

Legacy *Matters*



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Smart Investment: Youth Leadership Development



Valley United Way Youth Leadership past and present participants (L-R): Louis Nicoletti, Ansonia; Charlie Sampson, Derby; Deyja Gentile, Oxford; and Hudson Boles, Shelton.

The population of youth in the Valley region is shrinking. According to VCF's recently released report, *The Valley Now: A 2015 Snapshot*,

the number of youth and families with young children have both decreased since 2000, while the senior population has increased by fifteen percent.

Organizations across the region have recognized the need to ensure that the youth of our region will be well-equipped to take on the roles of business and government leadership, civic engagement and education reform as older residents step down from such positions.

Valley United Way (VUW) instituted its Youth Leadership Program 25 years ago for exactly that reason.

"We provide the skill-building opportunities, such as grant allocation and volunteering," says Pat Tarasovic, Director of VUW's Volunteer Center. "The students bring the desire to learn more about their community and to help improve it."

High school students from across the Valley participate in leadership activities, culminating each year in a rigorous grants process. Students learn quickly that there is always more need than there is funding to go around.

"The allocations process stresses to keep an open mind and to listen to other people's perspectives. It's one of the most important things about being a leader," explains Hudson Boles, a Youth Leadership alum entering his sophomore year at University of Pennsylvania. "Coming into the allocations process, I wanted my nonprofit to get all the money. But as I listened to what everyone else had to say, I thought about what could work best for the group and how best to meet everyone's desires."

Junior Achievement (JA) of Western CT brings leadership training and real-world experience into the academic setting for K-12 students, with the help of volunteer mentors from the local community.

"The ultimate goal of JA's youth programs is to ensure that graduating students have the financial literacy, 21st century college/career readiness and entrepreneurial skills to achieve their personal, academic and career goals," explains JA of Western CT President Bernadine Venditto. "The programs build confidence and leadership skills, behaviors and attitudes necessary to succeed in a fast-changing world."

"I try to go over things they might not otherwise learn in a classroom, or even from their parents," says Ansonia attorney and VCF Board member Timothy Dillon, who has been volunteering for JA of Western CT for over 25 years. "It's very rewarding to be a mentor, and I find the students enjoy interacting with each other and with me."

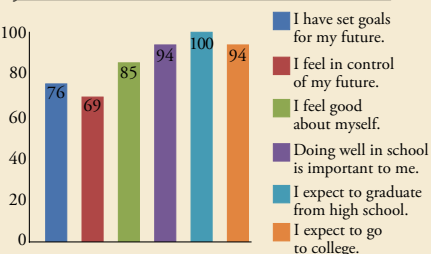
"Whichever path they choose, students learn what is involved in running a company," says JA mentor Ken Roberts, Director of Communication and Public Affairs at Griffin Hospital, speaking about the high school-level programs provided by JA. "The most valuable experience students gain is leadership skills to succeed in business."

Other organizations in the Valley, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley; and the Youth Service Bureaus in Ansonia, Derby and Shelton focus on personal growth and being a good role model for others in the community.

The result of these youth leadership development programs is a well-rounded and motivated group of adults ready to lead our community. And the future is bright.

"I plan on staying in the Valley for the rest of my life," says another VUW Youth Leader alum Christopher Pawlowski, currently in UCONN's Engineering Program. "The Valley has been great to me and I plan to give back to it for as long as I can."

Junior Achievement of Western CT Evaluation Results



Recent survey results from Valley students who participated in JA programs found that all students plan to graduate high school, 94% plan to attend college and the majority feel confident about their future. (data provided by JA of Western CT)

How You Can Help:

For more information on youth programs in the Valley seeking volunteers and mentors, visit:

Junior Achievement of Western CT
www.jawct.org

Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley
www.bgc-lnv.org

Boy Scouts of America, Housatonic Council
www.housatonicbsa.org

Girl Scouts of CT
www.gsofct.org

Valley YMCA
www.cccymca.org

Valley United Way
www.valleyunitedway.org



Donor Spotlight:

Boy Scouts Housatonic Council & Troop 3 Derby



"We are teaching youth to make good decisions and be good citizens in their community, whether in the Valley or wherever they may be," says Derby Troop 3 Scoutmaster Randy Ritter. At left, participants in the "Adventure to Eagle" program at Camp Strang.

Not every organization in the Valley can say they have played an integral part in the history of our nation.

But when Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Troop 3 in Derby, under the direction of Rev. Alfred Budd of the Derby 2nd Congregational Church, was only a few years old, a scout named Edmund Strang was tasked with organizing activities for the boys who were too young to be scouts, but who would congregate during meetings anyway. Cub Pack 3 was formed before Cub Scouts were officially recognized by the BSA.

"The National Boys Scouts were in the process of creating a program for younger boys and came up to study the structure of Ed Strang's programs," Scoutmaster Randy Ritter explains. "So, you can say, Troop 3 had a hand in creating the Cub Scout program across the U.S."

Troop 3 and its parent council, BSA's Housatonic Council, have many achievements to date, but members are always looking forward - not back - as they continue to groom young men in the Lower Nagatuck Valley to be civic-minded leaders tomorrow.

"The mission of the Housatonic Council is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law," says District Director

Roger Stewart, who points to the rate of advancement of scouts within the Council as proof that they are doing things correctly.

And while diversity has been an important topic lately for the National BSA, the Housatonic Council has always kept it top of mind.

"Each year, we are actively recruiting new members," Stewart says, noting that the Housatonic Council has roughly 800 to 1,000 scouts from across the Valley on an annual basis. "We are promoting the Scouting program in every elementary and middle school - public, private and religious. Our new recruits will definitely have the demographics of the area."

"Our decision to join VCF was, and still remains, a part of our mission to deliver the best programs to the youth of our Valley community."

*- Roger Stewart,
District Director, Housatonic Council,
Boy Scouts of America*

Ritter adds that there is a common bond between Troop 3, the Housatonic Council and VCF - to improve the quality of life in the Valley region. "We want these youth to understand that they

are a part of bigger world, and a global community. We're teaching youth to give back."

This alignment of values only strengthened the decision to establish funds at VCF, for the benefit of the Council and Troop 3.

"We had been in a more 'distant' fund but decided to join the new and growing Foundation in the 'Valley' spirit," says Stewart. "We have been pleased with that move ever since!"

VCF Sponsored Events

September

Lower Naugatuck Valley Parent Child Resource Center

The 2nd Annual "Food Trucks in the Valley" will be held Saturday, September 17th at the Shelton River Walk, to benefit PCRC's behavioral health programs.

Griffin Hospital

"Oh, What a Night!", a show of song and dance, on Saturday, September 26th at the Shubert Theatre. For tickets, visit www.griffinhealth.org.

October

Seymour Pink

The 4th Annual "Pounding the Pavement for Pink" is on Saturday, October 3rd at the Seymour Community Center.

TEAM, Inc.

TEAM's 50th Anniversary Gala Celebration will be held on Saturday, October 3rd at Race Brook Country Club in Orange. For tickets, visit www.teaminc.org.

November

Junior Achievement of Western CT

The 30th Annual "Bowl for Kids" Bowl-A-Thon will be held Saturday, November 7th at the Nutmeg Bowl in Fairfield and Saturday, November 14th at Lore's Lanes in Danbury.

Giving Back

Many of the grants at VCF are possible because people made bequests through their will.

Your planned gift will help us support the causes you care about.

Forever.

Contact us to learn more!



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Good News About the Valley



VCF awarded sponsorship grants to American Legion's John Collins Post 24 in Derby, Emil Senger Post 10 in Seymour and David S. Miles Post 174 in Oxford, supporting each post in the cost to send high school juniors to the Boys State Leadership Program and the Laurel Girls State Program, held in June and July.

Youth participate in a practical government course, including a mock election, for the purpose of developing a better understanding of the democratic process and civic leadership. Each student is assigned a fictional town and a political party for the process.

Government leaders from across Connecticut, including mayors and selectmen, as well as state and federal representatives, such as U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, participate in the leadership programs over the course of a week and help guide the students' election process.

Students return from the State Leadership Programs with a deeper sense of how local, state and federal governments function.



With the help of a VCF Community Grant, Youth 2 Youth Peer Advocates from Shelton attended the National Youth 2 Youth Drug Free Conference July 30th through August 2nd at Bryant University in Rhode Island.

The annual conference focuses drug education and information, personal growth, decision-making, environmental change and drug-free fun. Peer Advocates acquire new skills, network and gather new ideas for future projects to bring back to their community.

Organized by the Shelton Youth Service Bureau, Peer Advocates give back to their community by putting in countless hours of community service. They mentor youth ages 6-8 for an hour a week at the Boys and Girls Club of Lower Naugatuck Valley. Members of Youth 2 Youth also write and teach monthly lesson plans for the 7th and 8th grade students at Shelton Intermediate School, which focus on areas of alcohol awareness, drugs, and bullying.