motion and a second were made to accept the nominations. The motion carried unanimously.

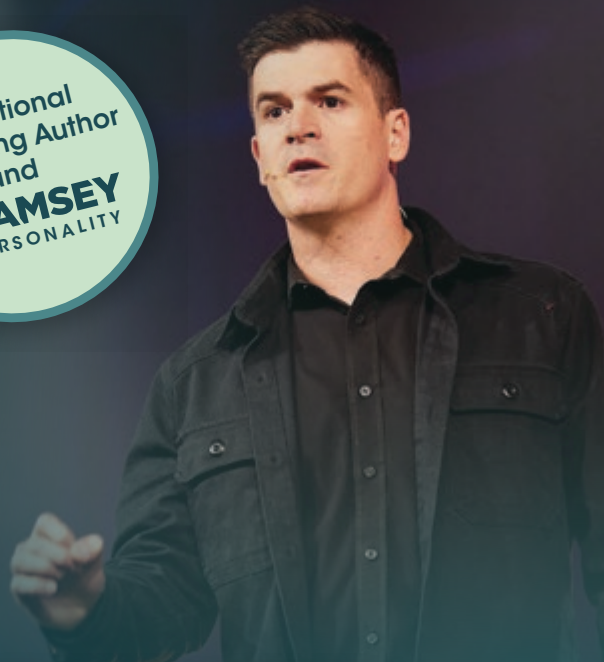
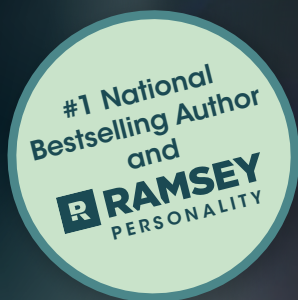
Chair Ron Hill then extended the gratitude of the Foundation to outgoing Board member, Mrs. Mary Lou Adams. Mrs. Adams dedicated service as a charter member and as a director since the Foundation's inception and as the Chair of the Scholarship Committee for many years during the program's development has been of significant impact on the Foundation. Chair Hill then presented Mrs. Adams with a small token of appreciation for her service.

Chair Ron Hill thanked the members for attending the 5th Annual Membership meeting. He then thanked all the Foundation's sponsors, members and donors and encouraged everyone to continue donating and, if not a member, to join the Foundation. With no other 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 **DR. JOHN DELONY**

presented by



West Tennessee
HEALTHCARE™

Thursday, August 14

Mark your calendars for an evening that changes lives!

Join #1 bestselling author and Ramsey personality

Dr. John Delony at EmpowerEd, presented by
West Tennessee Healthcare on Thursday, August 14
at the Carl Perkins Civic Center.

Learn more at leadersgives.org/events



BECOME a member

When an individual or organization chooses to give to the Leaders Education Foundation, their impact can 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 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

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