

**UNITED WAY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY & MERRIMACK VALLEY**  
**INSPIRE 4 LIFE: SUMMIT ON YOUTH**  
**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: KAREN PITTMAN, FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT**

On January 29, 2008 at the World Trade Center in Boston, about 650 community stakeholders gathered for an inspiring day that became the impetus for a community-wide effort for youth. The “**inspire 4 life: Summit on Youth**” began with a standing-room only presentation by Karen Pittman, Executive Director of the Forum for Youth Investment. Karen charged the group with developing a “big tent” idea and provided a strategic framework, compelling research and a demonstration of how Massachusetts could align ideas, resources and stakeholders to make a difference for youth. After her keynote presentation, she spoke with a small VIP group of about 25 high-level state government leaders, foundation leaders, and UW major donors. These discussions created an energy that lasted throughout the day. This highly motivated group agreed and called for all to take the next step to utilize the Ready By 21 framework to assess the data, develop a common big picture idea and rally around a goal for community-level change.

The event brought together representatives from community-based organizations, state government agencies, elected officials, businesses, schools, UW and affiliate board members, higher education, researchers, and advocates. The theme followed United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley’s key message: *the importance of adult-youth relationships to inspire and engage youth to be safe, stay in school and graduate with options for the future, as responsible, involved citizens.* We organized the Summit to engage discussion and examine best practices around UWMBMV’s access, quality, and policy strategies: providing high quality programs for at-risk and high risk youth, matching youth with adult mentors, strengthening staff skills around relationship-building and engagement of youth, connecting schools and afterschools, using research-based outcomes measurement tools, and seeking systemic change through public policy.

The day concluded with the formal launching of a new community engagement campaign titled: **inspire 4 life** with the adult-youth relationship message: be there for youth, inspire them for life. Our vision is for this to be a community-led campaign powered by UWMBMV. We had a strong show of support with our first lady of Massachusetts, Diane Patrick leading the movement by signing-on. In addition, present for the sign-on, were representatives from the Mayor’s office in Boston, the MA. Executive Office on Health and Human Services, the MA. Department of Youth Services, the MA Department of Social Services, the MA. Department of Public Health, the MA. Department of Education, the MA Office on Early Education and Care, and the Governor’s Office on Civic Engagement.

One of the goals of the event was to “go public” with the UWMBMV strategy and work. We wanted to let people know what UW is all about- what we stand for- and see the results of our many, many initiatives, products and tools that can be scaled out to the larger community. We also wanted to use our community relationships and leadership skills to stimulate a community impact effort with a nationally acclaimed strategy and consultant, Karen Pittman. By all measures this was a phenomenal success. We believe we are now well-positioned to discuss how we can move forward. In the next few weeks, we will be developing next steps to build on the momentum we have now created in the sector. We will also be working with Karen Pittman to identify ways in which we will continue to engage her.