United Way Youth Venture (UWYV) is a three way partnership between Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC), the United Way of North Central Massachusetts, and Ashoka’s Youth Venture which serves as the international model for UWYV programming. Young people involved in UWYV combine their passions and skills to address a problem they see in their community through an entirely youth-led and youth-created social venture.

Youth, primarily ages 10-22, are supported in this opportunity through intensive skill-building workshops, hands-on learning, consistent mentorship, and seed funding granted to them after a presentation with community leaders. All of these supports help young people to launch their idea from dream to reality.

Valuable life lessons are delivered through close collaboration with our partnering school districts, resulting in development of leadership skills, confidence, and a sense of empowerment. Their experience as a changemaker prepares them to be engaged members of society, and to succeed in college and future careers.

“If you have ever wondered where we are going to get leaders who will be interested in being active participants in community and run our organizations; if you have ever thought about having a positive brand experience with a large number of young people, not to mention the supportive adults in our schools, but are not sure how to go about the task; if you are wondering who will be there to care when care is needed, United Way Youth Venture is worth a careful look.”

Phil Grzewinski
President, United Way of North Central Massachusetts
UWYV Program Co-Founder
In 2002, the leaders of the United Way of North Central Massachusetts (UWNCM) shared a common vision when they identified that the North Central Massachusetts community was not meaningfully acting to help cultivate the next generation of leaders, volunteers, and philanthropists.

The United Way was unknown and irrelevant to many young people and too much of the investment in youth was in the form of remedial and intervention services. UWNCM wanted to also invest in youth proactively and offer the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of their communities. Believing in the capacity of young people to create change, UWNCM partnered with Ashoka’s Youth Venture, and later with MWCC in 2005.

In just 15 years, the North Central Massachusetts region has reaped the benefits of the common vision. It is our hope that through the UWYV experience, young people will carry the skills that they’ve learned, as well as the charge to take action, into the later aspects of life; and that elder generations will begin to see youth as capable, responsible, valuable members of society.

UWNCM launched the UWYV program in North Central Massachusetts with three (3) partner schools and three (3) Venture Teams.

UWNCM partnered with Mount Wachusett Community College to deliver UWYV program to a growing population.

UWYV program reached 100 Venture Teams launched across schools and community partners.

UWYV program was introduced to elementary school and in-classroom programming-models piloted within partnering schools.

351 Venture Teams launched with 17 partner sites across North Central Massachusetts.

Changing Our World one youth venture at a time
“Taking action in the present moment is the most important message I want you to take away from this. Three years ago, I was sitting in your seats at the UWYV Fall Kick-Off. I could’ve never imagined the opportunity to come speak as a Youth Venture alum...And now, I am the president of a nonprofit organization and on stage talking to all of you! This is all because I made the decision to act. You all have the amazing ability to #LEADnow and I hope to impress that upon you today.”

Kyrah Altman
President of Let’s Empower, Advocate & Do (LEAD) and UWYV Alum, Leominster High School

Kyrah is a founder of LEAD, a Venture-turned-nonprofit that authored a 900-plus page mental health promotion curriculum for high school students. This curriculum inspired a bill recently passed by the MA State Senate.
Our **ACTIVE Teams** by Cause

- **Environment** – Environmentally-conscious Venturers target their efforts to sustainable farming, hydroponics, composting, and school-wide recycling initiatives.

- **Animal Rights** – Many young people are drawn to issues that impact beloved family pets such as homelessness and adoption, animal abuse, shelter resources, extinction, and more.

- **Community Involvement** – These Venturers tackle issues specific to a given community, such as supporting area veterans, raising awareness about equality, and visiting elderly Alzheimer’s patients.

- **Poverty** – Venturers tackle problems ranging from hunger and homelessness to providing Christmas gifts or birthday parties to members of the community in need.

- **Health** – Our Venturers are keenly aware of mental and physical health issues affecting family and friends such as autism, cancer, disabilities, nutrition, self-harm, and suicide prevention.

- **School Improvement** – Many school-related ventures involve making much-needed school resources available including school supplies, expanded extracurricular programming, and mentoring programs.

Learn more about individual Venture Teams at [http://tinyurl.com/uwyvteams](http://tinyurl.com/uwyvteams)
Our Results

**17** elementary, middle & high schools partnering with MWCC

**7,963** youth actively engaged in workshops, team development or volunteering

**350** Venture Teams launched since 2002

**35** new Venture Teams launched during FY17 in **13 schools** with an additional **40 Teams** working to become a launched Venture

**612** students leading Venture Team efforts with **289 newly engaged this year**

**89%** Venturers believe that their ability and competence grow with their effort

more than **12,600** area youth reached

**87%** Venturers believe UWYV is an important opportunity for students in their school

**93%** Venturers believe it is important to encourage others to participate in their community
Venturers say that they are involved in improving their community because they want to, not because it is required.

Venturers are 38% less likely to receive detentions than non-Venturers.

Venturers believe it is important to learn about other cultures and beliefs that are not the same as their own.

Scholarship Awards

Laura Jenny, a Leominster High School graduate was selected as the second recipient of the Bob Chauvin Leadership Award.

This named scholarship honors Mr. Chauvin’s commitment to UWYV and his leadership in bringing youth development to the forefront of his organization, Tyco SimplexGrinnell’s charitable mission.

Two additional UWYV scholarships were awarded to Aidan Provost (Murdock High School) and Alexander Ramos (Leominster High School & CTEi).
“Student Venture Teams have made an impact in their schools, community, and beyond even reaching out to other countries. UWYV helps students master curriculum standards through project-based learning supporting their academic, social and emotional growth. Students graduate and enter post-secondary educational institutions with a very strong skill set for college and career.”

Gina Wironen, Leominster Schools Administrator

Citizenship
Young People Demonstrate Community Leadership

Junior, a student in Samoset Middle School’s life skills program, felt it was unjust that law enforcement figures around the country and in the community were being treated disrespectfully. With the simple idea of showing gratitude to Leominster police officers, he knew he could make a difference. With the permission and support of his UWYV Champion, Francine Meigs, school administrators and fellow students, he organized a school-wide appreciation event. On a beautiful September day, Samoset’s full student body lined the school driveway to cheer, greet, and thank area law enforcement for keeping their community safe. Photos and video from the event only scratch the surface at conveying the raw energy and emotion that was present.

Our Venturers learn that it is crucial to help others. They recognize that waiting for someone else to tackle a problem sometimes means that an issue important to them won’t be resolved. Our personalized coaching with youth enables them to explore a host of issues relevant to their community and helps them to identify areas they can impact.

86% Venturers plan to continue doing things that will improve their communities in the future

90% Venturers believe that what they have learned through UWYV is relevant to how they can make positive change in the community in the future
Healthy Living

_Influencing Their Community to Make Good Choices for Body and Mind_

*Project Blue Hands* of Murdock High School in Winchendon identified the need to help a disproportionately high number of students struggling with mental health issues and created a group of mental health allies to bolster support school-wide.

Perhaps an indication of the mental and physical health crisis our country and community faces, health-related causes were the most addressed issue by students via UWYV.

_A total of 15 Venture Teams_ are actively working to raise awareness about specific diseases like cancer, mental health, and healthy choices

32% of new Ventures launched in 2016-2017 tackled individual and community health issues
Academic Engagement

Improved Attitudes Toward School Lead to Better Academic Results

UWYV is openly accessible to all students within partnering schools to engage not only students that generally do well, but those that are falling behind, acting out, or lost in the middle. Gaming for a Cause of Sky View Middle School in Leominster is comprised of six students who represent diverse backgrounds and would never normally interact. One of the Venturers in this group was an introvert who struggled with social anxiety, with few friends, and rarely spoke in class or to peers. Academically, he was suffering and had all failing grades. Through his Venture, he made a few close friends and got over his fear of speaking in public. In addition, almost every one of his grades went up. During a meeting with his mother, she shared how much the program did for her son.

“United Way Youth Venture is quickly becoming the state’s model program for young people. Every school would do well to consider this program and is welcome to visit Leominster High School to check it out.”

Chris Lord, Principal, Leominster High School
Elementary School Programs
Developing Empathy and Leadership in K-5

During the 2015-2016 school year, UWYV partnered with Frances Drake Elementary in Leominster to pilot a whole-school elementary model, which grew this past year into four Leominster elementary schools. At the K-5 level, fourth and fifth graders write a letter to become representatives for their school to lead a single Venture Team. They learn how to conduct an environmental scan and facilitate the same process with each class in their school—from kindergarten to the fifth grade. With the input of their fellow students, these lead Venturers design a school-wide Venture that captures the imagination of their peers and addresses an issue they are all excited to get behind.

Frances Drake Elementary donated 500 cans of cat food to the Pat Body Shelter for Cats.

2,578 elementary students participated in our inspirational “Dream It. Do It.” assembly
Combined Map of Service for United Way of NCM, MWCC and UWYV

United Way Youth Venture Partner Sites*

- Ayer Shirley Regional High School, Ayer - 9 VTL**
- Ayer Shirley Regional Middle School, Ayer - 85 VTL
- Fall Brook Elementary School, Leominster - 0 VTL
- Fitchburg High School, Fitchburg - 21 VTL
- Frances Drake Elementary School, Leominster - 3 VTL
- Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, Devens - 32 VTL
- Gardner High School, Gardner - 3 VTL
- Johnny Appleseed Elementary School, Leominster - 0 VTL
- Leominster High School & CTEi, Leominster - 33 VTL
- Montachusett Regional Technical Vocational High School, Fitchburg - 7 VTL
- Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner - 10 VTL
- Murdock High School, Winchendon - 10 VTL
- Northwest Elementary School, Leominster - 1 VTL
- Oakmont Regional High School, Ashburnham - 4 VTL
- Samoset Middle School, Leominster - 19 VTL
- Sky View Middle School, Leominster - 64 VTL
- Sizer, a North Central Charter Essential School, Fitchburg - 5 VTL

* Does Not Include Inactive Partner Sites (54 additional Venture Teams)
** VTL-Venture Teams Launched to Date
How Can YOU Help?

Visit with students to provide feedback at a weekly meeting or serve as a panelist to determine if a Team is ready to become a full-fledged Venture.

Share your expertise and mentor a Venture Team as an “Ally” or “Technical Ally.”

Serve alongside a Venture Team that supports a cause important to you as they implement their vision in the community.
UWYV is one of the five main initiatives of the United Way of North Central Massachusetts and relies on the support of organizations and community members. Your donations and sponsorships are critical to enabling continued efforts to cultivate social innovation and youth leadership development in North Central Massachusetts.

Whether you are looking to make a tax-deductible gift, or contribute while communicating your organization’s commitment to youth enrichment, we offer both donation and sponsorship opportunities to suit your needs.

Please consider partnering with UWYV to support the growing programming needs in our community.

If you are interested in becoming involved or would like to learn more, contact us at:

Program Contributions and Funding
United Way of North Central Massachusetts
649 John Fitch Hwy, Fitchburg, MA 01420
Phone: (978)-345-1577
https://www.uwncm.org/

Program Operations, Management, and Sponsorships
Mount Wachusett Community College
444 Green Street, Gardner, MA 01440
Phone: (978) 630-9201
Email: uwyv@mwcc.mass.edu; http://mwcc.edu/uwyv/

Follow us at:
facebook.com/UWYVNCM
instagram: UWYVNCM
twitter: YouthVentureNCM
I believe more kids should have access to United Way Youth Venture because it shows them how much they can get out of the community. It shows that even the littlest things that kids come up with, it can create a big change in the community and really make a difference.”

Sammy Quaye, Spartan Center, Oakmont Regional High School
2017-2018
Program Staff

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Assistant Dean, K-12 Partnerships & Civic Engagement

Lauren Mountain
Director

Michelle Brennan
Assistant Director

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