

July 07, 2015 12:31PM

Print Page

Agencies host Merrimack Valley Youth Leadership Summit

The Merrimack Valley YMCA, North Andover Youth and Recreation Services, Andover Youth Services and the Boy's and Girl's Club of Lawrence hosted the first Merrimack Valley Youth Summit at YMCA Camp Nokomis on Bear Island, Lake Winnepesaukee, N.H.

The Merrimack Valley Youth Summit consisted of a three-day program where young leaders from different communities come together for a shared outdoor leadership experience.

Each agency selected 15 students from grades 8-10 for a total of 60 teens, including an equal number of boys and girls.

After the Youth Summit, this group of teens will continue to work together throughout their high school years, utilizing skills learned and continuing dialogue and discussion so that they can have an impact in their agencies and within the Merrimack Valley community.

The theme of the Summit, "Coming Together" describes the event's goal to bring students together from different communities to share a common leadership experience and discuss community issues.

During the weekend, the students participated in a number of activities including; team building and problem solving, leadership workshops and group discussions about issues facing teens.

The group developed plans for how they will work together after the summit. All teens received an opportunity to enjoy the full camp experience.

This leadership program was the result of the collaborative efforts of the Merrimack Valley YMCA, North Andover Youth and Recreation Services, Andover Youth Services and the Boy's and Girl's Club of Lawrence in response to local surveys that showed a need for affordable, quality programming and youth activities that promote cognitive development, physical well-being, social growth and character development.

Many adolescents within the Merrimack Valley region face a variety of challenges which often include academic hardships as well as behavioral risks.

The 2013 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (ESE) and the Massachusetts Youth Health Survey (DPH), supported by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and administered in a random sample of 144 public secondary schools by the University of Massachusetts Center for Survey Research revealed that out of middle school and high school students surveyed:

- 19 percent reported binge drinking in the previous 30 days
- 32 percent of high school students reported ever having smoked a cigarette
- 13 percent of students were overweight and 10 percent were obese
- 12 percent of high school students reported having carried a weapon in the previous 30 days
- 12 percent of students reported they seriously considered suicide.

Despite the obstacles youth and teens face, many retain their idealism, hope, energy and resilience; and are responsive when they recognize an opportunity.

Young people in the Merrimack Valley community have the potential to succeed, especially when they associate themselves with trusted youth organizations.



Teens from all over the Merrimack Valley came to a special summit in New Hampshire to discuss issues that they see as important to them. Courtesy Photo

<http://northandover.wickedlocal.com/article/20150707/NEWS/150707788>

Print Page