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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Umatter™ Program Empowers Youth and Young Adults

Vermont program teaches young people to be leaders in mental health wellness.

Umatter™ Youth and Young Adults (YYA) is a Vermont-based program that engages young people to be leaders in their community around mental health wellness.

The program teaches youth mental health practices for personal wellbeing, how to reach out to peers in distress, and provides them an experience of working as a team to implement a project to impact their community. “Mental health is something I care about,” says one participant, “I was helped a lot by others and I want to pass that on.”

For context on why programs like Umatter™ mean so much, some recent statistics from [the Centers For Disease Control’s 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) are sobering: 25% of high school students and 19% of middle school students across the country reported that they felt sad or depressed for over two weeks, often a clinical indication of depression. And 11% of high school students and 12% of middle school students surveyed in the U.S. reported making a plan of how they might attempt suicide.

In 2019, twelve groups participated in the Umatter™ care and prevention program from middle and high schools across Vermont. The program started with a Kick Off Training Event in January 2019 and ended with a Culmination Event in May of this year. During the months between, groups met together to plan and implement their Community Action Projects (CAP). Adult facilitators lead the groups. “It brings together an amazing group of students who might otherwise not have met,” said one adult facilitator. “Now they are all working on a common goal: community wellness.”

Community Action Projects implemented by youth this year include: mental health awareness week activities, anxiety management resource information campaign, a school wide wellness day, an interactive play on healthy dating relationships, and more. “The youth in my group have a clearer understanding of the issue of suicide prevention,” said another adult facilitator, “and they became student leaders on this important issue.”

The program will run again this year beginning with a statewide Kick Off Training Event on **November 14th, 2019**. The program is open to groups of young people 12-21 years of age from all schools and/or community-based organizations. To learn more and register, visit www.healthandlearning.org/events.

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