



2017

ANNUAL REPORT





## STAFF

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*Assistant Director*

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*Transitional Support*

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*Program Coordinator*

Samantha Melendez  
*Program Coordinator*

Gina Antuna  
*Transitional Support*

Thu Nguyen  
*Program Coordinator*

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“What if...” is the theme for this year’s YouthReach Arts program as youth imagine the concrete expression of social justice in our world.

Top: Gabrielle Guzman

Bottom: Aesha Nadeem

## COVER

Emily Alvarado



# A HEALTHY OUTLOOK

Dear Friends,

Preparing Worcester's youth for a bright future doesn't just mean academic guidance or work readiness at the Worcester Youth Center. We remain committed to promoting the health and wellness of our members every day. For us, this is fundamental. Hunger interferes with adolescent growth and schoolwork. No one can learn and thrive without a healthy diet and physical exercise.

Visit us any weekday afternoon, and you'll see youths enjoying – and sometimes preparing – healthy snack options and a healthy meal. You'll also see basketball games underway, the dance studio in use and other open spaces filled with youth in motion. Also on-site, our behavioral health counselor stands ready to engage members on personal matters.

Outside the Center, groups take field trips to cultural events, which offer another way to support overall wellness. Our schedule of leadership development activities connect youth with community issues, encourage artistic expression and healthy social interaction.

We are undertaking a new campaign to underwrite renovations to the Center that will strengthen our health and wellness initiatives, which you'll hear more about in the coming months. I invite you to stop by and see why I have a healthy outlook on the future of the Worcester Youth Center. Thank you for your steadfast support.

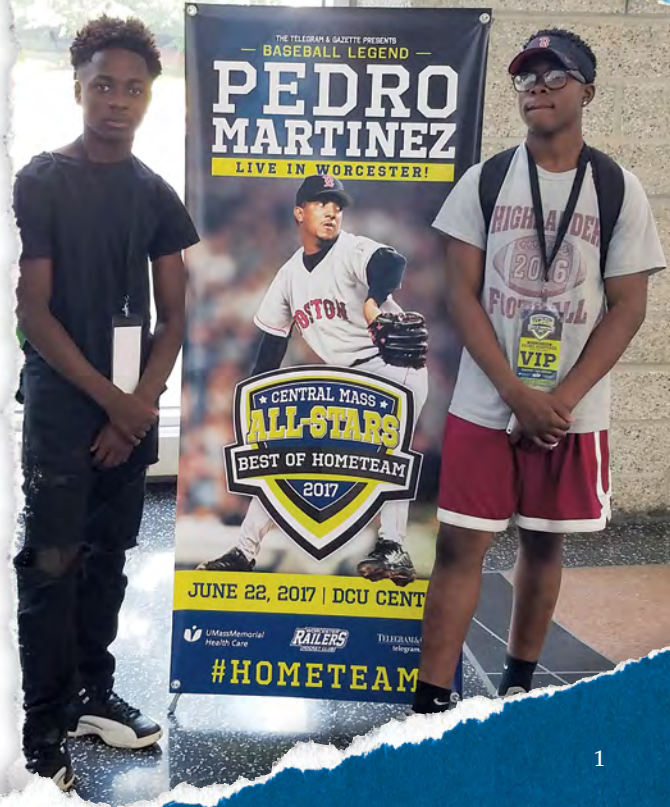
Sincerely,

Samuel Martin  
*Executive Director*

Laurie Ross  
*President*

Top:  
Jessenia Kolaco

Bottom:  
Youth Center members Benjamin Weah and Hector Johnson wait to meet baseball legend Pedro Martinez.





# 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

## AG HEALEY SHOOTS HOOPS, ADDS SUMMER JOBS

Attorney General Maura Healey kicked off the third year of the Healthy Summer Youth Jobs Grant Program with a July visit. After shooting some hoops with members, she explained that \$300,000 in grants were funded statewide with settlement money. The Youth Center's portion meant three more jobs in its summer employment program. The money was particularly welcome as the Center faced uncertain job funding sources and an increased minimum wage.

Jobs included working for the ReStore (a Habitat for Humanity retail outlet) and the City of Worcester/Fanning Building summer recreation program, as well as Youth Center outreach work.

## A VERY GREEN SUMMER

Several youths worked on a new rain garden project at the Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center & Wildlife Sanctuary, part of a long-standing collaboration with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Assisting a recent high school graduate, they helped create a garden designed to collect rain runoff for plants, replacing one destroyed by a 2016 sewer line break.

The Worcester Tree Initiative (WTI) also offered an introduction to environmental careers. Worcester has lost tens of thousands of trees to the infestation of the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB). In a joint project with the city, Worcester youth planted and watered ALB-resistant trees with WTI supervision.

## CENTER HOSTS CITY CANDIDATE FORUM

Six of Worcester's seven at-large candidates for City Council spoke at an NAACP forum hosted at the Youth Center in October. Held in the final weeks of the election season, the event prompted discussions about civics education, diversity in city government, affordable housing, and balancing development investment downtown and in city neighborhoods.

Photos by Sheron Hozier

# POTENT ART & DIALOGUE

*What would the ideal city look like?*

*A place where social justice is the norm?*

YouthReach Arts program participants wrestled with these questions and more. Spending four hours a week together since October, either at the Youth Center or the Worcester Art Museum, group members, ages 14 to 17, crossed cultural boundaries to learn from one another through a potent mix of art and dialogue.

They welcomed artists from the city's PowWow! mural project, created self-portraits of their superhero selves, and shared their thoughts and opinions on economic justice, immigration rights, LGBTQ issues and Black Lives Matter, and many other topics..

"They came into the program with a deep love for the world," said Program Coordinator Thu Nguyen. "I've been amazed at their maturity and understanding."

Projects included producing "zines" – personal magazines filled with meaningful art and words. Together, the group built a model city of cardboard and clay, painting it in primary colors. They experimented with spray paint and visited Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art. In discussions with local activist Coqui Negrón, they used layers of color as healing justice for past traumas.

"I've seen them grow more with each other," Thu said. "They are now artists, creators, actors in the world."

Top to bottom:  
YouthReach Arts  
group collaboration  
Jan Martinez  
Eliandy Bueno  
YouthReach Arts  
group collaboration



# WIDENING THE CIRCLE



There's a lot of talking every Tuesday. That's the day close to three dozen seventh- and eighth-grade girls gather at Worcester State University for the Teen Circle program. They talk about building healthy relationships, self-esteem and sex education. They talk about talking – how to communicate, avoid making assumptions, recognize cultural differences.

The girls come from Sullivan Middle School, Claremont Academy and Worcester East Middle School. On Wednesdays, they meet separately at the Worcester Youth Center, Worcester State and Plumley Village.

Teen Circle puts all that talk into practice, as participants build healthy relationships with girls who live outside their neighborhood or go to a different school.

And what they're learning should have long-term effects, as measures of their increased knowledge demonstrate. How to protect against sexually transmitted diseases (up 100%). Where to access birth control information (up 85%). And which behaviors create pregnancy risks (up 41%).

"They came in with their walls up," said Program Coordinator Carmen Rosado. Facilitator Isabel Muniz agreed. "Every time they're together is an opportunity to get a little closer."

## What's your favorite part of this program?

"Talking to girls, getting to know them." – Shelley Duodu

"I met people I thought I wouldn't be friends with." – Grace Nyamekye

"Even if you're having a bad day, they can make it go away." – Tamia Oliver

## Why should a girl join Teen Circle?

"Especially if you're shy, it will help you with life and social skills."  
– Tamia Oliver

"You'll be grateful they have a program like this." – Makeyla Webber

## What will you remember from this year?

"Even if people are different, you can still make friends with them."  
– Maureen Bittner

"Without Teen Circle, I wouldn't be at the mindset I'm in. I have a more mature state of mind. I used to fight with anyone, but now I'm getting A's."  
– Makeyla Webber

# COALITIONS DELIVER CHANGE

Numbers speak volumes, whether youth at a jobs rally or data demonstrating declining crime rates. The Worcester Youth Center and partner organizations understand that coalitions and collaborative relationships create the critical mass needed for systemic change.

About 10 years ago, Worcester's youth unemployment levels were off the charts. Worcester Interfaith found Boston netted half of all state youth job funding, shortchanging Worcester and other gateway cities. After a Statehouse meeting, Worcester's share doubled, recalled Frank Kartheiser, Worcester Interfaith's lead organizer, demonstrating the power of advocacy. The next year, a busload of Worcester youth arrived on Beacon Hill, part of the new **Central Massachusetts Youth Jobs Coalition**.

In 2017 it was three busloads, and state funding translated into 275 summer jobs, still well short of the 2,000 needed for all eligible youth, Frank said. Legislators now make the return trip to Worcester, starting and finishing their Summer Legislative Day tour of area youth-serving agencies at the Worcester Youth Center. To grow more job opportunities, the CMYJC is testing new private sector models.

Legislators responded to the coalition model, Frank said. "All the players came to the table ready to do the work to move the jobs program forward."

Coalitions are powerful. Responding to a spike in early evening violence among middle school-age students, YouthNet began in 1991 as a coalition of agencies focused on youth development services to reduce violence.

In 2016, seven executive partner agencies banded together as the consortium **YouthConnect Worcester** and applied for more funding to establish a new infrastructure so youth members of one program would be members of all. More than 30 supporting partners now provide services utilizing a new data tracking system to measure outcomes from the services received across agencies. Transportation is a critical component.

"It's a different model," said Judi Kirk, YouthConnect Coordinator and Director of Community Impact for Boys & Girls Club of Worcester. "The bottom line is to change the

system to better serve youth and their families." Youth Center programs support YouthConnect initiatives addressing safety and violence prevention, economic opportunity, mental health, and access to healthy food.

Organizations far beyond Worcester tell Judi that "we have something special here in Worcester." Judy added, "We're pretty proud of what we're doing."

The Youth Center also is an integral partner with the **Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative**. Established in 2015, the initiative tapped state funding to analyze contributing factors for youth gang violence to identify effective prevention approaches.

The city had seen many "programmatic efforts" over the years, said Laurie Ross, Youth Center board chair and Clark University community development and planning professor, but its youth-serving agencies understand they "can't really address youth violence alone."

Ross serves as research partner for the Initiative. Youth Center representatives participate in working groups on employment and outreach and engagement, coordinating their program offerings with their partner organizations to reduce barriers to needed community resources.

"All of this is working," she said, as the 2017 data tracked by Ross' team showed declines in youth and young adult arrests and gun and knife incidents, fewer out-of-school suspensions and school arrests.



# YOUR

# INVESTMENT IN OUR WORK

## Worcester Youth Center 2017 Financial Report

Support for the Worcester Youth Center is an investment in our collective future. For more than 20 years, the Center's work has created positive change for thousands of young people, encouraging new directions and better life decisions. Your contributions have had a significant impact on our community. We remain grateful for your confidence and continuing support.

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION — DECEMBER 31, 2017

#### Assets

##### Current Assets

Cash and equivalents	\$87,818
Investments	\$546,937
Grants and contracts receivable	\$141,548
Prepaid expenses	\$23,710

**Total Current Assets** **\$800,013**

Property and equipment, net **\$638,830**

**Total Assets** **\$1,438,843**

#### Liabilities and Net Assets

##### Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$7,636
Accrued expenses	\$26,999

**Total Liabilities** **\$34,635**

##### Net Assets

Unrestricted **\$1,346,998**

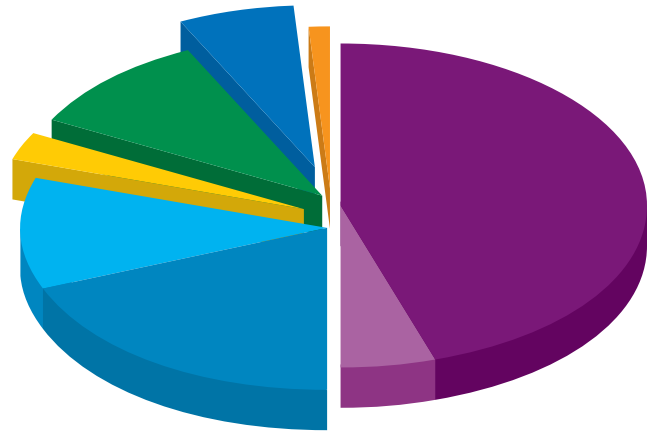
Temporarily restricted **\$57,210**

**Total Net Assets** **\$1,404,208**

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** **\$1,438,843**

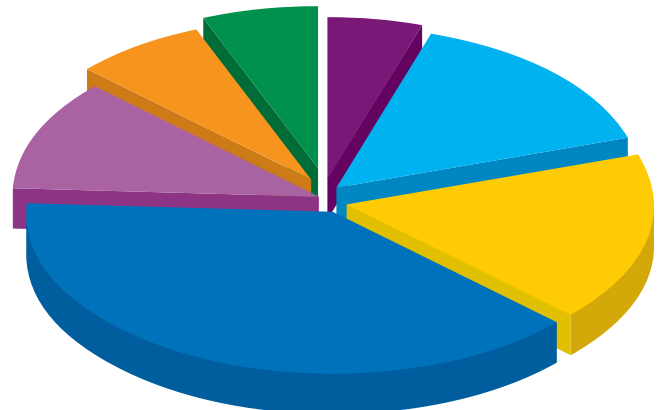
### REVENUE Year ending December 31, 2017

Grants and contracts	\$453,625
Temporarily restricted	\$26,325
Contributions	\$179,243
Temporarily restricted	\$99,992
Investment income, net of investment fees	\$17,512
Net realized and unrealized gain on investments	\$82,422
Contributions in-kind	\$29,190
Other income	\$6,045
<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$894,354</b>



### EXPENSES Year ending December 31, 2017

Recreation	\$48,002
Leadership	\$144,566
Health and wellness	\$150,948
Work readiness	\$379,428
Education	\$94,056
Management and general	\$54,542
Fundraising	\$53,268
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$924,810</b>





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## CORPORATE, FOUNDATION, GOVERNMENT DONORS

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### \$25,000 - \$999,000

Commonwealth Corporation

Greater Worcester Community Foundation

United Way of Central Massachusetts

### \$10,000 - \$24,999

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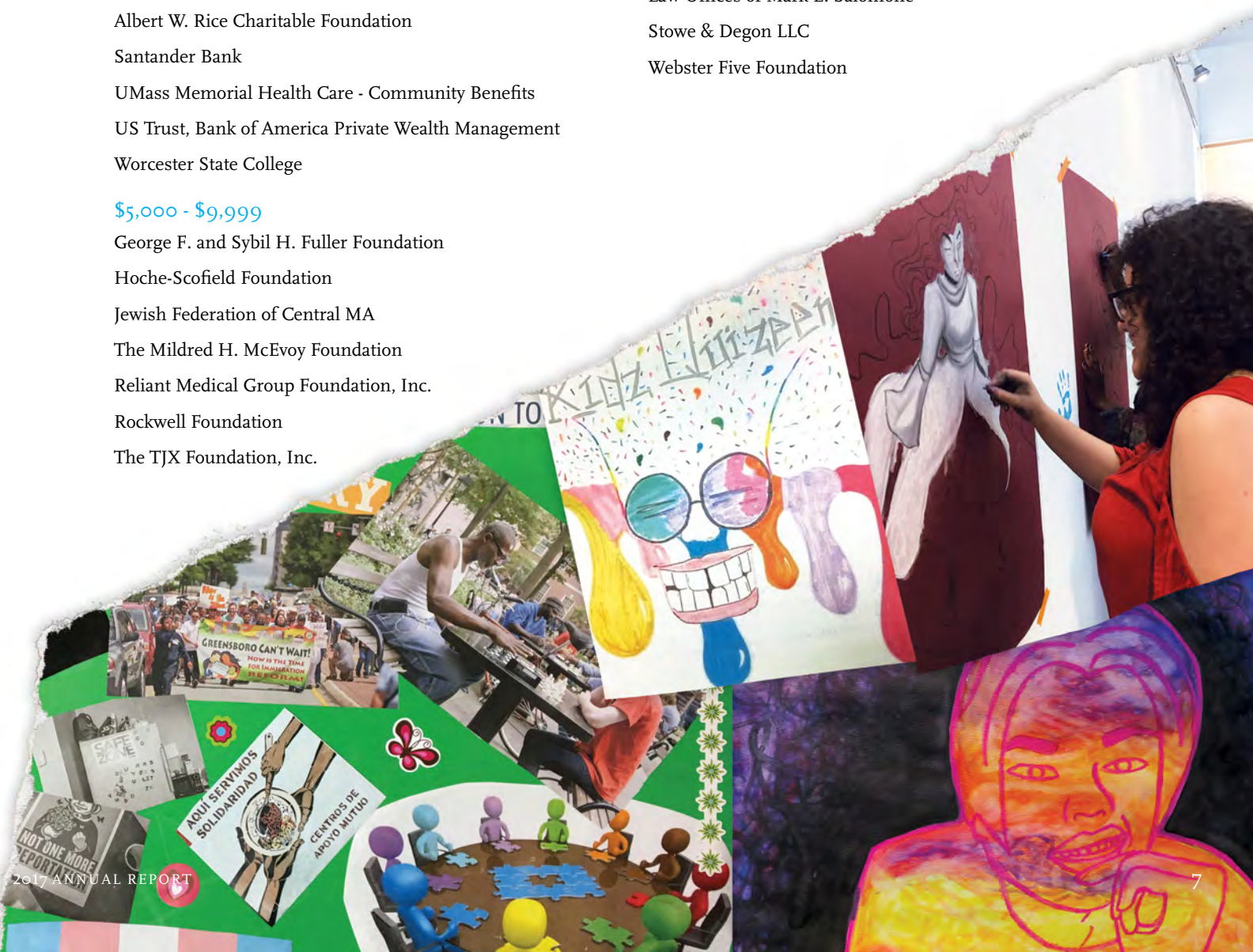
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Pleasant St. Neighborhood Network Center

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#### \$5,000 - \$9,999

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Aesha Nadeem