



Dynamy

EXPLORE. REFLECT. ACT. SUMMER 2009

Dynamy Joins Y.O.U., Inc.



Dynamy's Mission: To challenge, support and empower young people to discover their purpose in life and to practice their values.

Y.O.U., Inc.'s Mission: To provide youth and families with opportunities to fulfill their potential and build a brighter future.



Left: Donna Truex, Dynamy Board of Trustees president (l) and Georgia Griffith, Y.O.U., Inc. Board of Directors vice-chair, propose a toast at the recent celebration of the organizations' merger.

Right: Fred Kaelin, Dynamy executive director

This past year, Dynamy's board and staff concluded that, in order to continue to fulfill our mission, pursuing a merger was a necessary step. When we started that process, we did not know if a truly ideal partnership was possible. I am thrilled to be able to share the fantastic news that, on June 30th, Dynamy officially joined Y.O.U., Inc., a Worcester-based child welfare and behavioral health organization. This partnership will give Dynamy the ability to continue our two successful signature programs, and more importantly, to strengthen them. Founded in 1970, Y.O.U., Inc. is a large organization with over 30 high quality programs, and has long been recognized for its excellence and vision.

We approached Y.O.U., Inc. in large part because of the parallel missions the two organizations share. The only good reasons for a non-profit to join or merge with another are because there is mission overlap, and both organizations are made stronger by it.

In this case, both organizations exist to help young people to live a positive, meaningful life.

While it is true that, as a small non-profit organization, Dynamy struggled financially in recent years, and getting

under Y.O.U., Inc.'s umbrella certainly helps us weather the stormy economy, this step was not undertaken primarily for financial reasons. In fact, well before we ever approached Y.O.U., Inc., our dedicated group of strategic planning volunteers helped us ask the most important (and most difficult) question: are we still relevant—is there still a need for our programs? After a good deal of examination and reflection, we determined that both Youth Academy and Internship Year do fill important needs, and could be even stronger in the future if we pursued two strategic paths: redefining the student profile for Internship Year (see related article on page 2) and pursuing a positive

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merger with another youth-serving organization.

Given that Dynamy has long helped young people to take charge of their own life and to find their own unique path to a productive and autonomous adulthood, giving up some of our own autonomy and joining Y.O.U., Inc. may, at first, seem contrary to our own approach. Yet, ultimately, we also teach young people that self-reliance includes honest reflection, flexibility to be open to the right answers, and true community. Whether phrased as “no person is an island,” or “we cannot do it alone”, one of the most important messages about life is simply that we *are better together*. We all need the insights, help, encouragement of and collaboration with others’ strengths and talents to accomplish the most meaningful of goals.

As part of Y.O.U., Inc., we will have the best of both worlds—a more solid footing going into the future, with access to and the support of a tremendously talented and respected group of people—as well as the autonomy to retain the Dynamy programs, culture, and our experiential educational approach. As Dynamy reaches its 40th anniversary, we are well poised to head into the next forty years because, to put it simply, we *are better together*.

Regards,

Fred Kaelin
Executive Director

“we are better together”

“In order to survive and thrive in the early 21st century, organizations must be nimble, adaptable, and open to change.”

Fred Kaelin, executive director

Changing to Meet Changing Needs: The Evolution of Internship Year

When Dynamy was founded in 1969, the concept of a “Gap Year” was unheard of, and Dynamy’s Internship Year program attracted intrepid students who sought an experiential, adventurous year between high school and college that would help them develop leadership skills and explore their career interests outside of the traditional classroom.

Fast forward 40 years...As proof of the soundness of Dynamy’s founding principles, there are now hundreds of options for students interested in a gap year. Coupled with that, there are an increasing number of adolescents who struggle in their education with learning differences or disabilities, and who are often looking for and ideally suited to benefit from a year of support and experience at the end of high school. Over the past decade, based on our proven track record in the experiential education marketplace, Internship Year has become an attractive option for these students, and we have been accepting more of them every year.

As our student profile has gradually shifted toward students with learning differences, and is now the norm, not the exception, we have realized that our existing Internship Year program is not equipped to best serve the majority of these students.

As part of the comprehensive strategic planning process undertaken last year, which also resulted in the merger with Y.O.U., Inc., we examined this issue closely. As a result, over the next year, we will be taking the necessary steps to evolve the program to meet this growing community need and to bring Dynamy’s unique and successful experiential approach to a new generation of young people. With a modified program, additional resources and increased levels of student support, our plan is to position the organization to become the national gap year program of choice for this growing niche market.

Although the core experiential approach of the Internship Year program will remain the same, the significant changes and additional program components will give our students more resources, more support, and more success.

For a whole new generation, Dynamy’s mission will live on...Through internships, advising, adventure challenges and independent living, we will continue to prepare students for college, teach transformative leadership and life skills, and help to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood.

Class of 2009 Graduations for Youth Academy and Internship Year

Students from Dynamy's two programs, Youth Academy and Internship Year, celebrated graduations during the month of May.

On May 20, Assumption College was the celebratory site of the 2009 Dynamy Youth Academy graduation for its seven students. During the ceremony, Marangely Cancel-Rivera received the Spirit of John S. Laws award, given to the senior who most exemplifies the core values of the program, including persistence, compassion, leadership, respect of others and community service. The surprise award is named after Mr. Laws, the first African-American school principal in Worcester, and one of the first in the Northeast, in 1954, well before the Civil Rights movement began. In his late years, Mr. Laws was able to meet the first students involved in the

program (formerly named the John S. Laws program). Mangy will attend Wheelock College.

Other Youth Academy graduates will matriculate at the following colleges in the fall: College of the Holy Cross (2), UMass Dartmouth, Worcester State College, and Suffolk University (2).



Marangely Cancel-Rivera, Spirit of John S. Laws Award recipient



Will Gillespie and Alison Mayer, Reville Award recipients



On May 30, Razzo Hall at Clark University was the celebratory site of the 2009 Dynamy Internship Year graduation for its 23 students. At the graduation ceremony, Dynamy bestowed the Reville award to William Gillespie and Alison Mayer. This award was established by former executive director, Paul Reville, currently Massachusetts Secretary of Education, in honor of his father. The Reville award is bestowed upon two students each year who “have

taken the greatest advantage of the independence offered by Dynamy to pursue a rigorous self-directed course of experiential education.” In the fall, Alison will attend Clark University and Will will attend Randolph-Macon College.

Most other graduates of the Internship Year program will move on to matriculate at four-year institutions, including Wheaton College, Pace University, University of Maryland, Dean College, and Allegheny College, to name a few.



first row: Edvina Lila, Marangely Cancel-Rivera, Casandra Crespo; second row: Sarah Sekyi, Nathaniel Garcia, Juan Alvaraz-Arias, Annie Le

Dynamy Receives \$75,000 Grant from TG Public Benefit



In an extremely competitive process, funding only 20% of applicants, TG Public Benefit recently awarded Dynamy a grant for \$75,000 for the Youth Academy program. TG Public Benefit is a philanthropic initiative of TG, a non-profit student loan guarantor based in Round Rock, Texas. This was the first time this funder has made an award to a New England non-profit organization.

TG's Board of Directors established the Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program in September 2004, recognizing that nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions were in the best position to determine and propose specific solutions to address issues of college access and success for the students and families they serve. TG intends that the primary beneficiaries of the proposed programs be students who are from low to moderate income families. In addition, the competi-

tive process favored proposals that aim to serve the needs of first-generation college students or students who are from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in undergraduate and graduate education.

Youth Academy, Dynamy's college access and leadership program for promising low-income Worcester Public School students, met all the criteria of TG's mission. Our twenty year history of success and our strong community partnerships were instrumental in attracting TG's attention.

We are grateful to TG Public Benefit for their support of the work we are doing to improve college access and graduation rates for underserved Worcester youth. This grant is yet another validation of the strength and results of the program.

Youth Academy relies heavily on private contributions for its operations, and is also supported by the United Way of Central Massachusetts.

Tim Garvin, President & CEO of the United Way of Central Massachusetts, congratulated Dynamy by saying, "All of us here—the staff and board, our partner agencies and our thousands of donors congratulate Dynamy. The TG Public Benefit grant is not only a huge 'vote of confidence' for Dynamy and its outstanding operations; it is also a wonderful catalyst for Dynamy's great work in supporting and assisting our children."

Sponsor of the Year—Michael Belanger, Seven Hills Charter School

In his role as Technology Integration Specialist at the Seven Hills Charter School, one of Mike Belanger's major responsibilities is mentoring and teaching many of the 700 kindergarten through 8th grade students who attend the school. The school has an unusually comprehensive program, thanks to its charter school status. Mike creates creative and exciting ways to integrate technology into the classroom experience and curriculum, and each child at the school benefits from his creativity and innovative ideas.

Not surprisingly, Mike was immediately interested in expanding his mentoring capacity when he was approached for the first time three years ago to take on a Dynamy Internship Year intern. Since that time, he has worked with seven of our interns. Mike's enthusiasm is infectious, and it is easy to understand why our students take an immediate interest in being mentored by Mike as soon as they meet him.

In addition to his responsibilities for the technology curriculum, Mike also directs all the school musicals. So, he is able to offer our interns a wide variety of internship responsibilities, from classroom aide for technology to participation in the arts and music curriculum and musical productions.



Through a shadow experience, he gives interns the opportunity to learn what it takes to produce a musical, from advertising and sets to choreography and stage managing.

Mike's passion for helping young people is immediately evident. He says, "I get great satisfaction in empowering young people to learn how to take ownership of themselves, and realizing that they can accomplish their goals on their own. I give them the chance to make mistakes, but I have high expectations, and I won't let them off the hook when they do make a mistake. That is what experiential learning is all about."

We greatly appreciate the opportunities that Mike and the Seven Hills Charter School give to Dynamy interns, and are pleased to honor him as Sponsor of the Year.

Youth Academy Grads Expand Horizons Beyond Worcester



College bound: road trips to Mount Ida and Northeastern



With our decision four years ago to expand Youth Academy's college counseling services, Dynamy began to place more emphasis on the specific steps of the college search process. In addition to building and teaching a four year college counseling curriculum, Katelyn Gleason Klapper, Dynamy's part-time college counselor, also began extending college research recommendations beyond the schools of the Worcester Consortium, which had traditionally been the primary focus of our students' college search.

As a result of "expanding their horizons", 50% of students from the classes of 2008 and 2009 matriculated at colleges outside of the Worcester area. Five students will be studying in the Boston area next fall—at Wheelock College, Suffolk University and Mt. Ida College; and other students have begun their studies at Fitchburg State College, UMass-Dartmouth, and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

The growing interest by Youth Academy students to look outside Worcester has been inspired by college visit "road trips". College visits have included Boston, Springfield, Hartford, New York, Rhode Island and New Hampshire. These trips have been facilitated by Katelyn and Youth Academy staff during school vacations and in-service days. "This becomes yet another opportunity to talk to the students about their college criteria, what we have seen and what they want from a college experience," says Katelyn.

In addition, for the first time we have been hosting admissions officers from colleges during the school year, who present information about their schools to our students. Over the last year, we have welcomed representatives from Columbia University, Sacred Heart, and Ohio Wesleyan University. This past spring, Jane Hahn, Associate Director of Admission at Ohio Wesleyan, presented a special session on how to take advantage of opportunities such as fly-in programs for underserved students, and how to identify college-specific scholarships that not only look at academics, but also strong community service and leadership. Says Katelyn, "This was a fabulous afternoon, because the students were hearing the message that what they are doing at Dynamy is truly important to their process, and they were hearing it from a college admissions officer." Ms. Hahn stayed after her presentation to work with students on evaluating their transcripts and counseling them on course selections for next year.

The consistent message to our students is that, if they work hard, even in these economic times, they can enjoy the same scholarship benefits that they receive from Worcester Consortium schools at an even broader range of schools—their choices have no boundaries.



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Dynamy's mission is to challenge, support, and empower young people to discover their purpose in life and to practice their values.

Thank you to everyone who has given a gift to this year's Dynamy Fund. Every gift helps us to continue to offer the high quality programs that help so many teens and young adults make the transition to successful adulthood!

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www.dynamy.org



Have you thought about remembering Dynamy in your will?
Call Jan Curley in the Development Office at 508-755-2571 x16 for help or information