

LIVE
DREAM
UPLIFT
MOTIVATE
EMPOWER
RESPECT
INSPIRE
STRIVE
GROW
LEAD



2015 Annual Report

Hands of Ascension, collaborative work, one of several works in this report produced by YouthReach Arts Program participants, 2015, a program funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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Empower the Youth





Central Massachusetts Jobs Coalition members prepare for the Boston Youth Jobs Rally, February 2015.

Partnerships Broaden Possibilities

The Worcester Youth Center would never be able to accomplish as much as it does in a year without its multitude of partners from across the city. The list is a long one and includes Friendly House, Worcester Technical High School, Quinsigamond Community College, City of Worcester, Worcester Art Museum, Clark University, Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Straight Ahead Ministries, Central Massachusetts Youth Jobs Coalition, LUK and PressPass TV, among others. These agencies and organizations allow us to engage greater numbers of youth in more and different ways than ever before.

These partnerships have a positive effect on our programs, and our youth members have noticed. We celebrate a membership increase of 200 youth in 2015, with particular growth in younger members, ages 14 and 15.

I invite you to read more about our partnership activities in this annual report, with sincere gratitude for all those who bring their energy, commitment and financial support to the work of the Worcester Youth Center.

Samuel Martin
Executive Director

Laurie Ross
President

Faces of Oppression and Ascension

Use what you have. Try to fix things. These are some lessons learned by the 15-year-olds involved in this year's YouthReach Arts & Leadership program, a collaboration of the Worcester Youth Center and the Worcester Art Museum. The tools the youth had included cameras, creative ideas, paint and cabinet doors.

Working with program facilitator Elis Ortiz, the group discussed community challenges ranging from obesity to teen pregnancy to animal cruelty. In the end, he said, they held a meeting and talked about oppression.

Elis had been working independently on a photographic portrait series of Worcester residents, "showing a side of the city people don't really see," he said, noting that "images have a way of *making* you see." He took the group to University Park to experiment with four cameras donated by Nancy and Simon Gregory. They edited and manipulated their digital files to create "composition effects," doubled up self-portraits.

Elis also took black and white portraits of each student, expressions reflecting their own sense of oppression. Some youth sought to find a balancing positive theme in their art, which the group named "ascension."

Twice a week through the winter and spring, they worked with Jamie Buckmaster, art teacher at the Worcester Art Museum, who helped them explore their theme with clay, masks, and paint. He found a perfect canvas for their ideas — surplus small cabinet doors. Mounted on hinges, one side could illustrate oppression, the other, ascension.

In the youth art exhibit, one door had a classic broken heart image (superficial) which opened to an anatomic drawing of an intact heart (real). A partly opened briefcase sported a Styrofoam tongue and plastic teeth guarding bundles of fake money. The group painting incorporated a global map collage of newspaper images of war, crime and poverty, washed over with black paint beneath a city silhouette, held up by youthful hands.

"The hands are trying to shape the cities into a more manageable future," explained Jamie.



Left to right from top:
Alicia Davis, Iyanna Gaines,
Branggie Jimenez, Erick
(Alex) Martinez, Noriyoshi
Needle, Lovia Osei, Marabel
Reyes, Miguel Sosa



Connecting Homeless Youth with Sources of Help

At 16, Maria Sanchez arrived at the Worcester Youth Center to join the Army of Saints (AOS) program. An anti-violence program, AOS helped her learn self-control and think about the future. The Center offered her a place to be, as she sometimes slept on friends' sofas.

"I liked to come to the Center because my friends were there," she said. "It was a place to come out – a good location."

Today she can say she's been in every park in Worcester, part of her outreach work for LUK, a social service agency that partners with the Youth Center. Walking through Worcester's parks and neighborhoods, she looks for homeless youth, as well as local businesses, churches and libraries where adults could point youth to available services through her agency and other organizations. The information is there for anyone to pass along, she said, so she is not simply targeting homeless youth.

Now 22, Maria loves to help youth, because as she explained, "it's what we stand for."

Youth Helping Youth — WTHS Spruces Up WYC

Worcester students helped Worcester youth during the winter of 2016 when more than two dozen Worcester Technical High School students worked to renovate parts of the Center's facilities.

When Executive Director Samuel Martin discussed how the Center might use its existing space differently, board member Andy Serrato reached out to the WTHS carpentry, painting and electrical departments to help plan and build a new office, expand a door into the gym area, enlarge the snack room, and paint part of the building's exterior.

"I believe in giving back to the community, especially the area I grew up in," said Andy, a Worcester native and owner of Serrato Signs who joined the Center's board of directors in 2015. Worcester Technical High School students had recently completed a new handicapped-accessible bridge in Elm Park and were ready for another community service project.

"The kids really enjoyed the work," said Joe Lonergan, Carpentry Department Head. On the office project, he said, "We did the demolition, and Computer-Aided Design and Drafting Department Head Paul Chambers made the drawings for the walls in our new shop for drawing and design." Senior instructor Kevin Lussier brought the materials to the Center, where carpentry students took down the dropped ceiling, boarded up one wall and tore another down, installed sheetrock and taped it off. Another group of students put in new electrical wiring.

The new office behind the reception desk slowly emerged, the doorway changed, and the snack room became a place for shared community meals. The Painting and Design students came in next with Painting and Design Technology Department Head Larry Collins to paint walls both inside and out. Overall, the project took about six weeks as the students, all in their senior year, alternated classroom and shop weeks.

"It was a good learning experience for everyone," said Andy.



“Why do you come to the Worcester Youth Center?”

Members had a lot to say when asked why they come to the Center. Several were members of the Teen Circle Program, a collaboration of the Latino Education Institute at Worcester State University, Plumley Village (Community Builders), the Edward M. Kennedy Health Center and the Worcester Youth Center. Earning a stipend, high school age participants discuss how to stay positive, make smart choices, and solve a community problem.

“I’ve been coming since I was 16. I’ve been in the farm program, the culinary program at the Senior Center and I’ve learned gaming at Becker College. I’ve stayed because I got a job. The place is cool – if you think there’s nothing else to do, come to the Youth Center!”

— Taylor Conway, 21

“My friends go here, so I can hang out with them after track practice at Commerce Bank Field. We dance and make food in the kitchen. I can volunteer to do things here and talk to people.”

— Candida Bondah, 14

“I came because she brought me (pointing to Deshante Mitchell) last fall. This is better than being at home. I like what we talk about in Teen Circle.”

— Nasya Agyekun, 14

“My dad works here, and so I came in one day to find a trash can and say hi to him. Then I told all my friends to come. We do brain games as part of work readiness, in the blue room.”

— Deshante Mitchell, 14

“Deshante told me to come, and the van picks us up from school. We have dinner and field trips to Six Flags.”

— Angel Martinez, 14



From top

YWCA’s Stand Against Racism supporters, visiting the Worcester Art Museum, an outing at Elm Park

The Man with the Plan

The first time Emmanuel Asare visited the Worcester Youth Center with some friends, he was 15, the sign-up process took too long for him, and he walked out. It would be another two years before he came back. By then, he had developed more patience, and some goals for himself — specifically, to graduate from South High in 2013 — and was ready to return.

“I had been ignoring calls from the Center – I knew people who worked there – but I wanted to put myself back on track without any help,” he recalled. Several adults in his life provided help anyway, including South High’s principal at the time, Maureen Binienda, and his cousin who encouraged his involvement in the Upward Bound program at Clark University.

Emmanuel lived on Clark’s campus during his junior year of high school and went home on weekends. He helped his mother with her African textiles store, worked with summer campers, and while studying to pass the MCAS math exam, worked in the kitchen at Quinsigamond Community College. After graduation, he served as an assistant to Upward Bound’s director, but to pay for continued education, he needed another job.

Emmanuel made a list of his goals: Start school, get a driver’s license, open a bank account and get a job. School became Porter & Chester, and he enrolled in their electrician program for the January 2015 semester.

“We call Emmanuel ‘the man with a plan,’” said Worcester Youth Center executive director Samuel Martin. In the fall of 2014, when Emmanuel received an outreach letter from the Youth Center that mentioned they offered paying jobs, he gave them a call.

“Timing is everything,” he said with a smile. With plenty of work experience and good references, he landed a job working with children at the Boys & Girls Club and after hours, cleaning the building.

“I was a great maintenance guy,” he said with obvious pride. “I didn’t leave until everything was spotless.” He began his studies to become an electrician and within a year became an apprentice. By graduation, he had two jobs, plus his work at the Boys & Girls Club.

In one of those jobs, starting as a temporary worker, Emmanuel fell in love with solar power. He installed solar panels first on commercial buildings and then on homes in the greater Boston area. Now a full-time employee of SolarFlair Energy, Inc., Emmanuel sees the solar energy industry as the future of power for the U.S.

“My plan was to become somebody who can make a change in this world,” explained Emmanuel, “roof by roof and town by town, all across the state of Massachusetts.” He sees the Worcester Youth Center as his second family. There, he said, he learned about workplace expectations, and the value of showing up on time, every day.

“They changed my life,” he told an annual meeting audience. “My goal now is to have my own solar company.”

Happy to share with other youth what the Youth Center can do for them, Emmanuel said, “If you really want to take life seriously, come to the WYC and have a good talk with them. Listen, take their advice, and get somewhere.”



My plan was to become somebody who can make a change in this world.”

Your Investment in Our Work

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, 2015

Assets

Current Assets

Cash and equivalents	\$123,114
Investments	\$806,014
Grants and contracts receivable	\$89,072
Prepaid expenses	\$23,827
Total Current Assets	\$1,042,027

Property and equipment, net	\$580,060
Total Assets	\$1,622,087

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities

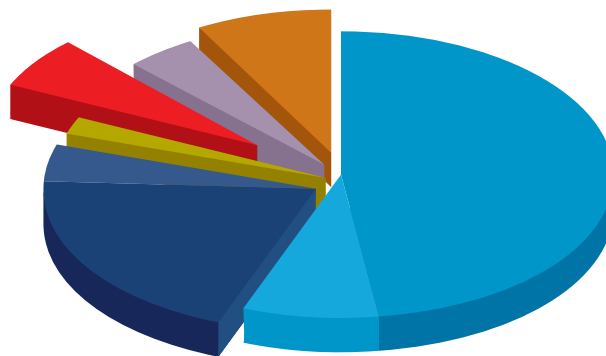
Accounts payable	\$2,815
Accrued expenses	\$33,765
Total Liabilities	\$36,850

Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$1,555,921
Temporarily restricted	\$29,586
Total Net Assets	\$1,585,507
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,622,087

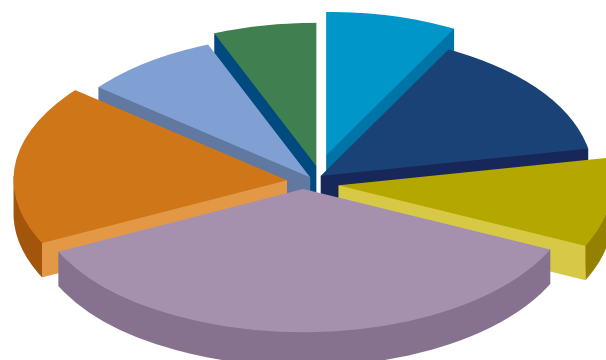
Revenue Year ending December 31, 2015

Grants and contracts	\$447,482
Temporarily restricted	\$77,625
Contributions	\$196,563
Temporarily restricted	\$24,000
Investment income, net of investment fees	\$10,354
Net realized and unrealized gain (loss) on investments	(\$33,146)
Contributions in-kind	\$29,790
Other income	\$6,441
Total Revenue and Support	\$759,109



Expenses Year ending December 31, 2015

Recreation	\$47,010
Leadership	\$111,765
Health and wellness	\$72,352
Work readiness	\$342,447
Education	\$154,921
Management and general	\$42,284
Fundraising	\$37,124
Total Expenses	\$807,903





Many Thanks to Our 2015 Supporters

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Hary Sanchez

Dark Rose

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place to go.*

*A place to
go further.*



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