

Beacon Hill Byline by Sue Scully

August 30, 2004

Sue Scully, Administrative Aide in my office, attended an Upward Bound session at Northfield Mount Hermon School this summer, and she returned to the office with a glowing report about the program. At my invitation, she is sharing her experiences with Byline readers this week. – Mary Rogeness

Upward Bound

There was a time when going to school in the summer months was considered one of the least desirable ways to spend one's summer vacation. The threat alone, passed from parent to child, was enough to make any daydreaming student get back on track for the remainder of the school year. Sure, going to school could be fun, but not having school for two blissful months was always much better.

Recently, I met with a group of young adults that did not completely share this point of view. I was invited to the Northfield Mount Hermon School to meet with the participants of the school's Upward Bound Program. [The Upward Bound Program](#) is a federally funded initiative to assist low-income high school students from Holyoke, Springfield, and Franklin County. Once accepted into the highly competitive program, students participate in a six-week intensive "summer academy." When they return to their home schools, they are provided with such services as year round tutoring, advising, after school programs, test preparation and leadership development. Most of these students represent the first generation in their family to go on to college, and they are not shy to tell you so.

Upon arrival at the school, I was greeted by Theresa, a high school junior from Springfield. She told me that this was her second summer attending Upward Bound, and she looks forward to these six weeks all year long. As my guide for the day, Theresa led me to the school's auditorium, where we sat and listened to various testimonies of how Upward Bound has altered individual students' lives.

One young man described how he was the first person in his entire family to even graduate from high school, much less consider going to college. He was introduced to the Upward Bound program by his high school guidance counselor after his freshman year, and attended the program for the next three summers. He said he really had no idea what college really was; he had heard of Yale and Harvard, but he thought those were places that people went to work. He is now entering his sophomore year at Brown University on a full scholarship.

After the morning program, we headed over to lunch, prepared by some of Northfield's culinary students. I was placed at a table with six students, most of whom attended school in Springfield, all of whom impressed me to no end. Three of the students, in addition to English, spoke Spanish AND French. One was adding Chinese to his resume; another was working on Italian. The meal was filled with questions and comments, which continued throughout the remainder of the program. What did I think of the MCAS? Was it fair to charge students to participate in extra-curricular activities?

What was my opinion on English immersion classes? While I thoroughly enjoyed the give and take of the conversations, perhaps my favorite question of the day came toward the end: Will you come back next week for my birthday party?