

# MALDEN YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT REACHES OUT TO COMMUNITY

“Democracy must be learned by each generation.”

## Evolving our Youth’s Character By Michelle Chung

Have you ever seen a group of young adults walking around in fancy suits and dresses around the YMCA? Have you been searching for a program your child can participate in with the mentoring of professional speakers? Have you wanted a program for your child that can improve their public speaking, social, and leadership skills as well as boost their college resume? Thousands of teens from around the country have been looking to have such experiences and as a result, seized the opportunity of joining a fulfilling program called Youth in Government (YIG).



Developed in 1936, YIG has been a part of YMCAs in 38 states and has been helping thousands of young teens become informed and involved on the workings of their country’s democratic system. Upon attending weekly meetings with their delegation, three sessions with other delegations, and even a multi-day conference held at the State House, these students are able to experience the processes and protocols exemplary of a true government. They learn how to prepare speeches, capture an audience, meet new people, and ensure that their voices are heard.

When first joining the program, delegates are first given a choice of what role they want to have. There are a variety of positions a delegate can become involved in, whether they are forming their own bills in the legislative branch, arguing their position in realistic and relevant cases in the judicial branch, advocating for and against certain bills in the lobbyists group, or writing articles about the

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program as a whole in the press corps. Regardless of which part of the program they choose to be in, each delegate enhances their skills with public speaking, writing, and compassion, all the while making long-lasting friendships and having wonderful, memorable experiences.

Malden Delegation formed in 2012 and is in its third year of existence. Led by Special Projects and New Initiatives advisor Karen Gately as well as YIG alumna Rebecca Damon, the two work together to ensure that each teen comes into the program feeling comfortable and confident about themselves through networking activities. They then spend the year teaching all of the delegates about how the government works by acting out public speaking exercises, mock committee and parliamentary procedures, and judicial hearings. They also help each of the delegates in their process of running for positions within the program such as Youth Governor or Speaker of the House through practicing interview questions and giving speeches. As a whole, each delegate grows in character and confidence.

In the end, Youth in Government feels nothing like an AP Government or Political Science course. It is much more than memorizing definitions or tests - rather, it is a series of life lessons that teens can use for years on end after being encouraged by a welcoming family of entirely different backgrounds, nationalities, and personalities. The Malden Delegation encourages all interested members to speak to Karen and learn more about this wonderfully fulfilling program.



### **State Representative Steven Ultrino Visits Malden YIG** **By Jenny Wen**

Recently, Massachusetts State Representative Steven Ultrino visited the members of the Malden YMCA Youth in Government program for a Q&A session. He was sworn in this January to represent the 33rd Middlesex District, and prior to this election, Ultrino served for several years on the Malden City Council.

Being a resident of Malden, Ultrino

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feels strongly about being part of helping it grow. The delegates within the program were able to ask him questions about these future plans as State Representative and focused on his involvement with “Malden Moving Forward.” When asked what he felt was the biggest issue for Malden, and also the Commonwealth, one of the concerns was on the labor system. He felt that the country’s foundation was built on the middle class - they worked hard, raised a family, and made a living. However, recently, that’s been disappearing, and the gap between the classes is increasing. The decrease of the middle class in corporate welfare creates conflict in sustaining their living and for future retirement plans.

Now, 1% of this country is controlling 60-80% of the wealth in this country, which is a detrimental issue. On his part, Ultrino wishes to look at how corporations are treating their workers and making sure they make and get enough. The minimum wage was recently raised a dollar for the next three years, an amount Ultrino believes still isn’t enough as he hopes to influence a larger increase.



Ultrino also looks at education with great value, bringing up, what he believes, to be another main problem in the Commonwealth. There is, and always has been, an apparent struggle with money distribution in the school system. According to Ultrino, the issue comes down to the funding formula. Each town or city gives out a certain amount of money to each system, and the problems lie in how much money is being given to them. In order to properly and sufficiently fund an area, there has to be a reasonable and equal distribution of that money. Ultrino knows that the city’s schools and programs have students with the potential to be future collegiates, and having them lack certain financial needs is damaging their future. He feels it is necessary to work on looking at all the variables, like healthcare and public functions, and also local aid based on the needs of the specific town. Though healthcare and public functions are essential, he feels there just isn't enough left to benefit the schools.

There is only so much a politician can do to change and persuade his people, so as individuals, Ultrino pleads that everyone should get involved in the community and politics in any way possible. He remembers always helping out and going to his local church in order to get involved, and he's starting to see a lack of that in Malden. There are countless citizens who don't know what's going on in their own town, and they don't even know the names of the people who represent them - yet those are the

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people making choices for their lives. Whether it's through community service, programs such as Youth in Government, volunteer work, or simply sitting at your computer and looking up your district representative, it's vital to build and bring together the town you call home.

## Spotlight: Patricia Luong

By Cindy Siu



Youth in Government (YIG) is a YMCA program that involves young adults from various parts of Massachusetts and acts as major influence in their lives. Malden High School student and Malden Delegation Leader, Patricia Luong, was one of the first and braver souls that took an opportunity to join this student government. Since then, she has grown in public speaking, making connections, and leadership. Just like the evolution of mankind has come a long way, Patricia Luong has had her life evolved greatly by her experiences in YIG.

**C: The Malden Delegation has been running for 3 years. As you've been one of the first delegates, how did you get involved?**

*P: I was actually part of the Malden Y Leaders at first and they mentioned a program that would be providing a free stay at a hotel and free food; so, I thought, 'hey, free housing and free food!' But, what made me stick to the program was the fact that I grew so much as a person and academically. I thought, 'oh my gosh, this program helped me to become the person I am right now. I want this to be a part of my life as long as possible.'*

**C: What is your role in the program and your favorite part of the position?**

*P: This year, I get to work with the Youth Governor. I'm in the Governor's Cabinet (so the executive branch) and my favorite thing about being in the Gov Cab is giving my opinion on bills. We don't really have speaking privileges, but I kind of like that, because it gives me an opportunity to walk around the House and the Senate to see delegates from both chambers engaging in debates. It also gives me the role of being the supporter. I have the ability to write notes or talk to people during recesses and*

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*encourage them to speak. I think that's so powerful and so empowering for both the delegate and myself. I'm able to give newer delegates that extra push and the confidence to speak.*

**C: Were there any major influences that led you to make the decisions you did in YIG?**

*P: Our advisor, Karen Gately, is just a hugely influential person in YIG and especially in my life. She really shaped me into the leader I aspire to be and I remember one quote that she told me. It was from Maya Angelou, and she said "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." That quote really stuck to me. That's what powered me through the decisions I made in the program and also outside the program.*

**C: When there were challenges and obstacles on your journey in YIG, how were you able to overcome them?**

*P: I was definitely able to overcome the challenges and obstacles with the support of my delegation. I think because that we meet weekly, it really just helps tie everyone together and get everyone familiar with each other. Karen's so supportive and she really tries to bring out the best in people. She truly believes that everyone in the delegation - if they wanted to run for a position or even run for Youth Governor - would win, and I think her support and her sheer belief in every delegate drove me to overcome these obstacles.*

**C: Do you believe you've changed from participating in Youth in Government?**

*P: I was so shy; I was one of those kids that would sit in the very back of the room. I wouldn't want to raise my hand even if I had a genuine question. I wouldn't want to raise my hand even if I had a really good answer. I was just afraid of speaking out and voicing my opinions. But YIG really gives you a platform to voice your opinions and practice your speaking skills in a space where no one will judge you. That really helped me to grow, so I went from being really shy, really introverted, and really not confident in myself to being more confident and being able to voice my own opinions.*



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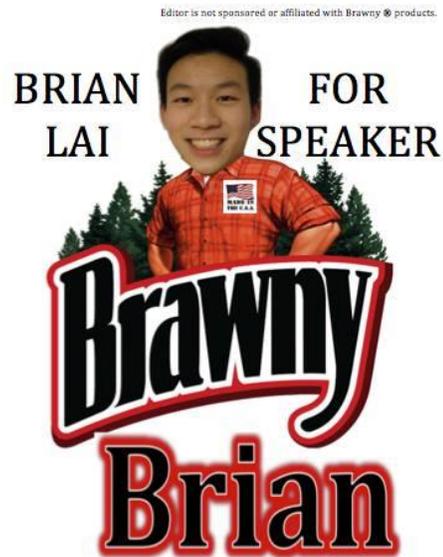
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**C: If you could travel back in time to when you joined the program, what would you tell yourself?**

*P: If I could travel back in time, I think I would tell myself, especially as a first-year, to not be so shy because I think it wasn't until my second year and especially after CONA (Conference on National Affairs) that I really started to branch out and say hi to new delegates from other delegations and kind of just have that confidence to talk to new people. My first year, I was really shy. I was like, 'oh my gosh, what if I say something stupid, or like what if I mix up the legislative branch with the lobbyist branch and then people are going to laugh at me.' But, I really wish I was able to be there to give myself some wise words. I would tell myself to get out there, meet and sit with new people, and just make myself comfortable around everyone.*



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