FY15 Annual & Strategic Vision Report
united way youth venture of North Central Massachusetts
Published August 2015
I am one, but still
I AM ONE.

I cannot do everything, but still,
I CAN DO SOMETHING

and because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do something that
I CAN DO.

Helen Keller
GROWING SUSTAINABLY FOR THE FUTURE:
FY16-18

Mobilize and Engage Youth
Initiate positive change around issues that impact the lives of youth, including those who are traditionally underserved and disengaged

Build Collaborative Community Relationships
Grow and deepen relationships with partnering schools, parents, and adult volunteers in order to embed rigorous UWYV curriculum into classroom instruction, expand program capacity to reach additional youth, and create a shared interest in investing in the potential of participating youth as future leaders

Empower Participating Youth
Build social competence, leadership skills in youth, and subsequently impact their community through purposeful training and recognition opportunities

Increase Program Sustainability
Achieve fiscal sustainability through a fundraising strategy that includes community and regional sponsors, targeted grant opportunities, and shared funding with partners, particularly for direct support in implementing curriculum
Welcome From United Way Youth Venture Staff

Youth are a vibrant, yet often underutilized, source of power for creating and leading positive community change—but that is not necessarily the case in North Central Massachusetts. Young people involved in United Way Youth Venture (UWYV) through one of 14 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 and confront problems, and find creative solutions. A consistent presence in the region over the past 13 years has changed the perception of how adults view youth in the communities served by UWYV. Youth are invited to the table to share perspective, help make decisions, and lead change. They are a driving and inspirational force of creative, problem-solving energy, who are empowered with the skills and encouragement needed to improve their communities.

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

Youth, ages 10-22, are supported in this opportunity through intensive skill-building workshops, hands-on learning, consistent mentorship, and seed funding to help them 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.

We have revised our annual report to not only celebrate the accomplishments of the past year, but also create opportunities for our stakeholders and supporters to understand our future direction. Demand for expansion of UWYV to new communities is ever present and requires additional resources from the communities directly benefitting from youth-led Ventures. Our intense focus on cultivating strong partnerships with schools in the region and consistently delivering quality programming that is complementary to Common Core curriculum standards, has prepared us for a strong future.

We are poised to help school districts in the North Central Massachusetts region bring classroom learning to life with critical development of 21st century college and job-ready skills. Your continued support enables UWYV to expand opportunities for groundbreaking, youth-led change in our region.

Thank you for your support,

United Way Youth Venture Staff
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Youth Engagement

- **41 Venture Teams launched** in FY15 with 68 previously launched **Teams sustained**
- **279 Venture Teams** launched since program inception in 2002
- 33 additional **Teams of students already working to launch a Venture in FY16**
- **8,960 young people exposed to the UWYV opportunity**
- **4,272 actively engaged** through **125 skill-building workshops** or working with a Venture Team
- **728 students** leading Venture Team efforts with **393 newly engaged** this year
- **14 partnering middle and high schools, and MWCC**
- **5 school partners** collaborating on a deeper level through **UWYV curriculum integration**
- More than **250 adults engaged** as Venture Team Allies (mentors), volunteers, and panelists

**Financial**

- **UWYV experience delivered to young people at a cost of $2,406.98 per team** and $62.86 per student directly engaged in UWYV, a **46% reduction over FY14**
- Venturers **raised more than $10,817** in matching funding to support their Venture missions, an **increase of 37%** from FY14
- **$20,435** in seed funding **awarded** in FY15 to launch Venture efforts
- Revolving fund accounts were established at all partner sites in FY14. In FY15, **$5,285** in seed funding was **paid from the revolving fund** to 15 Venture teams
- In FY15 **$1,122.54 Pay It Forward dollars** from Venture teams fundraising efforts was reported by 8 partner sites

**Student Performance**

- Venturers **MCAS scores** were reported to be **higher than the schools average** for both High Schools **10.03 points** and Middle Schools **8.64 points**
- Students who actively participated in UWYV had a **9.4% lower rate of suspensions**
- **84%** of Ventures report that they get **A’s & B’s**
- **95%** of Venturers report they **plan to attend a institute of higher education**

Actively Engaged Venturers who responded to the Spring Survey reported:

- **89%** of the Venturers feel that people their age can **influence decisions and policies** within their community
- **76%** of Venturers believe they can **lead change in their community**
- **83%** of students believe that UWYV has helped them learn **how to problem solve**
- **85%** of students feel their Venture has had a **positive impact on their community**
- **87%** of students plan to continue doing things that will **improve their community** in the future

“UWYV gives the power to those who wouldn’t necessarily have a say in what’s happening and gives them the chance to make an impact.”

– Helen Muma-Student, Sky View Middle School, Leominster
What We Do...

Curriculum Integration

• The UWYV program aligns with over 55% of English Language Arts Common Core Standards

• Six of our 14 partner sites have begun to implement the UWYV program during the school day through workshop periods and in-class programming due to the program’s ties to the Common Core

• The UWYV program can be aligned to portions of the Common Core Standards for grades ranging from 5-12

• UWYV has already piloted in-classroom programming at 3 partner sites to assist faculty in delivering workshops in conjunction with classroom units

• Teachers who support the UWYV program are able to complete their year-end teacher evaluations through evidence based documentation

Community Impact

• Venture Team LEAD wrote a 900 page mental health curriculum to be integrated into LHS & CTEi health classes next year

• More than 100 volunteers from the North Middlesex Regional School District took part in a very successful 2nd Annual Day of Service hosted by MLK Day of Service Team

• Operation Murdock Cares, since 2007 has supported veterans by putting together care packages. This year 59 care packages were sent to veterans and their families both locally and overseas

• GO Make a Difference hosted 4 birthday celebrations for homeless children in Leominster from 109 displaced families

• The Green Team at The Sizer School won a state wide award from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for their recycling and environmentally sustainable efforts at their school

• Blue Crew 2 of Ayer Shirley Middle School held an Autism Awareness Day at their school with over 100 of their peers participating

• Beat Out Bullying presented an anti-bullying awareness workshop to the entire Samoset student body of 485 students

Myalia, a soft spoken and shy student, was not one most would expect to lead her own Venture, let alone make a huge impact on her own community. However, when Myalia’s mom started to lose her hair over the winter because of a chronic medical condition, Myalia was so concerned for her mom and others burdened with the same condition she decided to do something to help.

This year, when introduced to Youth Venture in her school, Myalia and two of her friends formed “The Rapunzel Project” to raise funds for the non-profit organization “Children with Hair Loss” (CWHL). CWHL’s mission and goals are to never charge a family for replacement human hair at a time when they need the most help.

In 6 short weeks, Myalia was able to not only launch her Venture, but also host the team’s “cut-a-thon” fundraiser. With the help of her family, friends and leaders of her community; the word quickly got out about the event which led to a very successful outcome of donations exceeding more than $2000, but more importantly, the project raised awareness on the topic of hair loss of children and adults and the stigma that can follow.

Myalia’s dedication, hard work and motivation make her a shining example of the positive transformation one can undergo when they let their passion guide them to help others in need.

“I would recommend UWYV to students who want a chance to make a positive difference in their community. It is a wonderful and fulfilling experience to know you are helping make a change in the world, even a small one.

-Emma Kane-
Student, Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School
Environment – Environmentally-conscious Venturers target their efforts to sustainable farming, hydroponics, composting, school-wide recycling initiatives, and community-wide energy-efficient lightbulb replacement.

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.

Community Involvement – These Ventures tackle issues specific to a given community, such as supporting area veterans, partnering with local police to educate youth, raising awareness about LGBTQ equality, and visiting elderly Alzheimer’s patients.

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

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

In 2003 students at Samoset Middle School created the Venture Classroom Learning Activities for Samoset Students or CLASS for short, as a means to provide greater access to extracurricular learning activities for the student body. This Venture continues 12 years later, but has transformed, as all sustainable Ventures must, to support a whole new set of Samoset students. Today, the CLASS Venture is run completely by Samoset students who face mental and physical disabilities to prove that they too can give back to the community.

The CLASS Venture, while embodying its original mission to provide greater access to learning activities for these students, now additionally supports multiple facets of the Leominster community through their various efforts. This year alone, the Venturers of CLASS created a school wide Wall of Honor for all those who have served in the military, hosted the annual “Take a Veteran to Lunch” day, and collected holiday cards from their fellow Samoset students to send to both the troops serving overseas as well as for the local residents in assisted living homes. Each and every year, these students continue to prove that their limit for doing good is in no way limited by their own disabilities.
Where We Are...

Combined Map of Service for United Way of NCM, MWCC and UWYVV

Key
- Combined MWCC & United Way of NCM
- MWCC Service Area

★ United Way Youth Venture Partner Sites ★

- Ayer Shirley Regional High School, Ayer - 5 VTL
- Ayer Shirley Regional Middle School, Ayer - 74 VTL
- Fitchburg High School, Fitchburg - 18 VTL
- Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, Devens - 26 VTL
- Leominster High School & CTEi, Leominster- 28 VTL
- Leominster Center for Excellence, Leominster- N/A
- Montachusett Regional Technical Vocational High School, Fitchburg - 5 VTL
- Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner - 5 VTL
- Murdock High School, Winchendon - 8 VTL
- Murdock Middle School, Winchendon - 5 VTL
- North Middlesex Regional High School, Townsend - 11 VTL
- Samoset Middle School, Leominster- 16 VTL
- Sky View Middle School, Leominster- 43VTL
- Sizer, a North Central Charter Essential School, Fitchburg - 5 VTL

* VTL-Venture Teams Launched to Date
Our Students Leading Community Change...

UWYV addresses an unmet need in the community by modeling youth-led social entrepreneurship, while empowering young people to tackle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges Facing Our Community</th>
<th>What Our Youth-Led Venture Teams Are Doing to Help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leominster has experienced an unprecedented surge in the homeless population resulting in 328 new students being introduced into the school district in one academic year.</td>
<td>GO Make a Difference brings hope and happiness to 109 young homeless children, hosting group birthday parties at least four times a year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Across our partnering schools, 38.6% of North Central Massachusetts students receive free or reduced lunch.</td>
<td>Teens Helping Teens provided 150 welcome kits with school supplies and LHS pride gear to new students in need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster care rates are steadily increasing in North Central Massachusetts.</td>
<td>Karing 4 Kids feeds over 100 less fortunate elementary school kids, in Fitchburg, providing non-perishable, nutritional meals over the weekend during the school year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are an estimated 475 elders in assisted living in North Central Massachusetts.</td>
<td>Lift Up Foster Hearts supplies care kits for foster children in the region to feel supported by their peers.</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
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Kylee's Kare Kits for Kidz has been providing take-home meals for over 2 years to more than 250 students each weekend.  

Children's Education Fund of Leominster High School, supports foster youth to go on to higher education through educational support and scholarships.  

Stuffed Pals works to bring joy to seniors at assisted living centers around North Central Massachusetts by donating stuffed animals to seniors in need.  

Holiday Spreaders ensure that no senior citizen is forgotten on holidays as they host monthly holiday celebrations at Leominster Crossings.
In North Central Massachusetts...

Significant community issues head-on. To learn more and follow our teams visit our website at http://mwcc.edu/uwyv/

### Challenges Facing Our Community

- Increase of suicide/self-harm rates for middle and high school age group in region.
- Our veteran population faces rising economic and health related issues as they return from active duty.
- Our society is faced with many environmental challenges including lack of waste management, pollution, and rising demand and cost for energy.

### What Our Youth-Led Venture Teams Are Doing to Help

- **Teens Being Strong** raised over $150 in funds over a short period of time to raise awareness of and support for other students experiencing mental stresses of teenage life.
- **BOB (Beat Out Bullying)** have made it their mission to eradicate bullying and its affects within Samoset Middle School.
- **First Day Warriors** want to make sure that service members returning home know that they have support from their community.
- **Project Identify the Veterans** wants to raise awareness and support within the Leominster community regarding the issues faced by local veterans.
- **Green Team at Sizer** is working toward making their school more environmentally friendly through the use of waste audits, composting bins and better recycling initiatives.
- **Bright Lights Project** is working toward having North Central Massachusetts become more environmentally friendly through the installation of LED lights in every home and business.
When: Our Three Year Plan for Youth-Led Changemaking

Year 1: 2015-2016
Strengthening Community Ties

- Expand program delivery within 14 current schools with emphasis on the Fitchburg School District; Serve over 2,500 students.
- Increase demonstrated capacity for community change through deeper engagement with 109 active Venture Teams and UWYV alumni.
- Offer new engagement models at partnering schools including college dual enrollment and collaborative curriculum integration.
- Increase operational capacity by leveraging non-controlling adult volunteers and experienced Venturers in leadership positions.
- Develop new funding sources including sponsorships, fundraising, multi-year grants, and other revenue streams; ($20K needed to enter one new district) and determine plan for building financial reserves.
- Create online accessible workshops to simplify program implementation for partner schools.

Year 2: 2016-2017
Expanding Our Footprint

- Expand program delivery within current schools with emphasis on partnership development in Gardner and Ashburnham-Westminster school districts.
- Hire experienced curriculum designer to develop Action Plan workbook materials aligned with Common Core Standards, and to accompany learning units across multiple subject areas.
- Deliver refined curriculum both on-demand and paired with in-school classroom instruction, aligned to Common Core Standards, with direct support from licensed Massachusetts teachers.
- Integrate more cohesively with school partners by establishing program staff offices in schools where available.
- Increase number of outreach program staff to match growth needs at new sites and in support of increased participants within current partner sites.
- Introduce fee-for-service revenue streams and establish reserve funds.

Year 3: 2017-2018
Establishing a Legacy

- Expand program delivery within current schools and with emphasis on partnership development in Athol, Lunenburg, and Orange school districts, as well as partners at the college level.
- Hire “umbrella” Champions within districts consisting of multiple school partners to streamline communication and maximize program impact.
- Partner with the Massachusetts Department of Education for access to state-level support and further opportunity for program expansion.
- Establish long-term program sustainability, exploring merits of independent nonprofit status for UWYV program and other potential key partners.

“UWYV gives kids a chance to make their future the way it should be.”
– Josalyn Wright
Student, Sky View Middle School, Leominster
Year 1: Anticipated Outcomes

2015–2016

Embracing Our Community

• Mobilize and engage youth exposing at least 8,000 students to UWYV programming
• Successful launch of a minimum of 29 new Venture Teams (and up to 50), with 75% of existing UWYV Teams sustained
• 2,500 students actively engaged with at least 600 Venture Team members from up to 14 partners

Cultivating the Next Generation

• Fall Kick-Off workshops provided to at least 370 youth, 30 adults, and 11 partners with 75% of youth reporting increased confidence in ability to engage in social change
• Up to $10K in scholarship award funding provided to graduating seniors or UWYV alumni
• Workshop for graduating seniors delivered at each high school partner site
• “Junior Champion” program expanded to include at least two training meetings

Deepening Community Engagement

• Offer at least two Champion and two Ally trainings
• Minimum of 60 hours of intensive technical assistance provided to youth per program partner
• More than 125 adults engaged as volunteers
• UWYV programming aligned with 50% of English Language Arts Common Core Standards
• Attended at least two events or initiatives for each UWYV partnering district
• Launch of at least two Teams from the MWCC student population through in class programming

Enhancing Fiscal Sustainability

• At least two Venture Teams launched without the need for seed funding
• Secure event sponsorships for Fall Kick-Off of at least $5K
• Launch pilot online fundraising campaign, yielding at least $2K
• Proposal submitted to each partnering school to pay Champion stipends and at least partial seed funding in FY17
After learning that he can help make a difference through United Way Youth Venture, Felipe Rodriguez of Murdock Middle School decided to use one of his greatest joys of childhood, video games, to help children facing the fear of being in a hospital for long periods of time. Having faced times where he had to be stuck in the hospital, away from friends and the joys of being able to be a kid, Felipe knew all too well how much of an impact his Venture could have on their lives.

However, when Felipe and his team were almost ready to start their Venture, they faced unavoidable roadblocks to the Venture’s success when his teammates found out they were leaving the school. With the loss of his team, Felipe almost gave up on his hope to start this Venture.

Thankfully, the passion that he has shown for this project passed onto his younger brother, Julio, and together they were able to restart the necessary planning and work to ensure that their Venture would become a success. Their work together has shown that the bonds of brotherhood go beyond the home and can be an integral part to the success and sustainability of student-run Venture projects. Today, they are making great strides to raise funds to buy used video game systems and games to donate to the pediatric ward of Heywood Hospital, helping the kids there remember what it means to be a kid.

The UWYV program has the potential to reach thousands more students in North Central Massachusetts as it expands into new schools and additional school districts. One area of focus for the coming year is resource development to allow continued growth and sustainability. Keeping the integrity of the existing program is of key importance during this expansion so we want to ensure that expansion is done in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. Below you will find several options for ways in which you can help us continue to grow this transformative program to reach more area youth!

### Alternative Funding Models
- Fundraising campaigns (online, community donors, etc.)
- External grants outside current partnerships
- Sponsorships (event, overall program, Team or community-level)
- Direct partner funding support (fee-for-service)

### Revenue Streams
- United Way Youth Venture Store
- Fee-for-service (training, facilitation of corporate/organizational retreats, etc.)

### Financial Sustainability
- Increase efficiencies
- Volunteer management model
- Multi-year grants
UWYV is independently funded and relies on the support of organizations and community members like you. Your support is critical to enabling continued efforts to cultivate social innovation and youth leadership development in North Central Massachusetts.

Here’s how you can help:

**YOUR DONATIONS**
- Fuel new team launches with up to $1,000 in seed funding for sustainable Venture plans.
- Support UWYV program expansion into underserved NCM communities and schools.
- Bring social entrepreneurship and experiential learning to the classroom through curriculum integration.

**YOUR TIME**
- Volunteer to serve as a panelist.
- Mentor a Venture Team as an Ally or Technical Ally, a non-controlling adult advisor.
- Help with a Venture-sponsored community event or project.

To learn more, contact us at
MOUNT WACHUSETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE
444 Green Street · Gardner, MA 01440
Phone: (978) 630-9201
Email: uwyv@mwcc.mass.edu; http://mwcc.edu/uwyv/

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OUR PROGRAM STAFF

Lauren Mountain  
UWYV Associate Director

Evan Berry  
UWYV Communications & Outreach Liaison

Renee Tambling  
UWYV Program Assistant

UWYV Outreach Specialists  
Haylie Kelley, Elizabeth Reiser, Michelle Waalkes

Fagan Forhan  
Director of Experiential Learning Opportunities & Civic Engagement

Shelley Errington Nicholson  
Director of Community Learning

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Mount Wachusett Community College
Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement

United Way of North-Central Massachusetts