

Daniela Jurado: A Franklin County Upstander

By Lily J., Eli S. and Kaleb R.



Daniela Jurado is an upstander from Western Mass that works at the Brick House and Americorps. She works to help families and youth in the community through volunteering at the Brick House. Daniela provides support to people who are struggling through rough times when it comes to food or housing. So what exactly is an upstander? An upstander is a person who takes their time to help people and the community. Daniela Jurado is a good example of one and here's why.

Daniela graduated college in 2020 and needed to find a job. She wanted to help her community

during COVID. She has been in her job position for two years. She has been studying public health and other important topics that have been affecting peoples' lives, such as homelessness. Since her freshman year, she has studied public health as her undergraduate degree. In an interview that we conducted with Daniela, we asked what impact she thinks she has left in the community, and she said, "I just want to make sure that the work I'm doing now is currently helping families in the community." She also stated that it's hard because you don't see the change immediately, but knowing that it's helping people always feels good.

The Brick House and Americorps are organizations that have programs that help both struggling youth and families who need to find housing or need financial help. As an Americorp Member Daniela was also assigned to a local organization called DIAL/SELF. According to the Americorps website "DIAL/SELF AmeriCorps Members build relationships with young people and support them in developing skills, connection, and confidence in their learning." The Brick House has served over 2500 residents with things such as counseling programs, education, job training, and employment resources. They also provide programs to help build the community. It's important to know that "AmeriCorps invested more than \$33.2 million in federal funding to support cost-effective community solutions," and Daniela is one person amongst a huge team making all of this happen.

In conclusion, an upstander is someone like Daniela: a person who spends their time standing up for people and helping others when needed. She was an extremely positive person and we learned a lot about her and the work her organizations do in the community through our interview.

Mighty Mark

By Rex K., Cooper W., and Brennan M.



Introducing the man, the myth, the superhero, the upstander, Paul Mark. We would define Paul as an upstander. A person who stands up to something important to them and tries to fix it. Superheroes and upstanders have similar, or almost the same, meanings. Paul fits under this category because he has made a stand to try and reduce housing insecurities.

Paul Mark is a state and city representative who is in his twelfth year of work. Over the eleven years of his work he has represented 29 different cities and towns, and 27 small communities, which is the

second-most in the history of Massachusetts. He has focused on keeping low-income families off the streets and trying to prevent homelessness. They help these people with acquiring jobs or trying to find a less expensive place to live. Paul got into this work because he has experienced housing problems himself. As he said, "I could relate in my personal story, my father losing his job, and us having some stressful times and being evicted from our houses, houses at times, we never had to live in a hotel, we were lucky." This is why he wants to help or prevent others from going through the same experience. From what we heard in the interview that is one of the driving factors of why he does his work. Paul Mark has also helped with food insecurity. He also works to get new things like fire trucks for a town too. Paul Mark helps people with many things and he is a person who loves being able to help people.

Paul is an upstander because he is working hard to help and improve his community and adding to that, he is also an upstander because he looks high and low for problems in the community he might be able to fix. When asked if he had any advice for those who aspire to be an upstander like him, he said, "listen more than you talk. Don't be afraid to intervene in something if you see someone that needs help and isn't able to do it themselves. At the same time, don't always think that you know what the other situation is. So be active, be engaged, but also listen, and then, when someone asks you for your help, be there to help them, because it's easier to be there for people when everything's going well. It's important to make sure people know that you're there for them when things aren't great, either." The experience of interviewing Paul was different from what we expected. We were far more nervous than we needed to be but Paul was very nice to us and listened to everything we had to say, and gave us thoughtful and thorough responses. The most important piece we heard from Paul was to not be afraid to intervene in things when you can help.

What Is The Youth Action Board?

By Isla B., Miles R., Zach R., and Noah R.

Community Action Pioneer Valley

Young Adult Action Board Y.A.B.



While our society often focuses on individuals, it often takes more than just one person to make change. The Youth Action Board (or YAB for short) is a group of local young upstanders in Western Massachusetts. They work hard every day to make our community as safe as possible for homeless young people. To join the

YAB you have to be between the ages of 14 to 24. We had the opportunity to speak to Olivia, one of those young upstanders. An upstander is someone who will try to change the wrongs they see in their community, these wrongs could range from playground bullies to systemic racism.

Policy changes are one of the ways that the Youth Action Board rises up and makes a positive impact in our community. "When you look at rules for a group home, we help advocate for certain rules to be in place, or to remove certain rules," Olivia explained. She went more in-depth about the process of changing policies, and how the Youth Action Board plays a vital role in altering them. The pet policy was one of the most recent changes that the YAB oversaw. Children weren't allowed pets as small as fish in their housing complex but Olivia and her team noticed that the lack of companionship was taking a toll on their mental and emotional health. "[the YAB] saw, being young, a lot of kids might have mental issues like mental health needs... So we advocated for inexpensive, non-needed-a-lot-of-care pets for people to still feel companionship," Olivia explained.

Youth mental health is one of the most important issues the YAB advocates for in their work. In the past, volunteers from the Youth Action Board would provide things like emotional support animals for mental health and toys if someone is fidgety. The YAB has done a great deal of services for people who needed it. A project that the Youth Action Board is currently working on is giving helpful products to people who do not have access to them. "We're working on care packages for DCF (Department of Children and Families) youth who are currently entering DCF care, where we're giving little care packages with hygiene products, sensory items," Olivia described.

The YAB is an exceptional group of young upstanders doing what's right in our community. What they have done and what they are doing is something very brave and having such a supportive community is amazing for the unhoused community in Western Mass. The YAB has been working hard for years to help homeless youth and they don't intend to stop any time soon. During our interview with the YAB, Olivia shared some advice to anyone that wants to become an upstander in their local community, "I'd probably say to just do it, figure out where there's any issues... something that you're like, 'hey, that doesn't seem right, or that could be better.'" These people have done so much for our community and they don't get a lot of recognition, so thank you to the Youth Action Board and all of its members for helping all of these people.

Upstanders Everywhere

By Sylvia G., Logan B., and Christian D.



Occasionally you will come across someone who is spending their life helping others. These people, we call upstanders. Upstanders work hard for the good of others, not with biases towards certain people, but with open arms to everyone. An upstander is a person who takes on the responsibility to improve the world and not just take up space. An upstander confronts the wrongs and tries to create solutions and opportunities for improvement. MJ Adams is a hardworking upstander and does what is right to improve the City of Greenfield for its people. She looks at the world through eyes that see room for improvement, takes action, and employs change.

Adams' job is the Director of Economic Development for the City of Greenfield. This means that she is leading projects that will benefit the well-being of Greenfield, such as outdoor seating, room for parking, and helping

businesses create stronger foundations. Adams' department looks for ways to improve buildings and infrastructure or parts of Greenfield that need work or would help other civilians. Adams has been involved with this work throughout her whole life. She has worked for many different cities at different levels. Although she has done community development at both state and regional levels, Adams has always been drawn back to the local level because she finds herself making the most difference there. Adams is currently working on several projects, such as the revamp of downtown. This includes granting money towards keeping small businesses afloat. To quote Adams, "...community development is essentially the caretaker of the community." This means that she takes on the responsibility of helping our community become the best that it can be.

Adams dedicates her life to helping others. She said, "I don't park the work that I do at the door when I leave." She really lives with her work, she doesn't let it go for a minute. She is constantly working toward the greater good of our community, by helping one city at a time. Some advice that she shared was that the most impactful work that you can do is at the local level, after working for the state and regional levels she said that it's the most meaningful. Working at the local level creates the opportunity to give the resources to specific businesses and organizations, instead of larger groups.

This shows that Adams, and all upstanders, are working with us to make a better world. They dedicate their lives, not to their work, but to the whole belief of helping others and maintaining supportive and wholesome environments. We all need to work together for the welfare of everyone, not just the rich, or the powerful. All of us have the power to be kind, respectful, and loving, but little of us want to cut the time out of our days to do it. How can you help us to reach an equitable community for all?

Upstander Project: Rachel Berggren

By Iris R., Angelina C., and David K.



We all know that the world isn't perfect and that there are many problems that can be fixed to make sure everyone gets equal chances at a good life. Some people decide that it's their job to help work on these problems to make the world a better place for the people around them. This type of person is an Upstander. The person that we interviewed, Rachel Berggren, supports people who are food insecure by organizing food shelters that help people have a healthy lifestyle. She is the executive director at Franklin County Community Meal Program, whose website states its mission as, “[to] work in partnership with our community to alleviate hunger.”

Rachel considered entering the food industry, or something similar, after graduating high school.

Instead, she started working at Franklin County

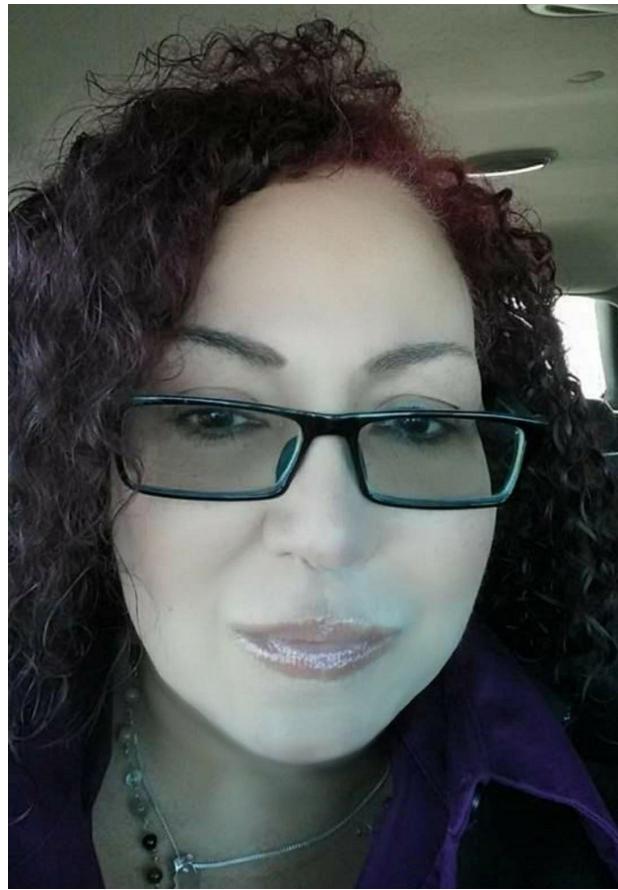
Community Meal Center in 2020 when COVID started. “I really knew that I cared about social issues” so Rachel asked herself, “What are the issues that people in the world face? And why do some people have hard times and other people don’t? And what is it about the world as a system that makes that happen?” Sometimes we don’t have the answers, but if you ask the right questions then we will be able to learn how we can help make the world a better place.

The Franklin County Community Meals Program has meal sites in Orange, Turners Falls, Greenfield, and Northfield Massachusetts. Rachel said that at their meal sites they distribute about 26,000 meals per year which ends up being about 250,000 pounds of food, which is an extraordinary amount of meals that residents would otherwise have trouble finding. Her job is organizing the shelters where they give out this food. She also helps out by giving out the food after organizing events if they need more people.

Interviewing Rachel gave us insight into the issues that people are dealing with in our everyday lives and the things that are being done to support those issues. Overall, Rachel and the rest of her team at the Franklin County Community Meals Program have helped plenty of people in our community, proving that they are true upstanders. Rachel’s answers were very descriptive which helped us write this profile on her. Thanks for reading until the end and thank you Rachel for agreeing to be an interviewee.

Hero Revealed

By Emily S., Kolin B., and Russell H.



Driven, upstanding, devoted, respectful, AWESOME! We know of a person who demonstrates these characteristics - her name is Sonia Cruz. Sonia is an example of what an upstander is. An upstander is a person who helps the community around them without thinking twice. They can help them physically, and mentally, or they can just try to cheer them up if they're having a bad day. They protect them and help them feel safe where they are living and feel comfortable with the situations they are in.

Sonia works as a housing navigator, helping people who are homeless find affordable housing in our community. She works for the Franklin County Housing Authority in Greenfield, MA. Sonia wasn't always a housing navigator though, she also worked as a clinical director for Grace House. Grace House is a place where women who have trouble with substance abuse can go for temporary housing until they are sober and can move into affordable housing. She also volunteered to go around and count people who are homeless so we have an idea of how many people need help. This is how Sonia started working with

homeless people.

What drives Sonia? "I was homeless myself before I went to school. I am originally from Puerto Rico. And I came here to the United States and didn't know a lot of English and didn't do things the right way. And I ended up homeless." She knows what it feels like to be homeless and wants to help the people that are without a home. She cares about getting everyone homes in our county.

When we interviewed Sonia she was proud to say that she had housed the first transgender person in our county, "just housed the first transgender homeless person...transgender people are suffering transphobia in the shelters." That is a really big step for housing more of the trans population. There are people that can help you work around transphobia and house people with the odds stacked against them.

Interviewing Sonia was easy because she gave us a bunch of detailed information about what it's like to work as a housing navigator. She gave us very specific examples of how she works with the homeless population in Franklin County. At some points, we didn't even have to ask the follow-up questions.

Sonia taught us that being an upstander isn't just being a good person but being selfless. We hope this essay spreads the word about the problems that are happening outside your bubble. I hope you take this to heart and research more into the problem that we have researched. Thanks for reading to the end.

"Give yourself Grace"

By Ren W., Oliver W., Kaz G., Sara C., and Aida P.



Stacy Parsons is the kind of person that anyone in the world could look up to. Upstander: “a person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.” - Oxford Languages Dictionary. An Upstander is anyone who can find injustice or struggle in the world and go out of their way to help. Parsons has worked hard for years to do everything in her power to help people who are less fortunate, which is the exact person that belongs to the Upstander title.

The role she currently holds is as the Regional Mckinney-Vento Liaison, where she helps students, schools, and families all over western Massachusetts. Currently, Parsons is working in North

Adams and North County “We have about 20 or 30 agencies that are coming to the table once a week to discuss people at the highest level of need in our community.” Stacy said. She helps to facilitate conversations and take action with other agencies. She works as a leader and organizer of new projects and opportunities for communities in need.

Before that, Stacy ran the Berks County Head Start program for five years. An organization for preschool-age kids and families suffering from poverty to provide education to the children. “Most of the time, you shouldn't see me because I've just helped support it and amplify what's already in place. I don't step in and intervene unless I need to.” Her goal is to be behind the scenes and help out as much as she can, and uplift others who are already assisting families in need.

Stacy works hard to help people with no intention of being celebrated for it and instead helps others to make a difference. During our interview, she was extremely patient with our age-appropriate disorganized behavior and was very respectful, giving us full and informative answers to everything we asked. She had some excellent advice for anyone wanting to become an Upstander, “I would say give yourself grace...I think understanding and giving yourself the grace of saying, Okay, if that ever happened again, I would handle it this way.” When you haven’t handled something well, take the time to think about what you could have done better and what you’ll do next time. Don’t be too hard on yourself but still take accountability.

Stacy Parsons helped give us a much better look into what it's like to be an upstander. She has helped so many people and will continue to do so over the next few years. She is an inspiration to all of us because of her positive attitude and perseverance. Stacy is the kind of person there should be more of in the world.

How to be an Upstander

By Grace M., Una G., and Kai S.



Have you ever heard of an upstander? It's okay if you haven't, but you probably know one without realizing it. An "upstander" is someone who recognizes something is wrong and does something to fix it. When someone stands up for what they believe is right, and does all they can to aid and assist someone in need, they are an upstander. Mary McClinton is a perfect example of who an upstander is.

Mary lives in Conway and has been working at Community Action Pioneer Valley for the past four and a half years. When we interviewed her she said, "my job title is community collaboration coordinator. My job is making those connections and one of the things I do is coordinate something called the Franklin County resource network." She works to support individuals who struggle with food insecurity and housing issues.

Her main goal is to help folks connect with someone to support their needs. She has also helped people with other problems besides food insecurity such as trouble finding housing. McClinton said in the interview that she knows how it feels to be someone struggling because she has helped so many people who have been and are.

McClinton started doing community work in 2002 when she started a peace vigil at the Greenfield Town Common six months before the war in Iraq. Since then, she has done much more work involving her community, helping many individuals live a safe and healthy life. However, being an upstander comes with its own difficulties. When asked about the challenges she faces within her work, she answered, "One of the challenges is being clear about when I'm at work, and when I'm not at work. Because actually, if I walk down the street in Greenfield, it's like I'm at work." She also spoke of how humbling it is to do community work. Seeing how housing and food insecurity really affects people, without any sugar-coated version really opens your eyes to what goes on in society.

So how can you become an upstander? As Mary says, "what do you care about? And what are the skills you can bring to that?" Becoming an upstander is more about finding that important thing that means a lot to you, rather than being perfect. Mary also mentioned that you can be an upstander for all kinds of things, from helping prevent wildfires, to working against animal cruelty. Being an upstander does not fit in a small box. Being an upstander for food and housing insecurity is just one of the many ways you can aim to make the world a better place.

Mary McClinton is an excellent example of what a great upstander is. She has been working to help solve the problem of food insecurity in Franklin County. Being an upstander is really about finding what is meaningful to you, and making positive changes in that area. We had an excellent experience talking with Mary. We learned a lot from her about how to be an upstander along with giving us amazing new points of view.

Emily Chiarra: An Upstander in Action

By Kale C., Gwen K., and Nate W.



Emily Chiarra is the Communications and Programs Coordinator at Just Roots. An organization working to stop food insecurity across our community in Greenfield, MA. She has worked in western Carolina, Guatemala, and the Pioneer Valley for more than 8 years. “I've always been very interested in food, and how it can be used to create community... And how to make sure that everyone has equitable access to healthy food that nourishes our bodies, our minds, and our mental health.”

Emily's work is mainly in the office, organizing and planning all of the farm's events, promotions, the CSA program, and online workshops. Another part of Emily's job is collaborating with her teammates, forming ideas, and planning fun events for the summer. In our interview with Emily, she revealed that they would like to do some movie screenings and some in-person cooking classes on their farm,

and even some plant medicine workshops as well. Emily and her team have also made extreme efforts to be able to connect with their community and others across different farms. They want community members to welcome, “We encourage community members to come out to our farm and to feel that it is also theirs.”

Emily makes a meaningful change in food insecurity by working with Just Roots and the CSA programs. Their teams provide food equity philosophy, free choice/market-style produce, year-round offerings, food demos, and community meals. Emily and her team at Just Roots are also working to break up the payments for the CSA program to make things more affordable for low-income families. What Just Roots has been doing from the beginning is trying to break down the costs by receiving grant funding from outside funders to help to offset some of the cost of CSA's so they can lower the price of what the communities are actually paying.

Overall, we had a lot of fun talking with Emily and learning how she is helping people by taking a back seat and listening to the people in the community to help them. Emily Chiarra is an Upstander by making difference around the world and in her community. “I would want to tell my younger self to not worry so much about trying to figure out what it is that I want to do. And to be patient with myself. And to just be open to different opportunities. And yeah, not to worry so much about trying to figure everything out all at once.” She opened our minds to the struggle of food insecurity that we see all over the world. She showed us that it's ok to be patient with ourselves and not stress about the future and what it holds. We hope that we can visit the farm one day and help out.

A Greenfield Warrior

by Alex C., Stella L., and Guenivere S-R



Do you know what an upstander is? It's someone who changes people's lives by standing up for what's right. Amy Clarke does just that. Our society has changed the way we see each other in the last few years. On Unhoused.org they say, "The label of "homeless" has derogatory connotations. It implies that one is "less than", and it undermines self-esteem and progressive change. The use of the term "Unhoused", instead, has a profound personal impact upon those in insecure housing situations." Amy Clarke works for the Interfaith Council of Franklin County. This organization is dedicated to finding ways for people to pay their rent so they don't end up unhoused as well as giving people who are unhoused a place to stay if they need it. She meets with people all around Massachusetts who want to get more involved with the Interfaith

Council. She's been helping her community support the unhoused population, especially around Greenfield, for over 20 years.

Keeping unsheltered people warm in the winter is a huge issue due to certain laws in place. In her interview, she says, "Our church, which is the second Congregational Church, opened up a warming center in the basement, which is a local organization I got hired to have someone stay overnight every night, during the winter, and we set up a room in the basement with six recliners..."

How did she change society? She saw there was a problem with people who are unhoused in Greenfield and decided to do something about it, even though it was very challenging. Before she started working to help the unhoused population, she worked to help get food for people who needed it. "I think it was an easy transition from food to housing," she says in the interview. It's amazing how many people she has gotten into homes, considering the very little amount of homes and shelters available in Greenfield.

Learning about this has been a very eye-opening experience. We knew that there were quite a lot of unhoused people in our community, but it was not until now that we knew how few shelters we have near us. Interviewing Amy really helped us understand how hard it is to help as many unhoused people as she does. You can't always get everyone into a home and she mentions how that is very frustrating.

We like that she has a big commitment to Greenfield even though there aren't enough homes available. The county should do more than just make things worse. Even though food is less of a problem, there are still unhoused people. We hope that the interfaith council can successfully encourage Greenfield to build more shelters to make Greenfield a safer place.

Keleigh's Quest

By Ella V., Emma H-W, and Zander D.



Do you know what an upstander is? Well an upstander is someone who sees something that is not right and takes action and works hard to make it better. We had the opportunity to interview an upstander in our community and get to see firsthand what it's like. Keleigh Pereira lives in Greenfield, MA, and works for the Three County Continuum of Care (CoC). She helps people in Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire Counties with housing. Keleigh Pereira currently works in housing, but her journey originally began working with a theater

program that traveled and participated in a lot of volunteer work. Through this, she learned about how different people act, and the commonalities and differences that we share. Then she got into political engagement and studied policies, and next she started working in the field of housing. She started off with running a youth and young adult program. By doing this, Keleigh learned about the different systems that are supposed to get people the resources that they need but aren't always helpful. She was frustrated with this and decided she wanted to make an impact in that area.

When we first met Keleigh back in February, when she spoke to our class, she mentioned how she is trying to get more beds for the people in our community. During the interview, my group and I took the opportunity to ask her how that has been going and if she has made any progress. She said that she has had success in this area but is still working towards it.

When we met with Keleigh the second time we asked her about COVID-19 and how that affected her work and how it impacted her ability to work with the community, she responded with, "COVID really took a lot of the circumstances that we see people experiencing and like, shone a light on it. You know, things that were already hard, became harder... they have to be six feet apart, and they have to be wearing masks, and they have to, you know, have all of these things in place to create safety. And yet, there wasn't money to make that happen."

Keleigh works for Continuum of Care, (CoC). They help people get jobs, get into homes or apartments, and with bad family situations. We asked Keleigh what some of the challenges she faces in her work were, and how she gets through them. She states "finding a middle ground between what people who are actually experiencing homelessness want and need in their resources and what the federal government wants and needs. And I think that has been a place where both myself and my team have been able to really like to learn about really effective communication." When in a workspace it's very easy to face challenges, but harder to overcome them. When we learned about how Keleigh overcome those challenges, there was hope that other people could do the same.