



Young Entrepreneurs of Holyoke

Gabe Camacho: Senior, Holyoke High School
Alexis Diaz: Freshman, Holyoke Community College

Jose Colon: Senior, LightHouse Holyoke
Isobel Williams: Senior, LightHouse Holyoke

The Young Entrepreneurs of Holyoke Project gives youth the tools to envision, empower and take initiative in their lives, their community and our world. The Project builds upon the success of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Entrepreneurship Initiative in Vieques, Puerto Rico: 2003-2007. The Institute's Faculty features successful alumni and experienced professionals.

Background

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute's 13th Youth Leadership Summit on Martha's Vineyard Holyoke youth (14-18 years) were nominated by their community to serve as delegates to the Summit where they worked alongside of the Institute's Faculty and Emerging Leaders. During this weeklong intensive training, they heard presentations: **Cultural Arts** and **Entrepreneurship** and used the **Life Planning Tools & Dream Map™** to envision their dreams—for their lives, for their communities, and for their world. They worked in Professional Workgroups with seasoned college students to develop their personalized. action plans.

The Sustainable Holyoke Youth Leadership Initiative is a year-round program to educate and empower youth through training workshops: college field trips, career mentors, entrepreneurship, public speaking and youth leadership. We work in partnership with nominating educators and organizations to collectively nurture and support these young people to maximize their academic and leadership opportunities.

Field Trip: New York Fashion Week: September 8-9

Entrepreneur Faculty Kassandra Castillo invited Holyoke youth to join her for New York Fashion Week. They had first-hand experience of all aspects of a business in the fashion industry. In preparation for this networking opportunity, they worked as a team to design a **culturally respectful logo** and **brand** and **personalized business cards**. Upon their return Holyoke youth wrote a photo essay to share with their community.

The New York Fashion Week Field Trip site visits included:

- **Fashion E-Commerce: Rebagg.com**
- **Milk Studios:** hub for supporting partnerships with industry's most visionary talent and innovative brands;
- **Art Hearts Fashion Show:** event for inspired emerging, designers to showcase their collections;
- **Artist & Fleas: Chelsea Market:** art, design, fashion, vintage in a dynamic "show-and-sell" marketplace;
- **FIT: Fashion Institute of Design/Museum**

On October 25, they will pitch their group business to their community at The Holyoke Chamber of Commerce's SPARK Holyoke Soup. During the Fall-Winter, Holyoke youth will build a small, strategic group business so they can learn the ropes from seasoned entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneur Course: Fall-Winter 2017

- Kutasha will lead custom-designed weekly workshops on the fundamentals of building a business.
- Product design and development
- Marketing and Social Media
- Financial planning & management
- Holiday Pop-Up Events
- Kassandra will assist with the development of the new group business and explore e-commerce opportunities.

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About Holyoke: a small town in western Massachusetts, less than two hours away - and yet a world apart - from the state capital of Boston. Holyoke was, for a moment in time, the largest producer of stationery, writing, and archival goods in the world. Once a thriving city, Holyoke suffered decline like other mill towns. For several decades the City's downtown, and its uniquely old brick buildings has experienced significant neglect. It is one of the state's poorest cities: 28.8% of its families live below poverty level. It now has the distinction of being the #1 per capita Puerto Rican capitol of the U.S. Now Holyoke is undergoing a budding renaissance. Holyoke youth are eager to be part of the solution. Entrepreneurship is the key to their ultimate success!

The Young Entrepreneurs of Holyoke Program is a pilot program of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute in partnership with The Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce Foundation's SPARK.

The Holyoke Chamber of Commerce Foundation's SPARK Initiative (Stimulating Potential, Accessing Resource Knowledge) through the Working Cities Challenge program. SPARK aims to link the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center and Holyoke's innovation economy strategy to its residents with an eye towards being inclusive and welcoming to the entire diversity of Holyoke's demographic. The SPARK Initiative develops a system that supports entrepreneurs by coordinating existing services and providing a community of entrepreneurs which can provide mentorship and further support.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission is to develop educational tools, and provide technical assistance and leadership training for young people to become leaders of their lives and a more sustainable world. The Institute is a leader in custom designing culturally inclusive workforce development initiatives in partnership with companies, Chambers of Commerce, schools, and organizations. From the inner cities of Boston, Cincinnati, Oakland to the islands in Hawaii, Martha's Vineyard, Vieques, Puerto Rico, Virgin Gorda BVI they have trained young people to address the economic, social, environmental issues of the 21st century.

Holyoke is BETA Site for The Institute's Entrepreneur Course on Global Leadership Platform.

The Young Entrepreneur of Holyoke Project will use the TouchStone Life Planning Tools & Dream Map™ The **Entrepreneur Course** will become a turn-key workforce development training program. In the Institute's **Career Mentor Course**, they are matched with professionals in their career path. This win-win approach increases community engagement and support for youth with internships and meaningful summer jobs. These two courses are custom-designed to be an economic engine to help youth enter the workforce.

Our Faculty

Kassandra Castillo is a successful entrepreneur who loves to inspire young people to pursue their dreams. When she was 14-years-old, Kassandra joined and then helped develop VYLI's Entrepreneurship Initiative. After a successful modeling career and graduating from business school, Kassandra became the first employee for the startup company Trendlee.com. In 2014, Kassandra moved with the company to New York City, where it is now a \$5 million enterprise. Kassandra is now Head of Operations at Trendlee.com and Rebagg.com, where she leads a team of 20 people. Kassandra serves as faculty for Institute's Summit and Holyoke program.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qe_hHiUrGAo

Marianne Larned is Founding Director of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute. Walter Cronkite served as honorary chairperson for a decade. Marianne is the author of educational series, *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*. Trained as a progressive educator, she received her MBA in Organizational Development at Boston University while public-private partnerships education and economic development. Working intimately with the next generation of leaders gives her hope for our collective future.

Kutasha Silva is a Ph. D. candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana in Curriculum & Instruction. An educator, musician, and scholar who is passionate about innovative forms of education for K-12 students, Kutasha was the Project Coordinator for Institute's VYLI (Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative: www.vyli.com). She was trained in New York City by **Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship** (NFTE) and then championed VYLI's Cultural Arts and Entrepreneurship Initiatives. She tailored lesson plans using the Institute's book-curriculum, **Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes**. Kutasha was co-Director of the Institute's 13th Leadership Summit on Martha's Vineyard

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