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Dear Colleagues & Friends,

Anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement embodies this idea. This year more than 2,000 students engaged in experiential educational and volunteer opportunities, providing an economic impact of over $3.5 million for the North Central region through more than 120,000 hours of service.

In this report we will highlight all the work we’ve accomplished as a Center throughout this year, on a national, state, and local level. From service learning trips to Haiti and Costa Rica to fundraising events like the Phi Theta Kappa Character Breakfast, we are effecting real positive change in our world. Although it can be hard to quantify transformation on an individual level, the conversations about social justice and the support that can be found within the Center is an important indicator worth emphasis.

While disillusionment and learned helplessness motivate some people to disengage, our students leave the Center ignited with the idea that it is within their power to do something about injustices in the world. That is powerful! Empowering our citizens to engage in the democratic process is what the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement does every day, and that is just as valuable as any dollar amount we’ve contributed to our communities.

While helping others is the core of our purpose, teaching those in need to help themselves is a greater service. To that end, our Students Serving Our Students (SOS) Office is focused on the motto “A hand up, not a hand out.” Educating students on the impact they can create within their communities is the first step in their transformation into change-makers. These transformations will be the highlight across the stories and statistics in this report, from events like the Robert D. Putnam speech and dialogue to students who co-planned the Economic Inequality Student Summit with Keene State College.

Sometimes hard conversations about difficult topics can lead to opened minds and charged aspirations. The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement educates the whole individual and sends students into the world with a drive to make a difference, with the motivation to better their communities, and with the courage to not step down in the pursuit of issues worth fighting for.

Sincerely,

Stevie LaBelle and Kate Zabierek
Student Leaders in Civic Engagement
PTK CHARACTER BREAKFAST

In April, MWCC families and friends joined together to enjoy a hot breakfast at the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society’s 2nd annual Character Breakfast. Students, faculty, and staff volunteers and attendees dressed up as cartoon characters, ate breakfast and played games on the Gardner campus. In total, 225 people attended the event, bringing in approximately $1,700, all donated to support hunger alleviation in North Central Massachusetts through the Gardner and Winchendon Community Action Committees, and the MWCC SOS Soup Voucher Program.

HUNGER BANQUET

The second annual MWCC Hunger Banquet was held this past November in an effort to expose students to hunger issues throughout the world. Based on the Oxfam model, this event brought faculty, staff and students together to experience a meal which was determined by random seating assignments.

Upon entry to the event, participants were given an identity which indicated their name, country of residence and other identifying factors such as age, family status, and job sixty percent of participants were designated as low-income and received a meal of white rice and water – which they ate on the floor with their hands. Middle-income individuals made up another 30% of participants, were seated at a table, and had a bowl of rice and beans, water and plastic utensils. Finally, high-income individuals made up just 10% of the population and were seated at a table with linen, china and were served a plated, three-course meal.

During the event itself, Dan Soucy, Faculty Chair of Civic Engagement and Assistant Professor of Philosophy, provided an interactive discussion on issues of poverty worldwide and at home. For entrance to the event, attendees either donated $2 or a canned good. Over $50 was collected to benefit the SOS Soup Voucher Program, and canned goods were donated to the Student Government Association’s annual Thanksgiving Food Drive benefiting our students in need.
The Students Serving Our Students (SOS) peer-to-peer mentoring program is a student-created and student-led service offered within the Center. With the goal of helping MWCC students succeed in their education, this program offers a variety of services to help students overcome personal barriers. Mentors assist their peers by connecting them with external social and community services and internal supports at the college. These referrals aid the students in overcoming a variety of barriers including financial concerns, childcare challenges, transportation issues, food insecurity, and housing.

The SOS office is structured to allow student mentors to guide the implementation of the program, which allows for mentors and volunteers to have a truly empowering experience. There are two meetings each month to ensure that students are given the opportunity to work together on proposals for program growth and upcoming projects. SOS mentors and volunteers acquire skills in critical thinking, communication and collaboration; increase their knowledge about resources and opportunities available in the North Central region; and are afforded the opportunity to develop both civic and professional experience.

In 2015-2016, the program consisted of one intern, two service learners, five SLiCE mentors, and two volunteer mentors who collectively dedicated over 813 hours of service. An intern from Fitchburg State University also completed 230 hours with the program as its Student Coordinator in the spring 2016 semester. One hundred percent of this year’s MWCC mentors and volunteers excelled in their studies or graduated; of those who graduated this year, 80% did so with honors.

The Students SOS office provided 213 food vouchers for 33 individual students and met with an additional 19 students to aid them with other barriers to staying in college. Mentors met with these 52 students approximately 232 times for an average of just over four visits per student seeking assistance. Of these 52 students, 75% remained at the college. In an effort to raise funds to support the SOS soup voucher program, a pie sale was coordinated by SLiCE member and SOS Student Coordinator Stevie Labelle, who raised $160.

From day one I could tell that the SOS office was a special place. I was greeted by friendly faces and warm welcomes. Everyone was ecstatic that I was interested in mentoring. During the three years I was here I developed close bonds with the staff in the office. I knew it was important to establish and maintain an open, fun atmosphere to ensure the students felt comfortable here. Working with the students was an amazing experience. I learned that people come from so many diverse backgrounds with a variety of limitations. At times it was difficult to fathom how they even made it this far, but they were truly strong and amazing individuals. I am blessed to say that I had the opportunity to meet them and to assist them in their journey. I learned to be open, understanding, compassionate, and thoughtful. I will take these experiences with me in my life and I can’t stress enough how meaningful the SOS office was to me and the students who pass through here.

- Chelsea Garrity, SOS Mentor; Student Leader in Civic Engagement
The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement rolled out its new Student Leaders in Civic Engagement (SLiCE) program this year. SLiCE members serve as liaisons between the college and nonprofit sites in the greater community, and engage students and the community by creating and sustaining a culture of lifelong leadership development, training, and education.

The SLiCE program, created with the capacity-building support of 2014–2015 MWCC AmeriCorps*VISTA, John Day, provides paid employment opportunities for MWCC student leaders to coordinate service programming and assist with volunteer recruitment and management for their site placements. This helps provide more meaningful opportunities for MWCC students to engage in the community, while also increasing a community partner’s capacity to accommodate student volunteers and service learners, and thus better serve their population.

The Center’s current *VISTA, Cathy Teague, has been pivotal in rolling out the pilot year of the program through maintaining communication with site partners and coordinating SLiCE trainings and professional development. The 2015-2016 SLiCE members included Jana Murphy, Chelsea Garrity, Stevie LaBelle, Carrie DeCosta, and Kate Zabierek. SLiCE members work 500 hours over the course of the year, splitting their time among the Center, the SOS Office, and their site placement. This year’s site placements included the Student Life Office, helping student clubs and organizations coordinate meaningful service projects; the Students SOS office; the Boys & Girls Club of Fitchburg and Leominster; and the United Way of North Central Massachusetts.

Each SLiCE member also coordinated a day of service or on-campus service project which included a 9/11 memorial activity, a day at a Habitat for Humanity build site, Alternative Spring Break day of service, the United Way Day of Caring and a service project to benefit animals at the Worcester Animal Rescue League.
MEET THE SLiCE TEAM

**Carrie DeCosta:** Carrie made a big impact by coordinating the first college-wide Day of Service with a 9/11 Thank You Card Drive. She encouraged faculty, staff and students to create cards expressing their gratitude to local first responders and military personnel. In addition, Carrie helped out with fellow SLiCE member projects including the Day of Caring. Her SLiCE placement with the Student Life Office allowed her to focus on aiding all of the clubs and organizations in doing meaningful service to fulfill their SGA requirement. Carrie coordinated a card signing for the Umpqua Community College community in an effort to express sympathy and solidarity with a fellow community college population after a shooting devastated their campus. Carrie also helped out with getting the new Cultural Engagement and International Service Club off the ground, resulting in the first International Service Trip this past May.

**Chelsea Garrity:** Chelsea said that during her two years at the Mount her favorite experience in volunteering was facilitating the United Way Day of Caring this past year. Over 130 students, faculty and staff packaged 20,178 meals to be given out to local food pantries as part of the Day of Caring. Chelsea also helped restore a community garden in Fitchburg. She said the experience of volunteering is “just amazing” and she enjoys seeing the reactions and smiles on the faces of people who are helped. She graduated from the college with a Liberal Arts degree in Communications and participated in the first International Service Trip to Costa Rica. “I hope wherever I go I can continue to dedicate as much time as I can to the community,” she said. Chelsea also received a “Pay it Forward” scholarship for students who are engaged in the community and is a Phi Theta Kappa All-Star.

**Stevie A. LaBelle:** As a Student Leader in Civic Engagement Stevie was the Student Coordinator of the Students Serving Our Students Office at the Gardner Campus. She majored in Liberal Arts and Sciences and graduated as part of the Honors Program. In addition to her studies and work, Stevie is a mother of two children and the wife of a disabled Purple Heart Army Veteran. Stevie used her drive for serving others to lead a team of student volunteer mentors who help students overcome challenges that could hinder their education. On a daily basis SOS mentors advocate for students dealing with issues such as homelessness, food insecurity or lack of child-care, and advise those students on the resources available to them within the college and in the greater North Central Massachusetts community. Stevie began a transportation fund to purchase bus passes to aid students dealing with transportation challenges and created an animal shelter donation drive. She devoted many hours volunteering for the causes associated with the SOS Office in addition to her work hours. Stevie is returning for a second year of SLiCE for the 2016-2017 academic year.

**Jana Murphy:** Jana serves as a Student Leader in Civic Engagement as well as the President of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and will be the 2016-2107 AmeriCorps *VISTA dedicating her year of service to combating hunger in North Central Massachusetts while educating the college community about local and global hunger alleviation initiatives. She is also a Phi Theta Kappa All-Star. As a SLiCE member, Jana planned the annual Alternative Spring Break project with Habitat for Humanity. Jana is a native of Germany who speaks three languages and is the mother of a three year old son. She is enrolled in the MWCC Honors program and was the student representative at the 2016 Democracy Commitment National Meeting in Indianapolis. During her year with SLiCE, Jana focused on deepening the Center’s partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Fitchburg & Leominster. Finally, Jana was also one of eight students who traveled to Costa Rica to do international service.
Cathy Teague (AmeriCorps*VISTA): AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer Cathy Teague worked closely with the Center’s community partners to build a deeper capacity to host MWCC students for service projects, with a particular focus on launching the first year of Student Leaders in Civic Engagement. Cathy is a 2015 graduate of MWCC with an Associate Degree in General Studies Allied Health. In the past, Cathy has taken a leadership role in civic engagement on and off campus, participating in many endeavors such as helping to build a home with Habitat for Humanity of North Central Massachusetts, food drives to assist those in need, and fundraising to benefit student-centered campus initiatives and community nonprofit organizations. Cathy was also a participant in the first International Service Trip to Costa Rica.

Catherine Zabierek: Kate is a biology major at the beginning of her journey to realize her dream of becoming a neurologist. She was able to help combat hunger in our area this spring through the United Way of North Central Massachusetts. Many people have been fed this year through the “Heroes Against Hunger” events that the United Way of North Central Massachusetts along with Outreach Inc. put together. Meals are packaged that help to feed the one in four children that are food insecure in our community. Her work as a Student Leader in Civic Engagement at the Center for Community and Civic Engagement at MWCC has enabled her to be the change she wants to see in the world. Kate is returning for a second year of SLiCE for the 2016-2017 academic year.
PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

MWCC’s Parent Support Group is a student organization that supports and helps meet the unique needs of students with families. This past year the organization coordinated a donation drive to collect coats and other cold weather gear in November, as well as a toy and book drive for students’ families around the holidays. The group also coordinated another very successful clothes drive entitled Dress for Success that collected business attire for job interviews for students in need. Their efforts to ensure that students with families feel welcomed and supported on campus made an immense impact on the MWCC community. As a result, the student organization was given the Above and Beyond Award at the Service Learning and Volunteerism Celebration.

CAREER PLANNING & PLACEMENT

The Office of Career Planning & Placement had a busy and productive year as it continued its efforts to align itself with and support civic engagement learning outcomes. The office provides job preparedness skills for our students in the classroom, one-on-one and in conjunction with on-campus activities.

Our growing economy brings with it increasing opportunities for our students. In response to an optimistic economic outlook, the Office of Career Planning & Placement continued its efforts to provide targeted services to the Gardner, Leominster and Devens campuses. These efforts included job search workshops, one-on-one student sessions, employer visits on all three campuses, and support of the college’s advanced manufacturing program housed on the Devens campus. Job postings, employer visits, and site tours assisted in bringing job opportunities to our students.

To best prepare students for a targeted job search, Coordinator of Career Planning & Placement Patricia Brewerton, developed in-class presentations and workshops beginning with First Year Experience classes through capstone courses for those students soon to graduate. These workshops began with a discussion of in-demand majors and how to explore labor market trends, followed by discussions and development of résumé-building experiences with a focus on utilizing civic engagement experiences. Students learn how to apply their college education to real world experiences including volunteer experiences, service learning and cooperative education experiences and eventually paid part-time and full-time jobs.

The annual job fair drew over 250 students and community members. Students applied their dress for success skills and their résumé-building skills in order to land full-time, part-time and internship opportunities. Over 35 employers arrived at the college equipped to share job opportunities in the fields of human services, business, STEM, advanced manufacturing, computer information systems, and criminal justice to name a few.

Training students on job search strategies, participation in our job fair, and exposure to local job opportunities is also shared with our community, through a partnership with the House of Peace and Education in Gardner. These hands-on trainings and job opportunities bring a ‘can do’ attitude to HOPE clients, equipping them with skills necessary to compete in today’s market.
OTAKU CLUB

For the second year, hundreds of kindergarten and first grade students at Waterford Street School ended the school year with fun summertime reading, thanks to a donation of over 1,000 books from a group of Mount Wachusett Community College students.

Otaku United, a club that celebrates Asian culture, raised $1,390 in April by conducting a silent auction of a wide range of gift cards and donated items. Proceeds from the benefit auction were used to purchase age-appropriate books for the students from Scholastic Reading Club.

Each kindergarten and first grade student went home on the last day of school with two books. The club donated 1,014 books to the elementary school and more than 40 books to the Garrison Center for Early Childhood Education at MWCC.

“One of the district’s goals is literacy, and this donation definitely supports that initiative. We really appreciate this donation to the kids,” said Waterford Principal Dan Hill. The donated books augmented the district’s summer reading challenge program.

The club appreciated the support it received from MWCC faculty, staff and students during the auction. “They were wonderful. We couldn’t do it without them,” said MWCC Early Childhood Education major Andrea Bartlett, the auction coordinator. This year’s fundraiser exceeded last year’s inaugural event by $390.

STEAM FAIR AT BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
(Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math)

The Central MA Science Festival, in affiliation with the Cambridge Science Festival, highlights the impact of STEAM in our lives, igniting scientific curiosity and creating opportunities for discovery. The free community festival was held on April 16 and attracted over 500 attendees ranging from toddlers to teenagers. Attendees enjoyed a wide range of STEAM-related activities including hands-on demonstrations, exhibitions, and workshops that featured building with Legos, electricity projects, beekeeping, robotics, geology, origami, astronomy, aviation, environmental science, and green energy.

MWCC students completed service learning hours on this project for Professor Peter Olszak’s Introduction to Physics course.

“Having MWCC student volunteers assist with this event helps us expand our ability to offer a broad variety of exciting activities at our Festival.” - Rebecca Cyganiewicz

“Due to the overwhelming success of this year’s festival, we were invited by a Leominster City Councilor to run another science festival during the popular Johnny Appleseed Festival in September. We look forward to having Dr. Olszak and other volunteers participate in this new event, and are grateful to those who help us to continue to offer innovative, educational events and programs for our clubs youth and our community,” reflected Rebecca Cyganiewicz, Volunteer Coordinator of the Boys & Girls Club of Fitchburg and Leominster.
This April, the Week of the Young Child Art Exhibit celebrated its 10th anniversary at MWCC’s Garrison Center for Early Childhood Education. The exhibit displayed paintings, sculptures and other assorted artwork created by children, and was open to the greater community. The exhibit was also paired with an Admissions-sponsored information session about MWCC’s Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education academic programs for prospective teachers in the area.
THE POWER OF OPEN DIALOGUE: NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES GRANT

As part of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and The Democracy Commitment, MWCC was selected to participate in “Citizenship Under Siege,” a national program of public forums, sponsored this spring through a $20,000 National Endowment for the Humanities grant. These forums, grounded in exploring the ways that the power of humanities can bridge differences and build stronger communities, were planned in collaboration with local nonprofit organizations, police departments and elected officials in the community.

“One of the benefits of working within a community college is the ability to be adaptive and dynamic, to respond to the needs of our students quickly, yet with intention,” said Fagan Forhan, Assistant Dean of K-12 Partnerships and Civic Engagement. “Very few community colleges are doing the work of deliberative dialogues, and yet our students are living with these social justice issues in a very immediate and visceral way.”

The Division of Access and Transition also launched and sponsored the Tea Time Speaker Series, its own public forum series that took place on the last Monday of each month throughout the spring semester. Topics included “Immigration and the Undocumented Student” (held in partnership with the NEH Citizens Under Siege grant), “Understanding the LGBTQA Community,” and “Men of Color Panel Presentation to Explore Modern Barriers.” This series brought together hundreds of students, faculty, staff, community members, and dual enrollment students to learn about and engage in discussion about these critical issues.

A FOCUS ON SERVICE

The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement provides students, faculty and staff opportunities to be involved in the community as a group. Every year the Center works closely with the college’s Student Activities office to welcome new students to campus through the Leadership Academy. This year, over 50 students participated in a day of service as part of the Leadership Academy. Some students volunteered on campus with a clean-up or with assembling 92 backpacks of donated school items for children in foster care in North Central Massachusetts. Off-campus service sites included Many Hands Organic Farm in Barre, and Cathy’s House, a new veteran’s shelter specifically for female veterans.

MWCC has long participated in the United Way Day of Caring and once again served as a host site this year. Through the Center, more than 132 students, faculty and staff packaged over 20,000 meals of rice and beans, macaroni and cheese, and pasta with sauce. The meals were distributed within North Central Massachusetts for families in need. Additional meals were kept on campus for students who visit the SOS Office and are experiencing food insecurity.

In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, two MWCC students volunteered their time and braved the cold with Habitat for Humanity in North Central Massachusetts at an active build site.

Spring Break is traditionally a time for students to catch up on school work, spend time with friends and family, or put in extra work hours. However, every year a group of MWCC students spend one day of their break in the service of others for Alternative Spring Break. This year, four students and three staff members volunteered with Habitat for Humanity building a home in Ayer and sorting donations at the Leominster ReStore.
GIVEPULSE

In the spring semester MWCC rolled out GivePulse, an online volunteer management community that aims to improve tracking and assessment of student volunteerism and service learning. GivePulse allows students to easily enter all of their service hours, or impacts, accumulated from student clubs and organizations, service learning, and community-based internships. The system subsequently measures the collective impact that students make in the community. This system aided in streamlining the process for tracking student volunteer hours for the Center for service awards and recognitions, and transcript notations. The online interface provides space for community partners to post volunteer opportunities and events, as well as a place for students to share and reflect on their experiences. GivePulse is already proving to be critical in diminishing the burden on faculty and community partners in verifying and tracking student service learning hours. By easing the administrative processes associated with service learning, we are opening the door to more opportunities for collaboration and partnership in the community.

PROJECT GRADUATION: THE PHI THETA KAPPA FOOD DRIVE

MWCC’s Phi Delta Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society sponsored its annual Project Graduation food drive in conjunction with the College’s 51st Commencement exercises. All graduates and their guests were asked to bring a non-perishable food item to the Commencement rehearsal or ceremony. In addition to nonperishables, over $60 was raised in cash donations. All donations were delivered to the Gardner Community Action Committee’s food pantry to benefit the local community.
SERVICE LEARNING & VOLUNTEER CELEBRATION

On May 17, more than 130 MWCC students attended the College’s annual Service Learning and Volunteerism Celebration, an event coordinated by the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement and its student leaders. The event celebrates the service completed over the past year, while recognizing students, faculty, and staff for their outstanding commitment to the community.

During the event, dozens of graduating students were recognized for their extensive hours of service in the form of medallions or pins to wear during graduation. The United Way of North Central Massachusetts was presented with the Community Partner of the Year Award for establishing MWCC as a “United Way Day of Caring” site. The Above and Beyond Award was presented to the Parent Support Group, an active club that has sponsored numerous events and initiatives this year to benefit students and their families. Art students who participated in service learning gave a slideshow presentation of the art projects conducted in Gardner over the course of the semester.

MWCC President Daniel Asquino was also honored at the event, as he prepares to retire early next year. Dr. Asquino’s dedication to community engagement over the past 15 years has allowed the Center to grow into a nationally recognized leader in the field, impacting thousands of students and community members.

RECOGNITION LEVEL (Hours of service) | AWARD | ELIGIBLE STUDENTS (Graduating Class of 2016)
--- | --- | ---
20 | Service Learning Lapel Pin | 121
40 | Civic Scholars Medallion | 64
75 | Civic Scholars Medallion & Outstanding Achievement Pin | 10
100+ | Certificate of Recognition from President Asquino, Civic Scholars Medallion & Outstanding Achievement Pin | 183
100+ (within one academic year - PVSA) | Eligibility for the United States President’s Volunteer Service Award | 85
THE SHARYN A. RICE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AWARD

The Sharyn A. Rice Civic Engagement Award is presented to an MWCC student each year in honor of former Senior Vice President Sharyn Rice, who retired in 2013 after 25 years of service to the College and the greater community. The awardee is a student of good character who demonstrates a clear commitment to the community. This year’s award was presented to Michel L. Cocuzza of Winchendon. Michel was chosen based on her outstanding commitment to service in the local community in addition to volunteering on campus with the Parent Support Group, where she coordinated the winter toy drive and spring Dress for Success event.

Volunteering is something everyone should experience. Too often we are caught up in our own lives and our own worries. To be able to think about someone else’s needs and actually ‘do’ something to help them is an amazing feeling! We ALL have something to give, so get out there and volunteer today.

- Michel L. Cocuzza, 2016 Sharyn A. Rice Recipient

RETIRING FACULTY

During this year’s Service Learning and Volunteerism Celebration, two retiring faculty were honored for their tireless contributions to service throughout their careers. Professors Janice Gearan (Human Services) and Kathy Panagiotes (Nursing) were presented with the Civic Engagement Career Achievement Award. At the celebration, Human Services student Amanda Favreau presented the award to Professor Gearan and spoke about Jan’s legacy of service and the inspiration she inspires in others to make a difference in their community. Kathy Panagiotes was instrumental in the initial development of service learning as a pedagogical practice at MWCC. Her work to integrate the practice into the nursing curriculum has impacted thousands of students over the past 15 years.
Service Learning Scholarship

Tatjana James of Athol and Bonnie Veilleux of Winchendon were presented with service learning scholarships during the College’s annual Evening of Excellence. Both students were selected for their outstanding commitment to service.

Tatjana James completed well over 150 hours of service during her time at MWCC. Tatjana, a graphic design major, put her talent to good use both inside and outside the classroom including designing the promotional flyer for the first annual ‘Dine For A Cause’ event, which raised $800 for the Alumni Scholarship Fund. Carol Jacobson, Associate Director of Alumni Affairs, had this to say about Tatjana, “I am so grateful for her efforts. She did a nice job on the flyer and her marketing efforts certainly played a role in the success of the event.”

Bonnie Veilleux is a student of many talents. She completed her Service Learning Capstone with the Gardner Senior Center in the fall while also serving as the volunteer coordinator at the House of Peace and Education where she triaged her classmates into meaningful service experiences working with low-income women and children in Gardner. Bonnie was nominated for this honor by faculty member Dan Soucy, who consistently spoke highly of her caring and compassionate nature as well as her true dedication to making a difference in her community. Bonnie went above and beyond in her service to the seniors she worked with and is a true champion of service at MWCC and in the local community.

Faculty Support

The Center provides ongoing support for faculty engaged in service learning including one-on-one meetings to integrate service learning into curriculum and trainings for new faculty on how to utilize the tracking system, how to find an appropriate service site and how to provide the most quality service learning experience for our students. In addition, the Center participates in new faculty orientation, ongoing professional development for new faculty, and provided technical assistance for GivePulse to enable faculty to approve service hours.

Enriching the Community Through Art Murals

As part of service learning courses, MWCC students in the Art Department have the opportunity to help beautify the Gardner area by painting murals around the city. Originally conceptualized by art students, this project aims to create murals in Gardner that will help revitalize the city, while also providing experiential learning for students. Murals have been painted in multiple sites around Gardner including the Goodnow Pearson Building, Cruisers Malt Shop, and the School Street School.

In addition to the murals, MWCC forged a partnership with the Wachusett Mountain Ski Area and Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School. The ski area donated old ski lift chairs; the high school students repurposed them into benches; and MWCC art students painted them. These benches are now placed throughout central Massachusetts.
EDUCATING THE MWCC COMMUNITY WITH THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement has continued its partnership this year with The New York Times to provide a resource for faculty to integrate relevant current events into classroom discussions on the Gardner, Leominster, Fitchburg, and Devens campuses. An MWCC student, compensated by The Times, delivers and stocks newspapers in classrooms and throughout the campus. A total of 5,452 papers were distributed for student use. The partnership also provides academic passes online for students to digitally access The Times website at no cost.

DUAL ENROLLMENT & FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE TRAININGS

Every year the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement provides presentations and workshops about the importance of community engagement and career planning for high school dual enrollment courses and MWCC’s First Year Experience (FYE) courses.

One of the most popular workshops, the Hiring Manager, provides students with a job description, over 20 fictionalized résumés and cover letters, and a scoring rubric. Students break up into small groups and imagine they are the hiring committee charged with the task of deciding who gets an interview. This activity serves as a catalyst for discussion about everything from constructing a résumé and cover letter to what students can do to gain valuable experience to enhance their own career prospects upon graduation.

In addition to the career focused sessions, the Center provides a workshop which challenges students to identify a community problem or need and brainstorm ways the need can be addressed via the power of service and volunteerism. Global and local issues are examined as students struggle with the limitations they feel regarding their ability to make an impact in the world. Students leave these workshops feeling empowered and inspired to make lasting change in their community.
**ECONOMIC INEQUALITY STUDENT SUMMIT**

In partnership with Keene State College, Mount Wachusett Community College hosted “A Ticket to the Middle Class: A Student Public Policy Summit on Higher Education” this past April as part of the American Democracy Project and The Democracy Commitment’s Economic Inequality Initiative. Students from New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts gathered for two days at Keene State College to discuss issues within higher education, network with their peers, and participate in a mock Congress. The summit discussion included free college education, student debt and access to higher education.

**As a result of the summit:**

- More than ¾ of attendees reported that they felt more prepared to engage within the political process on issues they care about.
- More than ¾ of attendees reported that they now have a better understanding of the Senatorial process.
- Two thirds of attendees learned a new or different way to utilize their ‘voice’ in the political process.

“Maybe I’m naive, but I have always had big ideas about how we can make our nation more free for all of our citizens. I deeply believe that the more free we all are—the more free we all are! I did a little welcome speech at the summit and in it I quoted Winston Churchill when he said, ‘Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.’

“My experience at the summit enabled me to have an epiphany about the construct of higher education in this country and who it was created to serve. What if we came together to form a construct that would serve all of our citizens? It IS within our power! If we all decided to care at the same time about the same thing, and took our responsibility to participate in the democratic process seriously, there is no limit to what we, as citizens, can do to make our nation more free, inclusive, and representative of the beautifully diverse nation we have become.”

– Kate Zabierek, Summit participant and Student Leader in Civic Engagement

“As always it was wonderful to collaborate with our colleagues at Mount Wachusett Community College. Their expertise and depth of experience were critical to the success of our first ever Economic Inequality Student Summit focused on access to and the affordability of higher education. However, the greatest value of the summit was the learning experience for our students as they interacted with students from the Mount and other institutions across the region. They were exposed to a wide variety of perspectives, some of which challenged our students but resulted in deeper learning and insight into a complex issue.”

– Kim Schmidl-Gagne, Program Coordinator, Keene State College

“[My biggest takeaway is that] involvement is a must. Learn how government works, engage in it, and keep fighting for what you believe is morally just.”

– Student Participant

“[My biggest takeaway was] the diversity of the people I met. Having a room full of an ocean of different views was enriching and I intensely enjoyed conversing with my colleagues and new friends.”

– Student Participant
A SERVICE LEARNING CAPSTONE COURSE

A capstone course is an opportunity for our students to demonstrate a culminating achievement of academic knowledge and goals through advanced project-based coursework. Two community service learning capstone courses were offered with a total of 12 students completing 350 hours of service learning.

Students performed their service in a variety of settings including local schools and food pantries, with most students focused on the elderly population with site placements at the Gardner Senior Center and the Leominster Senior Center.

This year was the second academic year where General Studies Allied Health students participated in the course, leading to an even greater diversity in sites and experiences as they explored, among other things, areas of complementary health care.

In a survey of participants:

- 100% feel that it is important to provide support to individuals and groups who experience injustices & inequality
- 89% are confident in their ability to address problems in the world by using their critical thinking skills
- 89% feel they have the power to improve the quality of people’s lives and the sustainability of the planet

“The experience with the students and staff was invaluable and there are many things I learned that have better prepared me for student and parent relationships within my own pre-kindergarten classroom. I intend to implement a variety of new activities, structures and modified approaches to academic and behavioral reinforcement plans in my class, and endeavor to revisit the preschool over the summer months to continue learning through serving. I couldn’t be happier with the experience overall and am glad to have been given this opportunity through MWCC.”

-Nicole Downey, Winchendon Public Preschool, ISC220 Student

ADDRESSING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY: ROBERT D. PUTNAM KEYNOTE

On Friday, March 25, best-selling author Robert D. Putnam visited MWCC to give a keynote presentation about economic inequality titled “Is the American Dream Real?” Professor Putnam is well known for his book Bowling Alone, which explored the decline of social capital in the United States. His keynote was based on his recent book Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis. The event was part of MWCC’s dialogue series “Citizenship Under Siege,” sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and was free and open to the greater community. Following the event, participants were invited to either attend a book signing for a small donation, or a free facilitated dialogue about economic inequality and the American Dream.
Mental Health Awareness Conference with Heywood Hospital & The SHINE Initiative

Mount Wachusett Community College partnered with Heywood Hospital and the SHINE Initiative to present the Mental Health Awareness Conference this past October in Leominster to raise awareness about mental health and wellness.

“For far too long, mental health has been viewed as a topic too delicate and too uncomfortable to speak openly about,” said MWCC President Daniel M. Asquino. “It is imperative, on a local and national level, that open dialogue take place in our communities, in our schools, in our workplaces, and in our homes, because this is an issue that has everything to do with learning, employment productivity, and the quality and enjoyment of life. We are honored to again join the SHINE Initiative and Heywood Hospital in presenting this important conference.”

Following the presentations, 150 MWCC Nursing students participated in the QPR (question, persuade, refer) suicide prevention training.

In addition, Faculty Chair of Civic Engagement, Dan Soucy sits on the medical ethics board of Heywood Hospital and routinely brings students to observe board meetings as service learning experience.

The Nonprofit Collaborative: Building Capacity with Enterprise Bank

Enterprise Bank, in partnership with the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement, hosted a grant-writing workshop for non-profit organizations in North Central Massachusetts. Thirty-six people attended the event entitled “Lessons Learned from Winning Proposals” featuring Susan Linn, Vice President of Institutional Advancement at William James College, as the keynote speaker.

United Way Youth Venture

Youth are a vibrant, yet often underutilized source of power for creating and leading positive community change. Young people involved in United Way Youth Venture (UWYV) of North Central Massachusetts through one of 15 partnering schools develop leadership skills, build confidence, provide countless services to their communities and most importantly, are given the chance to make lasting positive change in others as well as themselves.

During the UWYV process, youth learn how to identify problems and find creative solutions. A consistent presence in the region over the past 14 years, UWYV has changed the perception of how adults view youth in the communities served by the program. Youth are invited to explore social issues about the future of our community. They are a driving and inspirational force of creative, problem-solving energy, and are empowered with the skills and encouragement needed to improve their communities.

United Way Youth Venture is a partnership between Mount Wachusett Community College, 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.
UWYV hosted several events this year including an invigorating Fall Kick Off with more than 350 middle and high school students in attendance. Staff facilitated a Champion Training and Roundtable to educate and support our partnering school staff. MWCC hosted a third annual Administration Dinner for school superintendents and principals where a panel of successful UWYV alumni passionately spoke about the large impact youth social entrepreneurship through UWYV has made on their lives.

This year, the UWYV program held its first UWYV Community Expo, providing an opportunity for members of the North Central Massachusetts community to engage with Venture Teams and learn about the great changes they are leading in our region. With more than 30 teams in attendance and 125 guests, the event not only raised public awareness of program successes, but also raised $7,000 to support the efforts of future Ventures.

Finally, UWYV worked closely with Ashoka’s Youth Venture to facilitate the international UWYV Training program, sponsored by SimplexGrinnell, to help spread the program to new communities. Additionally, $30,000 grants were awarded to Pike Peaks United Way, located in Colorado Springs, Colorado and the United Way of Greater New Bedford, serving southeastern Massachusetts.

This year, UWYV expanded beyond its typical middle and high school partnerships to include collaboration with Frances Drake Elementary School (Leominster) and the first private school partner, the Applewild School (Fitchburg). These successful opportunities yielded two brand new Venture efforts, demonstrating that the UWYV model works effectively in a variety of school settings and with younger students.
UWYV BY THE NUMBERS

14
middle & high schools partnering with MWCC

36 new Venture teams launched in FY16 across 15 schools with an additional 61 teams in the pipeline well on their way to becoming a launched Venture

nearly 6,500 youth actively engaged in workshops, team development or volunteering

315 Venture Teams launched since 2002

580 students leading Venture Team efforts with 337 newly engaged this year

8 school partners in deeper collaboration through UWYV curriculum integration

more than 10,000 area youth reached

$16,406 in seed funding awarded in FY15 to launch Venture efforts

Venturers raised more than $5,000 in matching funding to support their Venture missions

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

80%
feel that people their age can influence decisions & policies within their community

92%
believe it is important to listen to other people’s ideas and suggestions when making a decision

92%
believe it is important to get a college degree

85%
feel their Venture has had a positive impact on their community

85%
are involved in improving their community because they want to, not because it is required

SUCCESS STORY

Through the United Way Youth Venture program, our students are gaining the resources and skills necessary to ensure their development as the next generation of civically engaged and business savvy community leaders. With the implementation of skill-based workshops, team support and weekly individual assistance from UWYV staff and a school “Champion,” the students involved in UWYV are given every opportunity to not just learn 21st Century job skills, but to use those skills to help make a difference.

Growing up in Leominster, Laura Jenny, a sophomore at Leominster High School & CTEi, knows the great things the city can offer, along with all of the challenges youth may encounter. As she continued to hear news of police clashing with minority youth with sometimes fatal consequences, she became concerned that her younger brother was getting to an age where a wrong decision on his part could put him in a similar situation. With this motivation, Laura and her teammate Isaac Annan, created the Venture Team Protecting Law Enforcement and Youth (PLAY) to do everything in their power to ensure that no Leominster youth would suffer a similar fate.

Initially, the members of PLAY were nervous about taking on the daunting task of decreasing societal divisions between at-risk communities and law enforcement. However, as they worked to prepare a plan that would help them succeed in this goal, Laura and Isaac learned the necessary skills to help them transform from students with a big idea into students with the business savvy to successfully implement their plan. With newfound confidence, they worked together to brainstorm innovative solutions, establish achievable goals, build a supporting budget, and present their compelling plan to community partners and leaders who work with at-risk youth, including officers of the law and the mayor of Leominster.

Bolstered by the support of critical community partners, including a national organization providing youth training through a “Juvenile Justice Jeopardy” game to improve police and youth interactions, Laura and Isaac have impacted communities as far as Worcester with their youth-led programming. They continue to strive to educate fellow youth on how to best interact with officers in a safe and respectful manner—with the ultimate goal of making Central Massachusetts a stronger and safer community overall.
PAYING IT FORWARD

Like many students, Chelsea Garrity was apprehensive about getting involved at MWCC during her first year. However, after mentors from the SOS Office gave a presentation about the SOS program in one of her classes, she instantly knew she wanted to join the program and signed up to become a mentor. Not long after, Chelsea became a model student leader on campus and in her community through programs including SOS, Phi Theta Kappa, and SLiCE. Through this work, Chelsea recognized the importance of the service she and her peers were doing, and simultaneously, the financial challenges that can keep students from engaging in these experiences.

Chelsea’s passion for these programs led her to conceptualize a scholarship for student leaders engaged in their community who, like herself, do not qualify for financial aid. She started raising money for the scholarship by selling dreamcatchers, collecting and recycling cans, and receiving a few small cash donations. She raised a total of $100, and is currently working with Carla Zottoli, Executive Director of the Mount Wachusett Community College Foundation, Inc., and other key members of campus leadership to grow the scholarship and make it sustainable for years to come so that students like her can continue to make a difference in the community.
Student Life involvement allows students to enhance their college experience. Most find that becoming involved with community service helps them see the world around them in a new light and gives them a sense of accomplishment knowing that they have helped others. The Center is key in helping our students become engaged and encouraging them to be active leaders.

-Kathy Matson, Coordinator of Student Life

Through internships and volunteerism, students have greatly increased their knowledge and understanding of our growing veteran student population. By working directly with the Office of Veteran Success and with veteran students themselves, student volunteers are gaining valuable insight into the responsibilities, challenges and rewards of community service.

-Robert Mayer, Director of Veteran Services

“[I had a] positive experience helping organize pantry goods, making grocery bags for families in need of nutrition assistance, and organizing donation clothing for reduced resale cost in thrift/pantry shop.”

“One of the gentlemen [at the Gardner Senior Center] had a grand old time messing up my calling cards and confusing me. It was a lot of fun.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed helping plant seeds, as well as learning about sustainable farming practices which have benefited my own gardening and landscaping ventures.”

“It felt great to be able to prepare food for families in need in our local community. It is good to know I can help make a difference.”
The Vision Project, a framework for public education in Massachusetts, aims to create the best-educated citizenry and workforce in the nation by 2020. Specifically, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education is working toward this goal through tracking, measuring, and assessing civic learning across the state. Center personnel including Fagan Forhan and Dan Soucy as well as Director of Institutional Research Tiffany Parker, are playing an integral part in how these assessments are being constructed and rolled out state-wide as well as on our own campuses. MWCC has started the process for course designation by collaborating with faculty and department chairs to determine courses with civic learning as an intended outcome.

MWCC students and SLiCE members Jana Murphy and Chelsea Garrity were nominated by President Asquino and selected as this year's Phi Theta Kappa All-Stars. All-Stars are high achieving students who demonstrate academic excellence, leadership, and service. Jana and Chelsea were honored at a ceremony at the Massachusetts State House and again by President Asquino at the MWCC Evening of Excellence.

MWCC is part of a partnership between two- and four-year institutions in Central Massachusetts, Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (AMCOA), which aims to improve learning through outcome assessment. Currently, AMCOA is assisting in developing ways of assessing civic learning in conjunction with the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement through the state-wide initiative implemented by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. Dan Soucy, Faculty Chair of Civic Engagement, sits on the AMCOA steering committee representing MWCC.
AMERICORPS*VISTA

This year the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement hosted an AmeriCorps*VISTA from Massachusetts Campus Compact. Cathy Teague, a MWCC alumna and current student enrolled in the new Liberal Arts in Civic Engagement (LACE) program, served as the *VISTA, building the capacity of local organizations to better manage MWCC service learners and volunteers. Cathy assisted in rolling out the first academic year of the new Student Leaders in Civic Engagement (SLiCE) program through managing partnerships with site placements. This year, Cathy gave 8,700 hours of service to the MWCC community.

MACC THINK TANK

In October, Mount Wachusett Community College hosted a Massachusetts Campus Compact (MACC) Think Tank, a professional development meeting open to all MACC member campuses, with 42 participants attending the session titled "Creating Diverse Coalitions to Change Faculty Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure to Support Community Engagement- Over the Long Haul."

Fagan Forhan, Assistant Dean of K-12 Partnerships and Civic Engagement, co-presented at the meeting with John Reiff, Director of Civic Learning and Engagement for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Barbara Canyes, Executive Director of Massachusetts Campus Compact, and Kat McLellan, Associate Director of the Learning Resource Center at UMass Amherst. The attendees discussed successful structures for supporting community engagement, envisioned new systems, and considered how to create cross-campus coalitions to continue to institutionalize community engagement in a time of increasing administrative turnover. The presentation was again offered to a national audience at this year’s International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement Conference by Forhan, Reiff, McLellan, and Canyes.
The Center is a critical resource for our students as they look to navigate the complexities in their lives while trying to make a tangible difference in the lives of others. Student Services partners with the Center to ensure that our most vulnerable students do not slip through the cracks. The Students SOS Office provides essential outreach services to our diverse community – their peer leaders are extraordinary and help our students persist and thrive at MWCC.

- Jason Zelesky, Dean of Students

As a faculty member who has a lot on their plate, it is a relief to know that the Center is not only working with us, but also working with the students to make sure that internship and service learning experiences are as seamless and painless as possible. The Center has been a very helpful tool in helping our students.

- Candace Shivers, Associate Professor of Sociology & Human Services

“A smile is all you need to give people to make their day a little better.”

“I really enjoyed my time at the Gardner Senior Center, being able to meet the residents and help bring a smile to their faces. I look forward to returning and participating in activities with the residents.”

“It has been a rewarding experience being able to volunteer within my community.”

“(The Gardner Senior Center) is a wonderful facility that I actually never knew existed in my own community. The staff was very welcoming and the clients were happy I was there.”
NATIONAL 9/11 CARDS

In remembrance of September 11, SLiCE, in partnership with the College’s Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success, assisted students, faculty, and staff in signing cards for first responders and members of the military to thank them for their service. Sixty-one cards with over 250 signatures were sent to a veteran center, fire, police, and EMT stations.

THE 2016 CIVIC LEARNING & DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Creating Pathways to Student Success Through International Service
Presented by: International Service Trip co-coordinator Shelley Errington Nicholson & student Jana Murphy
Participants engaged in discussion about the benefits of international service and lack of opportunity for these types of programs at community colleges, how to start an international service program on their campuses based on the experience at MWCC, and an exploration of the unique challenges associated with creating an international service opportunity for community college students.

Teaching Economic Inequality in the Humanities
Presented by: English Professor Michelle Valois
During this teaching demonstration about bringing Economic Inequality into a humanities classroom, Michelle discussed the photography of Dorothea Lange and the use of contemporary photographers work as study and research materials for students. The curriculum addresses photography as an art form, photography as a way to address social injustice, and the uses of social media to engage the public in a national conversation about economic inequality.

Students as Colleagues in Civic Learning and Engagement
Facilitated by Fagan Forhan & Shelley Errington Nicholson along with student Jana Murphy
This roundtable allowed participants to think about and discuss how to most meaningfully and effectively engage students as colleagues in civic learning and engagement work.

Economic Inequality and the American Dream: Understanding the Opportunity Gap through Oral Histories
Presented by: Associate Professor Dan Soucy
This was a mini-institute focused on instructional design and assessment techniques that were used to gauge civic engagement for an interdisciplinary capstone course. The course relied on oral histories to explore how social class was experienced by people in their day-to-day lives. Students acted as social historians, utilizing both scholarly texts and in person interviewing techniques. Students inquired into the truths, realities, and myths around the American Dream.

ADP/TDC Economic Inequality Initiative Workshop
Organized by: Kim Schmidl-Gagne, Program Manager; Keene State College & Fagan Forhan, Assistant Dean of K-12 Partnerships & Civic Engagement
This pre-conference session for ADP/TDC Economic Inequality Initiative participating institutions provided updates and reviews of projects that could potentially be shared with other campuses.

Citizenship Under Siege: Finding Common Ground Amidst Fractious Differences
Presented by: AAC&U staff & representatives from six community colleges nation-wide, including MWCC’s Fagan Forhan
“We the People”, is powerful language from our Preamble, but who belongs to the “We?” Who can become American citizens and fully exercise rights is entangled with issues of social justice, race, religious belief, property, wealth, national origins, gender, language, and ethnicity. Participants in this mini-institute learned how to design public forums and educational resources to continue campus/community dialogues as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities “Humanities in the Public Square” initiative, which sought to demonstrate and enhance the role and significance of the humanities and humanities scholarship in public life.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY COURSE

Mount Wachusett Community College is a lead campus of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Economic Inequality Initiative that calls for institutions to create hands-on learning opportunities for students to confront the causes of economic inequality. This past November, the Center’s Faculty Chair for Civic Engagement, Dan Soucy, went to Washington D.C. to work with other American Democracy Project/The Democracy Commitment Economic Inequality Faculty Fellows to create a new interdisciplinary model curriculum for first-year students. This innovative, experiential curriculum will encourage students to understand the root causes of economic inequality and its impact on democracy to prepare students around the nation for lives of informed civic engagement.
NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOW

The Newman Civic Fellowship honors inspiring college student leaders who have demonstrated an investment in finding solutions for challenges facing communities throughout the country. Through service, research, and advocacy, Newman Civic Fellows are making the most of their college experiences to better understand themselves, the root causes of social justice issues, and effective mechanisms for creating lasting change. These students represent the next generation civic leaders. They serve as national examples of the role that higher education can—and does—play in building a better world. For the fourth year in a row, a Mount Wachusett Community College student was honored.

Through an initial opportunity with United Way Youth Venture (UWYV), our middle and high school social entrepreneurship program, Rafaela Lopes created the social venture, “GO Make a Difference,” when she was only 15 years old. Nearly homeless as a youth in Brazil, Rafaela and her mother came to the United States only seven years ago. Not knowing the language, Rafaela quickly learned English, and helped her mother to assimilate as well. Grateful for newfound safety and security in the United States, Rafaela was inspired to pay forward the goodwill and support she received from others.

Rafaela is a highly motivated student who enrolled at MWCC last year when she was a high school junior as part of the rigorous dual enrollment Gateway to College program. The program is challenging, but allows dual enrollment students like Rafaela to earn credits that jumpstart progress toward a bachelor's degree. She also actively participates in MWCC's ALANA (Asian, Latino(a), African American, and Native American) Club, Upward Bound (academic and college preparatory support), and another UWYV team, Friends of Rachel's Challenge.

Over the past three years, through her Venture in addition to hosting regular birthday celebrations for homeless children in the community, she led a team of students in multiple Habitat for Humanity service days. The culmination of her dream—to make the impact of her Venture, “GO Make a Difference,” global—was realized this winter when she organized a student trip to Haiti for a week of service at a nutrition and health center in a rural Haitian village. She was instrumental in raising thousands of dollars and collecting 14 suitcases packed with essential supplies in preparation for the trip.

In addition to serving the community through her Venture, Rafaela has become a determined and passionate fundraiser and public speaker. Rafaela is a reliable and driven young woman who leads her peers by example. In preparation for the Haiti trip, Rafaela held five fundraising events, raising thousands of dollars in support of their goal to help the people of Haiti. On behalf of the college, she spoke at the international launch of Tyco Corporation's Tyco Cares initiative, with her remarks broadcast to employees globally and to a live audience of 500 that was brought to tears by her story. In addition to these many accomplishments, Rafaela is extremely family-oriented, works two part-time jobs averaging 38 hours each week, and still offers her friendship and support to family, friends, and the greater community without hesitation. Rafaela truly stands out as an inspirational leader deserving national-level recognition as a Newman Civic Fellow.

The contrast in my life as a young girl in Brazil, sleeping on the floor with a leaking roof, to feeling safe with my own bedroom and clothes to wear in America made me think, “what is the point of my life if I’m not taking action to improve the world around me?” This realization was the catalyst for starting a social venture, “GO Make a Difference,” which helps those in poverty or experiencing homelessness locally and globally. I look for ways wherever possible to help others, but often feel frustrated because so much help is needed in the world and I want to do more.

-Rafaela Lopes
CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION

Mount Wachusett Community College was selected to receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The prestigious designation continues MWCC’s Carnegie recognition for institutional excellence in civic engagement, initially granted in 2008. MWCC is one of only 20 community colleges nationally selected to receive this honor, which is only 2% of all community colleges.

CAMPUS COMPACT 30TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

The Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Conference, held in Boston in March, included a presentation by Fagan Forhan, Assistant Dean of K-12 Partnerships and Civic Engagement alongside Jennifer Domagal-Goldman, National Manager, American Democracy Project and Gabriel Arteaga, National Manager, The Democracy Commitment. The presentation, “Minding the Gaps Between Two-Year and Four-Year Institutions: Cultivating Civic Pathways Across Higher Education” focused on the ways in which civic pathways—intentional curricular and co-curricular offerings designed to help students navigate through colleges and universities as well as surrounding communities—can be intentionally built between community colleges and four-year institutions.
I utilize the Center every semester in multiple classes. Many students enjoy the opportunity to volunteer in the community while relating the experience to course concepts. The Center helps find service sites that are hands-on, safe and allow students the best possible fit. Center Director Shelley Errington Nicholson has helped me in ways beyond comprehension in finding placement sites that uniquely fit each student; finding the site experience that makes the course really exciting and meaningful to them.

Kudos to the Center—the college students especially would be at a loss without it!

- Julie Capozi, Associate Professor of Psychology & Sociology

The Department of Nursing collaborates every year with the Center. All students participate in a Community Health Fair, offered to area elementary schools. The activity is tied to two courses offered simultaneously during their first year. Students are given a pediatric public health concern to research and then present in an age appropriate way. The fairs are always well received, and students gain knowledge in both the area of health promotion and illness/injury prevention.

- Meghan Picone, Associate Professor of Nursing

“I like being a ‘community friend’ for Shelter from the Storm. I look forward to doing more. It is a good feeling to help others.”

“Great place to volunteer services, they truly appreciate your time.”

“I really enjoyed my time volunteering, getting to work with the residents and being able to help out with the staff. It was great being able to put a smile on the residents’ faces.”
A CULTURAL SERVICE IMMERSION EXPERIENCE IN COSTA RICA

As part of the Center’s experiential learning philosophy, a group of student volunteers traveled to Costa Rica for a week of service which they described as a life-changing experience.

MWCC students Cathy Teague, Jana Murphy, Chelsea Garrity, Shannen Pimental, Kelly Hillman, Karen Chapalonis, Esther Rivera and Justine Pottinger were joined on the trip by Associate Dean of Students Greg Clement and Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director of the college’s Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement.

The group’s first project was at an animal sanctuary where they rehabilitated cages for sick animals. They scrubbed walls and raked dirt while monkeys, birds and other creatures crawled on and around them. Their next project was with a local school, where they were welcomed with a cultural performance, dressed in traditional Costa Rican garb and taught a national dance. At this site, the volunteers sorted school supply donations, built garden beds and planted cilantro seeds.

The final service project began at sunrise, working with local farmers to plant yucca and learn about sustainable farming and agriculture.

The group also participated in various activities such as a biodynamic farm tour, a night hike in the rainforest, parasailing, zip lining and horseback riding. Every evening they gathered for dinner of fresh local cuisine to reflect on what they learned and experienced that day. Students were able to ask questions of the local guide to further contextualize their service.

The trip was funded in part by an Innovation grant from the MWCC Foundation and through the students’ hard work of raising over $10,000 in funds. The trip was co-coordinated by Nicholson and Clement, adding a new layer of strength to the bridge between the Center and Student Affairs—one which has been modeled nationally.
This international service trip was a life-changing experience. It opened our eyes to a completely different way of living and culture. From helping with the monkey cages to planting for the local schools and farmers, every service job we learned something to take home with us.

- Esther Rivera

I will not look at life the same. This trip was truly inspirational because I was able to experience many cultural differences, at the same time I was able to make a meaningful impact in their communities. During my time there I was able to find out more about myself than ever before. I felt like I found myself, and that’s an amazing feeling.

-Cathy Teague
HEALTH CARE & SERVICE IN HAITI

For the second year in a row, an MWCC alumna hosted a group of MWCC students over winter break at her nonprofit Forward in Health in Haiti. Paula Mulqueen, a 1994 graduate from MWCC’s nursing program, founded the organization with her husband, Dr. John Mulqueen, to bring medical care to the Les Cayes region of Haiti. It took the couple over a decade to open the Fronfred Klinik, a primary care clinic serving 18,000 poor adults and children in the Fronfred area.

The MWCC volunteers included nursing students Cassandra Pateneaude, Amy Moisan and Jessica Lugudde; Interdisciplinary Studies – Health majors Tiffany Cunningham and Isabella Smith; nursing professors Katherine Pecorelli and Donna Tully; and Marianne Stoy, administrative assistant for MWCC’s School of Health Professions, Public Service Programs & Social Sciences. While in Haiti, the group organized supplies in the Fronfred Klinik, toured the region’s nursing school, and taught CPR classes. In addition, the volunteers assessed nearly 100 patients, visited an orphanage, and provided lessons on dental hygiene for children.

“This day in Haiti is one that I will never forget. We handed out supplies with flyers about the clinic. Each home we visited received soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste for their family. It was a great day and we reached out to a lot of families.”

- Amy Moisan
15TH YEAR OF DEDICATION TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This year marked the 15th year of Mount Wachusett Community College’s Two Decades of Civic Engagement. Back in 2001, President Asquino declared a Decade of Civic Engagement to demonstrate the College’s significant commitment to improving and engaging in the local community. This initiative was so successful, he declared a subsequent decade in 2011. This unwavering commitment led to MWCC becoming the only community college in the nation with an endowment for community engagement efforts.
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**Total Number of Hours of Service to the Community:** 121,863

**Economic Impact:** $3,534,027