

Youth Venture gives creative students a boost

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A new creative outlet has opened at Merrimack High School this year: Youth Venture, a nonprofit organization that provides people ages 12-20 with the means and opportunity to start and sustain a program that will positively influence the community.

When Youth Venture starts at a new school, a "Youth Venture Champion" is named – a coordinator who facilitates communication between students and the Youth Venture organization. The Youth Venture Champion at Merrimack High is Carolyn Rordam of the art department.

Any group of two or more students can fill out an application detailing the proposal for their project, goals and a business plan showing how the \$1,000 of seed money given to each venture would be spent. Any funds outside the initial startup money must be raised by the "youth-preneurs."

Once the application is complete, the members of each venture group present their proposal to a panel for final approval.

Each group also is required to have one "ally" – an interested parent, teacher or other adult to serve as an adviser.

The organization doesn't focus on one topic or field of interest; instead, any topic in which a group has an interest is a potential Youth Venture.

The BioDiesel program at MHS, whose goal is "Saving the World One French Fry at a Time," is working on generating biodiesel out of french fry grease to run a bus purchased by Tray Sleeper, an adviser and science and videography teacher. BioDiesel started as an independent program, which then joined with Youth Venture.

Junior Jane Starke, senior Noelle Joubert and junior Melia Robinson are working on a program called Pure Water for the World. The group plans to raise money by setting up vending machines around Merrimack, the proceeds of which will be sent to Pure Water for the World to buy water filters in Honduras, where water contamination is a significant problem. Each of the filters costs \$75.

Students interested in starting a Youth Venture can contact Rordam.

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