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 Youth Venture 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, from elementary through college, 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.

“UWYV has a positive impact on the students in the district and within the community. Students involved as Venturers are learning how to work cooperatively and collaboratively with one another. Their team-building skills, self-esteem, and self-confidence are growing stronger. Students within the district and the community look at those involved in UWYV as positive role models and as changemakers.”

Francine Meigs, Samoset Middle School Teacher & Champion, Leominster
MA Commission on the Status of Women 2018 Unsung Heroine Award Recipient
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 16 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 collaborative problem solvers with a voice in collectively addressing community issues.
At this year’s Fall Kickoff, Venturers from around the region had the opportunity to learn in depth about the continually growing opioid epidemic and how it has impacted the North Central MA region through the motivational words of recovering addict and advocate Michael King, of the organization Facing Addiction. His message had a greater impact than even he could have imagined, helping to inspire two young women at Oakmont Regional High School to create the Venture, Adolescents Against Opioid Abuse (AAOA), as a means to continue to educate others about the epidemic. Both of these students were personally affected by the deadly opioid epidemic that is raging across the United States today, and wanted to take action using their own stories to inspire their peers to take action. These students are driven to increase awareness of warning signs and problems that result from opioid abuse within the student body, and work with local opioid-focused nonprofits to raise funding for the needs of victims and their families. It is their hope that by adding a student voice to this battle, the youth of this community will be able to come together to help stem this issue once and for all.
Our Active Teams by Cause

Health – 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.

Community Involvement – Venturers address issues specific to any local or global community, such as supporting area veterans, raising awareness about global issues, and visiting elderly Alzheimer’s patients.

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.

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

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

Learn more about individual Venture Teams at http://tinyurl.com/uyvteams.
Our Results

23 elementary, middle & high schools partnering with MWCC

9,127 youth actively engaged in workshops, team development or volunteering

403 Venture Teams launched since 2002

53 new Venture Teams launched during FY18 in 23 schools with an additional 88 Teams working to become a launched Venture

708 students leading Venture Team efforts with 465 newly engaged this year

85% of Venturers believe that their ability and competence grow with their effort

more than 13,566 area youth reached

90% of Venturers believe UWYV is an important opportunity for students in their school

91% of Venturers believe it is important to encourage others to participate in their community

5 FY2018 ANNUAL REPORT
94% of Venturers say that it is important to listen to other people’s ideas when making a decision.

85% of Venturers will plan on doing things in the community in the future.

90% of Venturers believe it is important to learn about other cultures and beliefs that are not the same as their own.

Scholarship Awards

Ethan Smith, a Leominster High School graduate, was selected as the third recipient of the UWYV Bob Chauvin Leadership Award. This named scholarship honors Mr. Chauvin’s long commitment to UWYV and his leadership in bringing youth development to the forefront of Johnson Control’s charitable mission.

Two additional UWYV scholarships were awarded to Samantha Collette (Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School) and Victoria Powers (Oakmont Regional High School).
"I honestly cannot say enough about the impact this program has had on my students. My students are working so hard and are so passionate about each and every single project they have been working on. The impact this program has had on these students is amazing and is why I am so passionate about this program. The moment I heard about the program I knew that I wanted to be involved and wanted my students to be involved and I think that it has been a major factor in the transformation that sixth grade as a whole has made."

Sarah Carnabucci, McKay Arts Academy Science Teacher & Champion, Fitchburg

Peer Support
Young People Improving Lives of Other Young People
Fitchburg High School

Karate for Kids, of Fitchburg High School, raises awareness of the personal benefits karate has on one's whole self, and raises funds to sponsor other students through the Karate program at FMAC (Fitchburg Martial Arts Center). This Venture does much more than allowing students to learn a new sport they could not previously afford. Lead Venturer, Ethan Chandler, saw and reaped the personal benefits of the martial arts program at FMAC. Through martial arts he learned so many beneficial life skills which helped him excel as a student, a son, and as a community leader, and Ethan wanted to be sure that others could experience the same benefits.

After several successful fundraisers, Karate for Kids has given their first scholarship of six months of free karate lessons to Reingold Elementary School student Me’Yah Newton.
On hot days at Sky View Middle School, the uncomfortable temperature and stuffy air quality make it difficult to learn. Many teachers attempt to ease some of that discomfort by bringing in fans, many of which are loud, dirty and transmit dust and debris into the air. The Cool the School Venture Team learned that when students are hot and uncomfortable, they can’t focus or remember as well; therefore, their learning becomes hindered. They researched environmentally friendly (and noise friendly!) fans to purchase. Cool the School purchased fans for Sky View - making a difference in the classrooms of 30 teachers, positively affecting teachers’ work, students’ learning, and the overall environment at school. Their future goals are to replace more classroom fans at their school, and then other schools in the district.
Health Advocacy
Creating Awareness
Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School

Having seen firsthand the difficulties of their teammate, Victoria, experiencing Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), student Venturers at Monty Tech wanted to raise awareness and education around the syndrome. POTS is a form of dysautonomia that is estimated to impact between one and three million Americans and millions more around the world. Like many others with POTS, it took Victoria a long time to get diagnosed due to the lack of awareness and research about the illness. Her two teammates have witnessed her pass out, be unable to speak, and felt the fear of not knowing how to help. As a result, these three students set out to solve the problem and launched their Venture, **Thoughts for POTS** with the goal to educate the community around them and ensure future patients get a faster and more accurate diagnosis, and ultimately, a cure.

“For me, UWYV is a way to interact with people. It is allowed me to reach outside my comfort zone and discover new things about myself and others in my community. If I didn’t get involved with Youth Venture I don’t think I would be where I am today. Going to meetings and being a part of something bigger than myself was truly amazing.”

Student Venturer, Murdock High School, Winchendon
What if an entire community could redefine student-teacher relationships and reimagine classrooms as collaborative learning environments that supply our region with Changemakers? A Changemaker is an individual with the skillset and the connection to purpose that helps them identify problems within their community, build teams, and innovate solutions to complex social, economic and environmental problems. Where many people see problems, Changemakers see solutions and feel driven to act. Many Venturers have been modeling Changemaking for adults in our community for years. The Changemaking pilot brings this philosophy and intensive focus to adults as a means to increase capacity for youth empowerment and experiential learning in the classroom.

Over the ten academic months of the 2017-2018 school year, faculty, staff, and students from Fitchburg Public Schools, Leominster Public Schools and Mount Wachusett Community College had a unique opportunity to partner with Ashoka’s Youth Venture, to pilot, together as part of a larger ecosystem with local business people and youth, to identify the barriers to change, bring skills, knowledge, backgrounds and being to the table to co-create ways to prepare students for the rapidly changing world in which they will live.

During the pilot, the most passionate educators, administrators, and community leaders engaged in a workshop series to practice the skills of empathy, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. They addressed mindset, culture, curriculum and systems with a Changemaker lens to ensure support for students growing up in a world where change is the only constant.

"I am beside myself with happiness to be a part of this movement. With so much negativity going on in the world, being a Changemaker is a necessity for me and something I strive for every day."

Carey Mount, Longsjo Middle School Teacher & Changemaker, Fitchburg
MWCC was the host of two full-time Commonwealth Corps Members in the United Way Youth Venture (UWYV) program. Bryan Nolan served as a Commonwealth Corps Transformational Leadership Design Innovator and Eden Shaveet served as a Commonwealth Corps Venture Retention & Engagement Innovator. Both members were tasked with designing, implementing, and evaluating pilot initiatives that serve K-12 youth, as well as delivering UWYV in the North Central Massachusetts region. Through their service, Bryan and Eden impacted more than 1,000 students and increased UWYV sustainability through district cultural change and reengaged program alumni. Both Members provided outreach support to the UWYV program, meeting with young social entrepreneurs on a weekly basis to coach them in their leadership journey.

In addition to mentoring high school youth, Bryan supported a pilot initiative to infuse a culture of changemaking and joy into school districts. We were optimistic that Bryan would help to host professional development for K-12 educators, but what has transpired far exceeded our expectations. We experienced sweeping change in the attitudes of teachers, collaboration, problem solving, leadership, and empathy. The structure Bryan provided to this new initiative, along with his support to improve future implementation, allowed us to leverage his unique perspective to develop the future state of this exciting movement for our region and other communities on a national level.

Eden passionately leveraged her experience through connection with several students at a middle school and an alternative high school. She customized communication with students based on their unique needs and as a result facilitated a virtual network among the youth. Eden also led a comprehensive effort to design alumni engagement experiences, a youth-created blog, and our very first internship program.
Innovative Partnerships
Expanding Outside of Schools
Girl Scouts of Eastern MA, Littleton

As the UWYV program continued to expand at an exponential rate, it became time to find new opportunities to engage the region’s youth. Thanks to Ayer-Shirley High School Champion Rachael Fusco, this year the program was able to create an innovative partnership with the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, discovering a seamless connection between the values and goals of the Girl Scouts and the lessons taught by the UWYV program. As Girl Scout Troop 61150 was looking for a way to complete their Bronze Medal community service project, they worked with their UWYV Champion to create a Venture that met their project needs and together were able to create the Life Buckets Venture, helping to create 72-hour emergency buckets to support families in need during a natural disaster. The success of this partnership has set a glowing example for future endeavors as the UWYV program continues to grow throughout the North Central MA region, helping youth realize their ability to be leaders in this community.

“UWYV, to me, is a community where everyone supports each other. We all are trying to make a change for the better, and we all work together in doing so. We may have different ideas in how we do that, but we all are working for the same cause - a better world.”

Student Venturer, Sky View Middle School, Leominster
United Way Youth Venture Partner Sites*

- Ayer Shirley Regional High School, Ayer - 10 VTL
- Fall Brook Elementary School, Leominster - 1 VTL
- Fitchburg High School, Fitchburg - 21 VTL
- Frances Drake Elementary School, Leominster - 4 VTL
- Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, Devens - 35 VTL
- Gardner High School, Gardner - 5 VTL
- Girl Scout Troop 61150, Littleton - 1 VTL
- Goodrich Academy, Fitchburg - 2 VTL
- Johnny Appleseed Elementary School, Leominster
- Leominster High School & CTEi, Leominster - 33 VTL
- Lonsjo Middle School, Fitchburg - 4 VTL
- McKay Arts Academy, Fitchburg - 16 VTL
- Montachusett Regional Technical Vocational High School, Fitchburg - 8 VTL
- Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner - 13 VTL
- Murdock High School, Winchendon - 8 VTL
- Murdock Middle School, Winchendon - 9 VTL
- Northwest Elementary School, Leominster - 2 VTL
- Oakmont Regional High School, Ashburnham - 8 VTL
- Overlook Middle School, Ashburnham - 2 VTL
- Samoset Middle School, Leominster - 21 VTL
- Sky View Middle School, Leominster - 79 VTL
- South Street Elementary School, Fitchburg - 1 VTL
- Toy Town Elementary School, Winchendon - 1 VTL

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

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

Thank you to the 149 Panelists in FY18 who listened and supported our Venture Teams community-benefiting ideas! See the list here: https://mwcc.edu/campus-life/brewer-center/uwyv/support/

Share your expertise and mentor a Venture Team as an “Ally” or “Technical Ally”. (An ally is a non-controlling adult who has agreed to help mentor a specific Venture)

Thank you to the 127 Allies and Technical Allies who regularly guided our Venture Teams in FY18.

Serve alongside a Venture Team that supports a cause important to you as they implement their vision in the community.

Thank you to the 26 Community Partners who gave advice, support and opportunities in FY18 to our Venturers.
Volunteering

Donations

Partnerships

Sponsorships

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/

New Partners, Volunteering, 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/

facebook.com/UWYVNCM

instagram: UWYVNCM
twitter: YouthVetureNCM
$10,637 per program partner

$481 average seed funding per Venture

$48.95 per actively engaged youth

$32.97 per individual youth exposed

“I feel like UWYV has made me so confident about myself, in what I do and how I feel about myself now.”

Dominic Berdeguer, The Venture Kids, South Street Elementary School
2017-2018 Program Staff

Fagan Forhan
Assistant Dean, K-12 Partnerships & Civic Engagement

Lauren Mountain
Director

Michelle Brennan
Assistant Director

Evan Berry
Program Manager

Donna Toothaker
Program Manager

Bryan Nolan
Eden Shaveet
Commonwealth Corps Innovators

Tamarah Estes
Jacob VanHillo
Rachel Vargeletis
Outreach Specialists

Melissa Beaulac
Katelyn Murphy
Interns