



# The Merrimack Valley Project

## Where We've Been - 2023

**2020 Listening Campaign** - As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, MVP's in-person Listening Campaign went online from March through October. During this time, MVP leaders held over 20 listening sessions with member groups and allies, engaging over 200 community leaders, to hear their worries and concerns relating to both COVID-19 and the racial justice movement. These listening sessions helped identify trends that will inform MVP's work in 2021.

**Immigrant Justice Campaigns** - MVP leaders have continued to lead the way in calling for immigrant justice throughout the region. This past year, MVP was a regional lead for both the Safe Communities Act and the Work and Family Mobility Act. MVP gained the public support of 7 Valley legislators for this latter bill at the end of July. MVP will continue working on these campaigns throughout the fall and will continue earning the support of our region's elected officials in the hopes that both these bills receive a floor vote prior to the end of the year.

**Addiction & Criminal Justice Campaign** - From January 22nd through June 30th, MVP's pilot transportation program, Wheels of Hope, provided over 100 individuals with free rides to treatment. This program continued to provide services even during the ten-week quarantine, showing continued demand. This fall, MVP criminal justice leaders are working with state legislators to earn a second year of funding, with the goal of making the program a permanent part of the state budget by next summer.

**Worker Justice Campaign** - As the regional lead of the Raise Up MA coalition, MVP has continued to be the leading advocate for worker justice in the Merrimack Valley. In 2020, MVP worked with the statewide coalition on a critical bill for emergency paid sick time. Currently, the bill is being considered in the Ways and Means Committee, and MVP and its members will continue to advocate for its passage, should it end up on the floor for a vote.

**Food Insecurity** - In March, MVP worked with a coalition of over a dozen faith communities in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover to address the critical need of providing food to our immigrant and low-income communities. Reuniting with the Gas Leaks Allies, MVP organized first with local bodegas, and then with the Boston Area Gleaners, to create leadership teams that distributed weekly food donations to over 120 families in the region.

**New Experiences** - Moving into the virtual world for much of 2020 provided MVP with some new, exciting opportunities. In late June, MVP hosted its annual Delegates Assembly online, bringing over 30 leaders together in an online space. In June and July, UMASS professor Dr. Bob Farrant and Boston University professor Nathan Phillips joined MVP as guest speakers for our online House Parties, designed to share the work of MVP. In August, MVP officially welcomed new Board members Jane Hucks and Tom Raiche to our team with an online Board retreat. This year's MICAH Awards Celebration has been re-designed to safely include as many members as possible.



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## Where We're Going - 2024

**Listening Campaign Analysis** - In October, MVP leaders will be convening during our Annual Convention to review what we are hearing from our communities. Moving forward, we will be sharing these reports with our chapters and will be discussing our findings with community allies to see if there are regional campaigns that can arise from what we discovered. MVP organizers will also be doing a deep dive with leaders from MVP's three chapters, to identify ways to strengthen the organization throughout 2021.

**Immigrant Justice Campaigns** - MVP will continue to serve as a regional lead for the Safe Communities Act and the Work and Family Mobility Act as needed. MVP will also continue supporting the Merrimack Valley Interfaith Sanctuary Network, as it continues to aid a Lowell-based asylum-seeker with financial support and resources for over 20 months. If feasible, MVP will also restart our Know Your Rights workshops, provided by our allies from the Northeast Justice Center, for our local immigrant communities.

**Addiction & Criminal Justice Campaign** - MVP criminal justice leaders will continue to advocate for sustained funding for their regional transportation program, Wheels of Hope. Throughout the fall and first half of 2021, MVP will be collecting testimonies from community advocates, and will be engaging the Department of Public Health to ask that the program be permanently funded as part of its budget, starting in July of 2021.

**Worker Justice Campaign** - MVP will continue to advocate for workers' rights throughout the region via the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition. MVP will be active in the spring of 2021 when the Fair Share Amendment, or millionaire's tax, will be up for a vote, potentially putting it on the ballot for the fall of 2022.

**Food Insecurity** - MVP will continue to support the efforts of the interfaith team dedicated to providing weekly food donations to over 120 families in Greater Lawrence. MVP's Lawrence chapter will be involved in the work not only to support the immediate efforts but also to provide leadership opportunities for new and emerging leaders in the region.

**New Experiences** - MVP will use what it learned in 2020 to continue to create a culture of inclusion in 2021. This will include having bilingual information sessions and fundraising events, as well as having opportunities to interact and to collaborate via the Zoom video messaging platform. MVP will also continue the process of having weekly check-in calls with our members who do not have access to technology, as a way to insure their voices and concerns are heard and addressed.