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WILSON SHEEHAN LAB FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES



Fall 2025

The work that lasts

What we do today, together, becomes tomorrow's change.

Not at the beginning anymore

How one LEO partner agency is delivering on its promise to end poverty.

Katelin Cortney, guest writer

LEO believes that those closest to a problem are often the ones most equipped to solve it. One of the best ways to understand the impact of LEO's work is to hear it directly from those who know it best: the partner agencies they work with and the clients they serve. In this issue, we're giving one collaborative duo the stage to tell their story.

Keisha Moore, a mother of seven—including two bonus children—and a grandmother to 11, has been working with Stefany Maldonado, one of Catholic Charities Fort Worth's (CCFW) Padua case managers. The Padua program, run by Catholic Charities Fort Worth, offers participants a holistic, long-term approach to leaving poverty behind. With a skilled and passionate case management staff that works to meet every capable individual where they are, clients are empowered to use the skills and tools they learn to change their trajectories and make their way to a bigger and brighter future.

Through this partnership, Keisha has tackled both personal and financial challenges, learning how to manage resources, set boundaries, and maintain accountability, all while preparing for the future she envisions for herself and her family. Here is her story, as told by her and her case manager:



KC: Stefany, tell me about your role as a case manager. How do you view your work?

SM: I've been with CCFW for four years, and my role as a Padua case manager is really about guiding our clients rather than telling them what to do. I like to see myself as a partner, someone who helps participants identify their goals, walk through the steps, and hold themselves accountable.

I'm on a team of case managers who meet biweekly so we can support one another and brainstorm solutions for our clients; we are actively borrowing from one another's strengths and ideas for each person we

STEFANY MALDONADO & KEISHA MOORE.



Padua taught me that I can't control everything that happens, but I can control my response. And equally as important, I can let things go that are not in my control.

serve. My role is to provide tools, encouragement, and structure for my clients, but the work comes from the clients themselves.

KC: Keisha, will you tell me a little about yourself?

KM: My name is Keisha Moore. I'm a mother of seven—including two bonus children—as well as a grandmother to 11. I am recently separated and navigating life's challenges, including the loss of my son in May of last year.

KC: What led you to Padua in the first place?

KM: When my son passed, I was not only dealing with extreme grief but also the burden of funeral expenses. I was behind on rent, and my car broke down, costing more to fix than it was worth. A family member had mentioned the Padua program at Catholic Charities, and I reached out. What I wanted was support and tools for today to put myself in a better situation so I could respond to life's challenges with more control, no matter what came my way. I wanted someone to help me stay accountable and prioritize small goals like paying off debts, managing subscriptions, and saving for emergencies.

KC: Stefany, where do you start when you first meet a new client?

SM: The first step is really meeting the client where they are. Everyone comes in with their own experiences and sometimes understandable skepticism. With Keisha, I started by listening and understanding her goals, fears, and immediate needs. She told me she was not financially stable and that she



KEISHA MOORE, STEFANY MALDONADO, & CINDY CASEY AT LEO'S FALL WEEKEND

hadn't been able to catch up on rent because of the funeral expenses. Her priority was to get caught up so she could stop paying $300 in monthly late fees. I listened, and together we were able to come up with a plan to address the root cause of her financial issues. This made sure we weren't putting a Band-Aid on her situation, but rather, helping her move forward.

By listening and allowing the client to lead, it is one important way to build trust before we move on to the practical steps, like financial snapshots or the goal-setting binder. It also allows us to be a team and think, "What are we going to do next?"

KC: You've worked with other social service programs. Was there anything about Padua that made it stand out?

KM: Definitely. It's the partnership and structure, including the binder, which I call "my Bible," the discovery sessions, and the ability to track progress. Honestly, I was cautious. I've worked with other agencies before where caseworkers made me feel like a box to be checked. But with Stefany, she listened, cared, and worked with me to reassess situations when things didn't go as planned. Our relationship feels like a "little big sister," someone I can share wins, challenges, and day-to-day moments with.

I think the support is huge, not just financially, but more from an accountability standpoint. I could see my growth over time, which made a huge difference. It wasn't just about immediate help; it was about long-term planning. Other providers give aid if they have aid, and that's that until the next time you're in need. But with Padua, there is so much follow-up.

KC: Stefany, can you elaborate on the importance of the tools Keisha mentions?

SM: These tools give clients a clear way to measure their progress. The pre- and post-surveys track discretionary income, savings, debt, and financial literacy, which helps clients see where they are and plan where they want to be. It's all about identifying resources, setting goals, and giving them the ability to cope with challenges in a structured way. It also shows clients that growth is measurable, not just abstract.

KC: Keisha, a year in, what have your biggest learnings been?

KM: I'm learning to handle my finances step by step—paying off small debts first, removing duplicate accounts, and setting aside savings. For example, I was able to plan for a down payment on a car rather than relying on expensive Lyft rides. Over the course of a year, I saved up enough to pay for a down payment on a used car as well as the insurance required to drive it. Now, I'm actually paying a little less than I was paying for the Lyfts.

KC: What about your outlook and how you approach life now?

KM: Padua taught me that I can't control everything that happens, but I can control my response. And equally as important, I can let things go that are not in my control. Through goal setting, accountability, and support from Stefany, I feel equipped to navigate grief, setbacks, and challenges while still moving forward. Having her in my life feels like a comfort zone—someone who understands me and is both there for me and pushing me to my highest potential.

I think the outlook is really important. Before you know it, you're not at the beginning anymore. You're in the middle now, and you get to leave all that stuff from the past behind. You worked that all out, so you don't have that much further to go.

KC: Stefany, you've seen Keisha through some tough times. What do you think kept her moving?

SM: Keisha's resilience comes from her commitment to herself. She's motivated by her family and her goals, and she's willing to put in the work even when it's hard. I saw her rise to challenges when she navigated her car situation,

managed her grief, and continued to pursue career growth.

KC: Where do you see yourself in five years?

KM: I want to be financially stable, excel at work, and give back by supporting other participants in Padua. The bigger focus for me is building a legacy for myself, my children, and my grandchildren. I'm putting myself out there at work more; I'm looking for opportunities. I'm earning more and saving more so I can begin to work on my credit next. This year I'm on the receiving end; next year my goal is to be on the giving end.

"Keisha's resilience comes from her commitment to herself. She's motivated by her family and her goals, and she's willing to put in the work even when it's hard."







KC: What does Padua mean to you?

SM: For me, Padua is about creating that safe space where participants like Keisha can explore their potential, develop life skills, and achieve goals they may have thought were out of reach. It's about accountability, guidance, and being a consistent presence in their journey. It's made me look at my life as a whole as well and has changed a lot of my own choices. I don't ever think, "I'm just here to do a job."

KM: Poverty often doesn't look like homelessness or someone losing a job. It can look like me—someone with a degree and two parents who are college-educated. Life can happen, and the next thing you know, you're on this other side. Padua taught me the excitement of knowing you get to control the narrative in your life. You don't get to choose what happens to you, but you do get to choose how you respond. I have more control than I thought, and I didn't realize that before.

Padua isn't just about receiving immediate assistance; it's about building a lifetime of skills, accountability, and empowerment. It's a support system that teaches you to control your decisions, manage your resources, and look forward to your future. •

Up at night

Heather Reynolds
Michael L. Smith managing director



What we do today

Seven years ago, I joined LEO because people experiencing poverty deserve solutions that work.

Before that, I spent years at Catholic Charities Fort Worth, sitting across from people doing everything right—working hard, holding families together—and still falling short because the systems meant to help them weren't built on evidence of what actually makes a difference. Those moments taught me that good intentions aren't enough. If we want to solve poverty, we need to know what works and have the courage to act on it.

That belief has guided my time at LEO. Together, we've helped turn research into real change. We've learned how to prevent homelessness before it starts, how to support students on their path to college completion, and how to help families find lasting stability. And we've shown that when service and science come together, the results reach farther than either could on their own.

This work has never been about data for data's sake. It's about dignity and using the best tools we have to ensure that people have the chance to build the futures they want.

As I prepare to return to Catholic Charities Fort Worth as CEO, I've been reflecting on how much we've accomplished because of this community. LEO's growth and impact are the result of so many people—partners who opened their doors to research, policymakers willing to listen, and supporters who believed that rigorous, compassionate solutions can change lives. You have been the constant through it all, ensuring this work continues to reach farther every year.

In this season of gratitude, I want to thank you, for your trust, your partnership, and your faith in what's possible when evidence and empathy move together. What we've started together will only keep growing, because the need for real, tested solutions has never been greater.

On behalf of the entire LEO team, and from me personally, thank you for being part of this mission and for shaping what comes next.

Happy Thanksgiving,
Heather


POWERING
SERVICE
WITH
RESEARCH
TO END
POVERTY

Calling poverty's fiercest adversaries

Across the country, service providers are testing what works—and sharing what they learn.

Mary Curran
policy and impact poverty research fellow

Across the country, innovative social service providers are reshaping the way communities confront some of society's most persistent challenges—from incarceration to homelessness and child welfare. These projects, rooted in collaboration and compassion, demonstrate how targeted interventions can restore hope and opportunity.

LEO has partnered with six more of these agencies to build evidence around their interventions and identify ways to permanently lift people out of poverty. These partners have the courage to test their programs in hopes of ultimately sharing what works with those who need it the most. Here is a brief look at the wonderful work they are doing!

Child welfare

Partner: Restore Hope
Project: The 100 Families Initiative
Location: Arkansas
Coordinating care so families don't fall through the cracks.

The 100 Families Initiative surrounds struggling families with a network of care, connecting them to dozens of service providers ready to tackle the complex challenges of poverty. Through the Hope Hub web platform, case managers from multiple agencies collaborate in real time to meet each client's unique needs, from housing and legal aid to employment and training. With a "no wrong door" approach, every referral becomes an entry point to coordinated, compassionate support.



DALLAS LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION (DLF)



TELEVERDE FOUNDATION

Criminal justice

Partner: Televerde Foundation
Project: Career PATHS
Location: Dallas, Texas
Preparing women in prison for lasting success.

Career PATHS confronts recidivism by equipping incarcerated women with the tools to build a different future. Through personal and professional development programs, participants gain both confidence and credentials. Upon release, graduates are welcomed into a network of peer mentors, housing assistance, and ongoing guidance, ensuring a smooth transition back into society marked by stability and hope.

Partner: Dallas Leadership Foundation (DLF)
Project: Faith-Based Dorm program
Location: Dallas, Texas
Building character and community behind bars.

Inside Hutchins State Jail, the Dallas Leadership Foundation's Faith-Based Dorm provides incarcerated men with the opportunity to engage in a faith-based community. In a dedicated dorm apart from the general population, participants engage in financial literacy, anger management, parenting, recovery, leadership, and job readiness classes to rebuild their lives. Grounded in prosocial Christian values, the program helps men strengthen character, foster community, and prepare for lasting success beyond prison walls.

These partners have the courage to test their programs in hopes of ultimately sharing what works with those who need it the most.







HOUSTON FOOD BANK

Housing

Partner: Hennepin County
Project: School to Housing (STH)
Location: Hennepin County, Minnesota
Keeping families housed and kids in class.

The School to Housing (STH) program steps in early by partnering with schools to identify families on the brink of homelessness and connect them to the support they need. Through housing search assistance, nine months of case management, and rental support, STH helps families find a safe place to call home. By preventing displacement, the program nurtures both self-sufficiency and educational continuity, ensuring children can stay in their schools.

Partner: Strategies to End Homelessness
Project: Housing Stability Collaborative (HSC)
Location: Cincinnati, Ohio
Using data to prevent eviction before it starts.

Through the Housing Stability Collaborative (HSC), Strategies to End Homelessness employs predictive analytics models to identify households at risk of eviction before a formal notice arrives. Following identification, a System Navigator works with each household, addressing urgent housing needs and connecting them to lasting resources. By pairing innovation with compassion, HSC helps families not just avoid eviction but build the foundation for long-term stability.

Economic mobility

Partner: Houston Food Bank
Project: Food for Change
Location: Houston, Texas
Turning hunger relief into opportunity.

Through its Food for Change initiative, the Houston Food Bank is transforming hunger relief into a pathway out of poverty. Partnering with local colleges and universities, the program identifies food-insecure students and connects them to the Food Scholarship, which provides up to 120 pounds of groceries each month. By easing the burden of grocery costs, Food for Change helps students focus on education and long-term stability. •

What the experts say

Inside a Texas jail, a new approach to safety and rehabilitation takes hold.

Katelin Cortney, guest writer

The issue

More than 7 million people move through America's jail system each year, and on any given day about 660,000 are detained, many awaiting trial or sentencing. One in four lives with a serious mental illness, and nearly two-thirds struggle with substance abuse. As average jail stays have lengthened, especially after pandemic-related court delays, these environments have grown increasingly volatile for both inmates and staff.

For decades, solitary confinement has been used to control violence inside jails. Yet research shows that isolation often worsens mental health, fuels aggression, and increases the likelihood of reoffending. Roughly 4.4 percent of incarcerated individuals are held in solitary confinement at any given time—a practice that often deepens harm instead of fostering rehabilitation.

Partnering with the Lubbock County Detention Center in Texas, LEO researchers are evaluating a program called Step Up—a therapeutic intervention that's helping people in custody learn new ways to manage emotions, build community, and prepare for life after release.

A new way forward

Step Up is a voluntary waitlisted therapeutic program. It is an intense 14- to 21-week program focusing on therapy, structure, community, and accountability. Grounded in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), it aims to reduce acts of violence and bring substantive changes to an individual's behavior.

"Every morning at 8 a.m., our guys come out to a community room to prepare for class, work on their therapy homework or projects, and socialize with one another through games, art, and conversation," says Kristina Luera, Rehabilitation Coordinator at the Lubbock County Detention Center.

One young man spent two years in solitary confinement. He was disruptive, angry, and always causing trouble. Step Up gave him a choice: join the program using a Behavioral Management Contract or go back to solitary. He joined. When he graduated from the program and later left for prison, it was reported he had become one of the most respectful people to live inside of the jail walls. The officers noticed it. Other inmates noticed it. Later, Step Up staff heard from people in prison that he's still practicing what he learned.

Another participant in his forties didn't speak much when he came to the Lubbock County Detention Center. He had been through other mandatory "checklist programs," as he called them. When he started Step Up voluntarily, something shifted.

He had been in a toxic relationship with someone who used drugs, and this ultimately was what landed him in jail. Through the program, he started learning how to set boundaries. When he got out of jail, he used them. He had learned to love himself. He found work landscaping. He reconnected with his kids. Recently, he invited his rehabilitation coordinator to attend his two-year sobriety check-in as his support since no one else he invited was able to attend. He hasn't been back to jail.

This handwritten letter by one of the graduates, from the prison he is now in, may sum it up best:

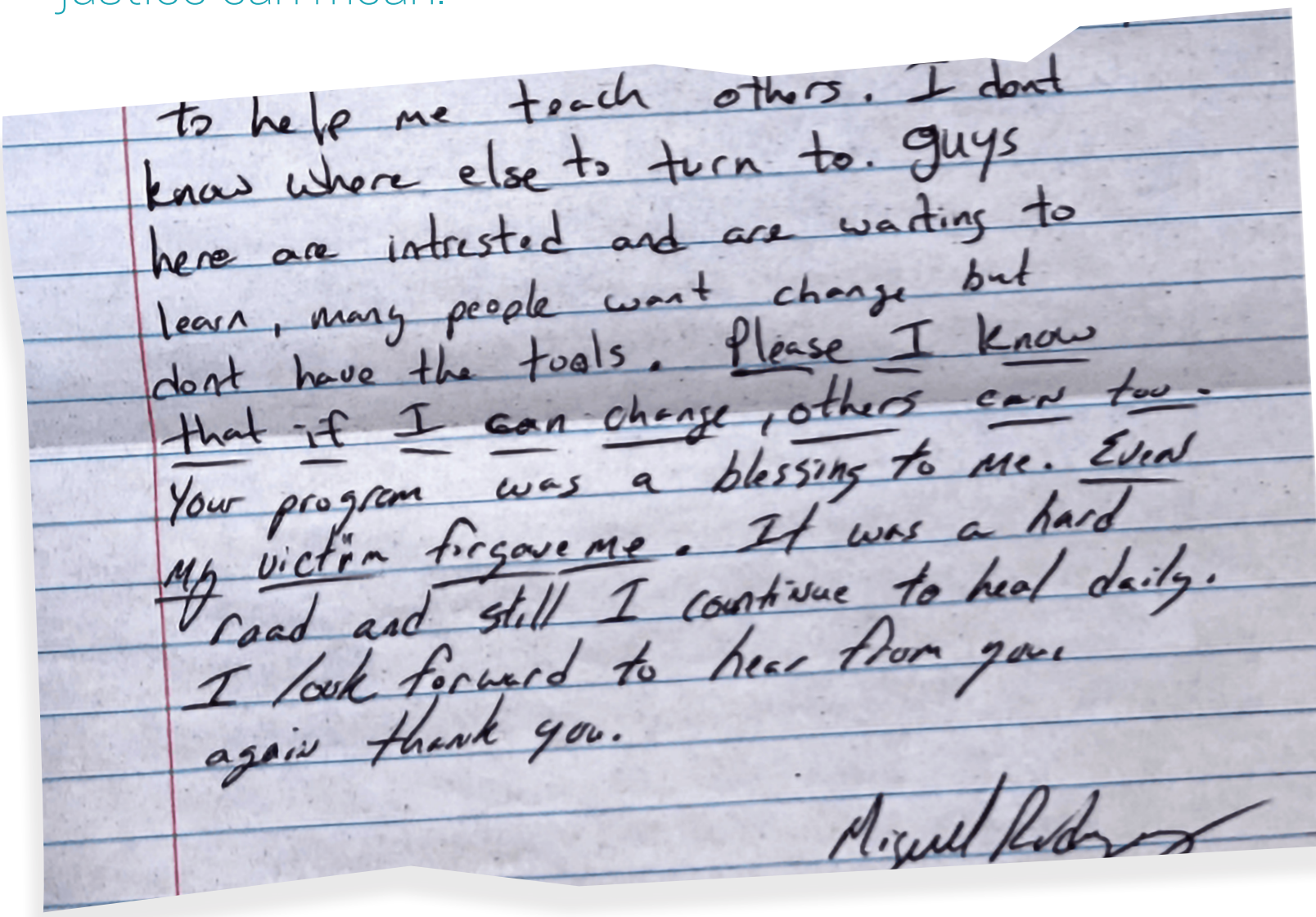
"I learned to understand why I acted out when I was young, and how learning how to forgive myself and others was just the beginning. Changing my way of thinking was challenging, but you never gave up on me. I try to teach others what I have learned, and many are interested. People want help but have nowhere to turn. Is there any way I could get an outline of your curriculum to help me teach others? Please, I know that if I can change, others can too. Your program was a blessing to me. Even my victim forgave me."

As Kristina Luera sees it, stories like these show, "The stigma 'once a criminal, always a criminal' simply isn't true. Some of the men we work with are facing charges of 3–4 years, some 40–50. Some are young, 17-year-old kids charged as adults. Many come from poverty, or they were abandoned by their families, or they were stuck raising their siblings, or they fell into the wrong crowd at an early age. In so many other contexts, we would treat them for trauma." Step Up brings that treatment inside the jail walls, and in doing so, changes what justice can mean.

What the research shows and why it matters

LEO's evaluation of Step Up includes both a retrospective quasi-experimental study and a randomized controlled trial. The research compares behavioral and recidivism outcomes between inmates who participate in Step Up and those who do not.

Step Up brings that treatment inside the walls, and in doing so, changes what justice can mean.


to help me teach others. I dont know where else to turn to. guys here are intrested and are wanting to learn, many people want change but dont have the tools. Please I know that if I can change, others can too. Your program was a blessing to me. Even my victim forgave me. It was a hard road and still I continue to heal daily. I look forward to hear from you. again thank you.

Early results are striking. Step Up participants saw a 49 percent drop in behavioral incidents and a 50 percent decrease in assaults on inmates or officers. The greatest improvements appeared among younger participants, ages 18–30—those most at risk for violent infractions.

"The underlying philosophy is that although individuals experience negative events, it's their interpretation of those events—not the events themselves—that leads to anger and violence," says Mary Kate Batistich, one of the study's lead researchers. "When people learn to reframe their thinking, violence decreases and pro-social behavior begins."

The findings also reveal that rehabilitation can be both effective and efficient. The program costs about $618 per participant, while a single assault inside a jail carries an estimated public cost of $37,000.

If Step Up continues to show strong results, it could reshape how the nation thinks about incarceration: how people in custody are treated, what we expect from rehabilitation, and how communities build safety.

"Step Up is helping inmates transform themselves so that they have an exit strategy that works and a support system to hold them accountable," says Luera. "By walking them to the door with skills, techniques, and the power of choice to live differently, they don't ever have to come back."

LEO's work seeks to illuminate what works so others can follow. Because when people are given the tools to change their thinking, they can change their lives—and, in doing so, change the world around them. •

Future learnings

In Baltimore, long-term relationships are changing what support looks like.

Katelin Cortney, guest writer

If you distill everything Thread does into two words, it's this: build relationships.

For many, social isolation has deepened over the past few decades, but in Baltimore, Thread is weaving a new social fabric—connecting people across lines of race, class, religion, age, and experience to build a community where everyone can thrive.

It starts by identifying the lowest-performing ninth-graders at the lowest-performing Baltimore City Public Schools. And then? Thread makes a unique 10-year commitment to walk with each student through the transition to adulthood and self-efficacy. Since it never unenrolls a student (no matter what), Thread offers them a promise, not a program. Each student is matched with a small group of local volunteers—Gen Zers and retirees, college students and PhD candidates, working professionals and empty nesters, lifelong residents and transplants—who live, work, or go to school near one of Thread's seven partner high schools. Volunteers build relationships with young people and each other. Together, they define goals, overcome barriers, and achieve success. These relationships are supported by an extensive network of programs and partnerships—a deeply woven extended web of care and support.

What starts as a small group of strangers becomes a "Thread Family." When one person is sick, another steps in. When someone is overwhelmed, someone else offers to drive the carpool.

At first, the volunteer may offer something small: a ride to school or a reminder to study consistently and persistently. But over time, Thread has found that a beautiful reciprocal model begins to emerge.

In March 2020, a retired woman in her mid-seventies joined Thread as a volunteer. She was paired with a high school student she had never met in person, and then the COVID lockdown began. At first, the young person didn't respond to her texts—none of them, for months. Then one day, the volunteer suffered her third heart attack. She texted the student to explain why she'd been silent for a while.

That moment changed their relationship.


leo

Thread is breaking down traditional power structures. Society tells young people that they're to be helped—but rarely are they invited to be the helper. That's where Thread comes in. As its students start building trust, they start showing up for their volunteers—helping host baby showers or sharing the burden of a loss.

The student responded immediately. The dynamic shifted, giving the student a chance to offer support, not just receive it.

From that day forward, the student began visiting the volunteer's home regularly to check in on her and keep her company. She was able to log in to her virtual classes using the volunteer's Wi-Fi and study, which helped her graduate high school on time. As the volunteer recovered, they became essential to each other's well-being. They became family.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREAD

In this way, Thread is breaking down traditional power structures. Society tells young people that they're to be helped—but rarely are they invited to be the helper. That's where Thread comes in. As its students start building trust, they start showing up for their volunteers—helping host baby showers or sharing the burden of a loss.

The key to community is mutuality. No one wants to say, "I'm lonely." But in Thread, people find an antidote even if they weren't seeking one. Through time and consistency, volunteers often reflect that they came to Thread hoping to help someone but didn't expect to be the ones who felt seen and supported. Thread's students have shared that they didn't realize how much they cared about their volunteers until moments arrived when they needed to step up.

Since its founding in 2004, Thread has worked with more than 1,300 young people and alumni and more than 3,500 volunteers and collaborators. Its students go on to graduate at ten times the rate of their peers. They enroll in college, start careers, raise families of their own, and stay involved in Thread. The model works because it's more than a model—it's relationships.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREAD

"We often hear the greatest gift we are giving our community is to build the extended family many of our volunteers and students didn't know they needed," said Sarah Hemminger, Thread's Co-Founder & CEO.

A data-driven organization founded by a neuroscientist, Thread eagerly anticipates the results of its Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) with LEO to evaluate outcomes such as school attendance, graduation rates, postsecondary attainment, enrollment and matriculation, household income, and incarceration rates over a ten-year period for its young people compared with students not enrolled in Thread.

By building social connections across backgrounds within Thread's supportive community, the organization creates conditions for young people to achieve upward economic mobility and make their dreams real.

"Our community is growing, and because of that we are actively changing and bettering the future of Baltimore. By focusing on what assets we have collectively, we are able to maximize talents and gifts in relationships to bring out the best in each other."

LEO is partnering with Thread to test the impact of their model in hopes of codifying the informal social supports that help young people navigate the difficulties of growing up in poverty. Because community social supports can be found almost anywhere, LEO hopes to learn how this kind of local good can be harnessed for collective benefit. •

Forming the future

What a summer at LEO taught one student about evidence and empathy in action.

Lexi Wetzel, LEO poverty research fellow

When I think about this summer, one of the first things that comes to mind isn't the spreadsheets or the long literature review. It's our soccer team, the Refried Beans. I hadn't played in years, but something about the way people at LEO welcome you in—whether it's for your first game or your first exploratory research design—makes you want to stay.

That's what struck me most this summer: LEO builds community in every direction. Among interns. Between staff and students. And, most importantly, between research and the people it's meant to serve.

I'd wanted to intern at LEO before I even arrived at Notre Dame. Back in high school, I met Professor Spence from the Notre Dame Economics Department, who described LEO with a kind of contagious respect. I remember thinking, *this is research that matters*. Not just academic or theoretical, but real work rooted in communities, designed to answer the question, *what's really helping people out of poverty?*

This summer, I worked on a study evaluating Restore Hope's 100 Families initiative, a community-based case management program in Arkansas. One of the biggest lessons I learned is that so much of what we label "neglect" is actually about poverty—about lacking support. Restore Hope recognizes that, connecting families with resources and helping them navigate the system. Even when help exists, finding it and following through can be overwhelming when you're already in crisis.





I didn't expect this kind of work to feel personal. I was sitting behind a laptop, hundreds of miles from the communities I was studying. But LEO didn't let the work stay abstract.

One of the most meaningful days of my summer was a visit to Our Lady of the Road, a local center serving unhoused individuals. I spent the morning serving coffee and listening because so often, no one does. One man told me about playing football at Penn before giving it all up to explore his faith. Another grumbled about his walker but admitted it beat falling. Two others were from my hometown in California. I left that morning thinking less about systems and more about stories—how thin the line can be between stability and struggle.

That visit made the work feel real. It reminded me that evidence isn't just data; it's dignity in action. Each dataset and each study is tied to real lives. It tells us what works, what doesn't, and how to build systems that serve people with respect instead of indifference.

One of LEO's speakers this summer told us the story of a man who, after being placed into housing, later took his own life. The isolation was too much. On paper, it was a success. In reality, it was a tragedy. That story gutted me. It made me realize that research can't just chase metrics. It has to care about the whole person.

That's what LEO does. It studies systems and interventions, yes, but it never forgets that at the center of every number is a name, a face, a story.

This internship taught me to think rigorously and reflect deeply—to see that what we do today, the questions we ask and the care we bring to answering them, determines the kind of change we'll make tomorrow.

I came in knowing I want to be a doctor. I'll leave knowing the kind of doctor I want to be: one who understands that housing, transportation, and access shape a patient long before they walk into an exam room. One who knows that dignity must be at the center of care.

That's how LEO forms you—through both heart and rigor. Because what we do today, choosing dignity and choosing evidence, determines tomorrow's poverty solutions. •

Force for good

Stories of evidence, action, and community.

Kat Desai
assistant director of policy and engagement

The evidence is clear: targeted, rapid, and flexible financial assistance prevents homelessness—and saves communities money...



Marking five decades of impact

LEO co-founder Jim Sullivan joins Brookings to reflect on how the Earned Income Tax Credit continues to lift millions—and who's still being left behind.

LEO co-founder Jim Sullivan joined a panel at The *Brookings Institution* to mark 50 years of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)—a policy that lifts nearly six million Americans out of poverty each year, including three million children.

Still, as Jim reminded the audience, there's more work to do. "If you're emphasizing who's benefiting, it's also important to highlight who's not," he said, pointing to families in deep poverty, workers without children, and the one in five eligible individuals who don't claim the credit.

Fifty years in, the EITC remains one of the most effective poverty-fighting tools in U.S. history—and one of the clearest examples of how data can drive impact.



When evidence meets action

In the latest Evidence Matters webinar, researchers and practitioners share how communities can adapt proven homelessness prevention models to meet local needs.

The evidence is clear: targeted, rapid, and flexible financial assistance prevents homelessness—and saves communities money. But every community is different.

That question—how to translate what works—was the focus of the latest Evidence Matters webinar. Panelists David Phillips (LEO), Chad Bojorquez (Destination: Home), Jessica Orozco (Santa Clara County OSH), and Alyson Moon (Mary's Place) shared how research-practice partnerships can help communities adapt proven solutions to their own context.

Using Santa Clara County's RCT-backed prevention system as a case study, the group introduced the new Homelessness Prevention System Toolkit, co-created by LEO, Destination: Home, and Results for America. The guide offers step-by-step support for communities seeking to design and launch their own local prevention systems grounded in evidence.

Watch the recording at leo.nd.edu/evidence-matters/homelessness-prevention.



Introducing "Those Closest"

Meet the partners and changemakers whose daily work makes building evidence possible—and whose stories remind us why it matters.

At LEO, we believe those closest to the problem are closest to the solution.

Our new blog, **Those Closest**, highlights the partners, service providers, and community leaders whose daily work makes building evidence possible. These are poverty's fiercest adversaries—people turning compassion into action and showing us not just what works, but why it matters.

Read the latest posts at leo.nd.edu/those-closest.

Bringing evidence to the national stage

We're proud to share that Jim Sullivan, LEO co-founder, has been appointed to the Committee on National Statistics at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

The National Academies advise the nation on issues where science, policy, and public life intersect. As a member of the committee, Jim will help advance the use of data and evidence in shaping smarter, more effective solutions to the country's most complex social challenges.

Fall weekend highlights

Every fall, the LEO community—partners, researchers, students, and supporters—comes together to step back, reconnect, and get real about the work ahead.

Here are a few moments from an incredible weekend you made possible.









The big reveal: *What We Do Today*

We debuted our new video, What We Do Today, that captures where LEO's been, where we're going, and why the choices we make now matter more than ever. Scan the code below to watch it or visit bit.ly/what-we-do-today. •

WILSON SHEEHAN
LAB FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

3060-I Jenkins Nanovic Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556

leo.nd.edu



"Before you know it, you're not at the beginning anymore. You're in the middle now, and you get to leave all that stuff from the past behind."

Not at the beginning anymore, page 1