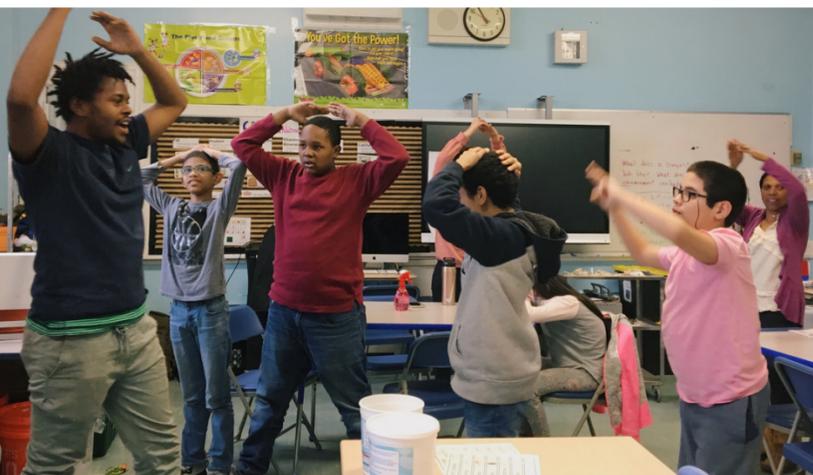




LEAVE IT BETTER FOUNDATION

Ourselves • Each Other • Schools • Communities • The World



OUR MISSION

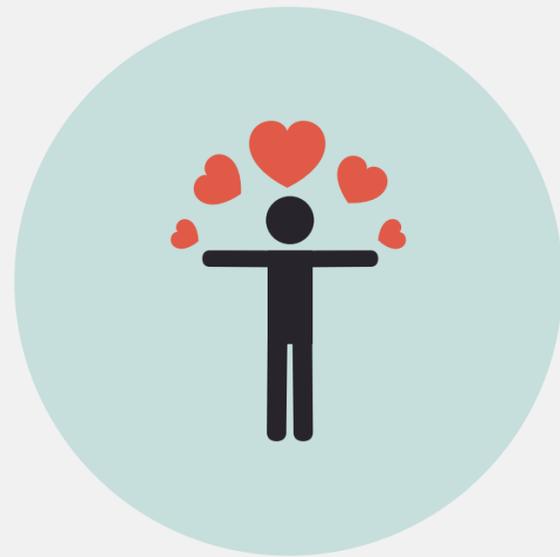


ABOUT LEAVE IT BETTER FOUNDATION

Leave it Better Foundation was brought to life in 2009 by founder Graham Meriwether's conviction that youth are key to healing our environment. While nearly 75% of Americans report that they support protecting the environment, the progress in our nations awareness of environmental issues is compromised by a lack of opportunity to empower stewardship in the classroom. As it stands, environmental education is not a mandated component of any k-12 curriculum nationwide.

Through hands-on activities, STEAM projects, gardening, and mindfulness, LIBF purposes to fill the tangible void in our nation's school system where environmental education is concerned. Our mission is to provide programs where children co-create a more mindful, sustainable world using their innate optimism, keen sense of purpose, and knowledge of the environment.

OUR VISION



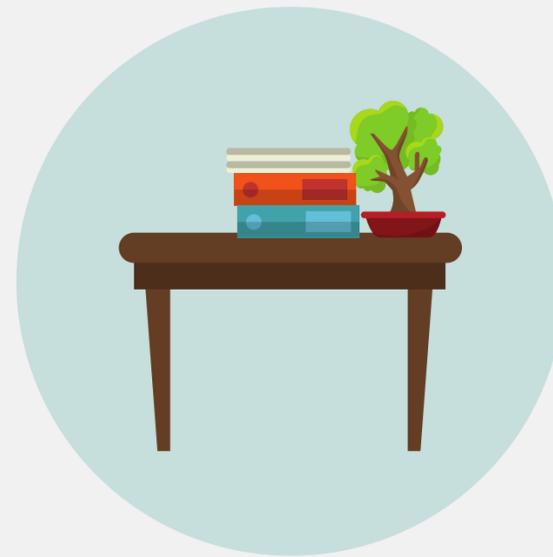
We leave ourselves better

We strive to slow down, create a moment of time and space to breathe and smile. We are realistic and honest in assessing our impact, goals, outcomes, and adherence to principles. We see falling short as an opportunity to learn more, to start an engaging conversation. We take ownership of our own health, we choose healthy food to eat. We take ownership of our thoughts, our words and our actions. We choose to make ourselves healthier each day.



We leave each other better

We believe that people who have enough sleep, eat healthy food, and exercise are in a better frame of mind to create healthy relationships. We believe that different generations can learn from each other. We believe that the students doing the work are more important than the work itself. We bring diverse educational approaches including hands-on activities, environmental education, STEAM projects, gardening, and mindfulness to create a space where everyone can contribute according to their abilities.



We leave schools better

We believe that healthy relationships are the basis for healthy organizations. As we have healthy relationships together, with our students, and with our teachers, and administrators, schools will be better. We believe students who have healthy relationships with their friends, family, and teachers are the stewards of change in their communities, influencing their families and peers.



We leave communities better

We believe healthy schools create healthy communities, with youth and schools being the driving force for good in a place. This means thriving environmental, economic and social growth.



We leave the world better

We believe that healthy communities are the basis of healthy ecosystems. Healthy communities understand that humans are a part — albeit a small part— of the global community. Once the self, the friend, the organization, and the community are healthy, they can impact the world around them. We are the world. We understand our interconnectedness.

LEAVE YOURSELF BETTER

The Leave Yourself Better program promotes mindfulness through meditation, journaling, self-care, and DIYs. The eight day program is divided into four units (meditation, body care, art, and food), with each targeting a different approach to leaving oneself better.

Upon completion of the program, students are more comfortable with engaging with their thoughts, nourishing their bodies with natural ingredients, and wholly embracing their identity.



CYBERSELF

Cyberself challenges each student to reframe his/her relationship with social networks. We begin the program by tracing the origins of the word cyber to the Greek word for steersman. This sets the stage for students to determine how they can take more control in online spaces.

Students leave the program empowered to use social media as a positive force to better themselves, each other, their schools, their communities, and the world.

WATER

The Water Program cultivates mindfulness of the role that one of the world's most indispensable resources plays in our lives. During the four day program, students use investigative documentary techniques, learn how to test for lead contamination, and create detailed science journals.

As they interpret the results of their tests, students become more aware of the value of clean water and develop a sense of ownership over this critical resource.



AQUAPONICS

Offered in partnerships with OKO Farms, a Brooklyn-based urban aquaculture and education company, the Aquaponics program teaches students to farm in a sustainable, water-conserving fashion.

Over the course of eight days, students learn about the dynamic aquaponics ecosystem, which includes fish, bacteria, and plants. They perform water quality tests to ensure that the health of each of these components is accounted for and harvest microgreens using a technique that maintains the natural reGeneration process.

BEES AND BEYOND

The Bees and Beyond program is offered in partnership with City Growers, a Brooklyn-based non-profit that uses urban agriculture to facilitate connections between city kids and the natural world.

The program highlights the significance of bees to sustainable environments. Students learn about the anatomy of bees, the role they play as pollinators, and the threats they face today. This leaves them with greater consciousness not only about bees, but also about the interdependence that characterizes ecosystems and the world at large.



FILMMAKING

The film program introduces students to the world of filmmaking, which plays an integral role in many of LIBF's programs. After learning the six shots of filmmaking (close up on the action, close up on the face, wide shot, over the shoulder, medium shot, and experimental shot), students put their skills into practice.

They conduct interviews, taking turns being the cinematographer, interviewer, interviewee, and director. These roles are designed to enrich their storytelling abilities.

REGENERATION

ReGeneration, LIBF's pilot program, encourages students to build healthy relationships food. Each class constructs its own compost bin, an experience that opens the door to many first-time encounters with red wiggler worms and allows students to familiarize themselves with compostable food wastes.

After exploring the significance of nutrition and identifying different properties of healthy fruits and vegetables, students put their knowledge into practice. They use their own compost to plant vegetables and later, harvest them using the reGeneration technique.



LEAVE IT BETTER PROGRAM

The Leave it Better Program is a holistic curriculum designed to support students through a year-long journey of learning to care for themselves, each other, their schools, their communities, and the world. It integrates LIBF's seven programs while focusing on key concepts and skills that can facilitate learning and growth during this period.

Beginning with **Leave Yourself Better**, students carve out a space to nurture their minds and their bodies. They expound on this concept of space in **Cyber Self**, where they take control of online spaces and exercise agency over the content they engage with.

Next, students strengthen their cinematography skills in the **Filmmaking** component of the program. They use these skills to express what they learn about water quality, ecosystems, and pollinators during **Water, Aquaponics, and Bees & Beyond**.

During the final component of the Leave it Better Program, students deepen their understanding of the natural world as they grow and harvest their own organic produce in **ReGeneration**. They graduate from the program prepared to make tangible changes to better themselves and world around them.



WHY LIBF?

Leave It Better Foundation takes a holistic approach to education. Its programs engage with the student as a whole, stimulating mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing collectively.

This integrated approach to learning has a transformative effect within an educational system that thrives with interdisciplinary learning.

By understanding that physical health, nutrition, and mental fitness are fundamental to learning, LIBF students are better positioned to make changes in their lives that will have a positive impact within and beyond the classroom.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIET

Individuals who increase their daily intake of fruit and vegetables are on average less likely to experience depression or anxiety. Reciprocally, being diagnosed with these illnesses can lead to lower fruit and vegetable intake in the future. (1)

THE PREVALENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13-18 experiences a serious mental illness throughout their life. These mental, behavioral, or emotional disorders result in serious functional impairment that substantially interferes with major life activities. (2)

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY

Individuals who develop secure attachments display greater empathy toward others than those who are otherwise disconnected. The capacity to empathize with others acts as mediator between attachment and welfare, contributing to an individuals subjective well-being. (3)

(1) Mujcic, Redzo and Oswald, Andrew J (2018). "Does eating fruit and vegetables also reduce the longitudinal risk of depression and anxiety? A commentary on 'Lettuce be happy'". *Social Science & Medicine*.

(2) NIMH. *Mental Health Information Statistics*. National Institute of Mental Health.

(3) Wei, Meifen et al. (2010). "Attachment, Self-Compassion, Empathy, and Subjective Well-Being Among College Students and Community Adults." *Journal of Personality*.

OUR IMPACT

“ When I first started the gardening program, it was a different experience for me. I'd never planted anything in my life, so just learning about the process, about planting and what it takes to even grow a plant, was cool to me. We first started planting vegetables behind my school and then we expanded to gardening in the park that was really close to me and my community. That was sixth grade.

I didn't continue to grow things on my own, however, I did take a sense of self-confidence. It gave me confidence to feel like I could tackle any type of problem in my community and it gave me a sense of pride to know that I was a part of something that was moving towards change.

I hadn't been around that community for years. But I came back when I was 21 because I was working over there. I saw Graham, Ilana, and somebody else gardening. At first I didn't even want to say anything because I didn't know if Graham would remember me. But, I went up to him and he was like "Hey, you know, you look really familiar," Two or three months later, he wrote me and said that he would like me to be a part of Leave It Better.

Coming back in the role of an educator is rewarding. When I go back to MS 331, it's like I'm back in my territory. I get nostalgic because I'm looking at me, like what I used to be. It gives me a sense of pride to pass on what I've learned and to pass on how people made me feel.

BRIANA BLACK

ON HER JOURNEY
FROM LEARNING
TO TEACHING WITH
LEAVE IT BETTER





THANK YOU

