I. Background

Youth of color and youth from underserved communities rarely have the opportunity to enter to the tech industry. African Americans and Latinos represent less than 7% of the workforce at Google, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, and other large tech companies. Lack of access to early tech education results in underrepresentation of minority groups in collegiate computer science (CS) programs. Lacking "diversity" in college CS programs results in the lack of diversity that we see in the tech industry.

MyRise was contracted by the Stone Soup Leadership Institute to pilot the Institute's leadership curriculum and platform alongside MyRise's pilot program in Holyoke, MA.

Holyoke has a history of being innovative and technologically disruptive. However, it is one of the poorest Massachusetts and even U.S. communities. It is full of youth that have the capacity to contribute amazing ideas to the tech industry but do not have the opportunity.

MyRise is a pre-college coding academy that provides high school aged youth with the opportunity to enter the tech industry. The 10-week pilot was conducted from February 3rd until April 13th. Session were held on Wednesdays from 3:30pm-5:30 pm and on Saturday 12:30pm-3:30pm. The graduation with students and their families was held on May 4 at the Holyoke Library.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute is a 501c3 non-profit organization founded in 1997 on the island of Martha's Vineyard. Its mission is to provide educational tools, technical assistance and leadership training to develop young people to become leaders of a sustainable world.

The Institute's Education Curriculum has been used in over 120 communities for the past 20 years to teach empathy to young people and prepare them to help address social, environmental and economic challenges of the 21st century. Over the last 20 years the Institute has developed youth-community initiatives in inner cities of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Oakland and rural/island communities in Hawaii (Oahu, Lanai, Hawaii Island), Massachusetts, Puerto Rico and Virgin Gorda (BVI).

II. Overview

MyRise creates pathways into college and into the tech industry by teaching youth the same technical and soft skills utilized by professionals to create meaningful websites and web products. We taught HTML, CSS, JavaScript, basic command line, GIT, and simple project management methodologies.

We received twenty-four applications for our pilot program and had a maximum of twelve slots. 9 of the accepted students successfully completed the program and graduated from the 10-week program. Of the twelve accepted students 5 of them were young women and 7 of them were young men.

In addition to teaching "hard" technical skills the pilot program covered lessons on leadership and soft skills. The Institute's Executive Director Marianne Larned wrote her book, *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*, on the Islands of Martha's Vineyard and Hawaii in 1996-1997. Over the past 19 years, the book and its accompanying curriculum have been refined and used 120 communities to inspire young emerging leaders. This year, the Institute built a Global Leaders Platform to support emerging leaders interested in creating youth enrichment programs.

MyRise served as one of the first user's of the online platform. The online platform provides users with a calendar system, video chat functionality, a participant progress tracker, and curriculum management tools. The platform hosts the book used to teach the soft skills curriculum in Spanish and English. The book is a collection of anecdotal stories of global leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Eleanor Roosevelt, and a myriad of other change makers.

The MyRise pilot program covered 1 story each week during the 10-week program. The stories selected for the program are below and can be read at: *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes* - Book In English - or *Pan Y Vino Para El Camino* - Book In Spanish.

1. Sidewalk Sam (pg. 12-14)

2. Teaching Jazz, Creating Community (pg. 20 -22)

3. The Power of an Idea (pg. 31-33)

4. She Kept Her Promises (pg. 38-43)

5. Everybody In America Is Helping (pg. 45-47)

6. Viva! Barrios Unidos (pg. 84-87)

7. Democracy in Action (pg. 96-100)

8. A Messenger of Hope (pg. 111-115)

9. Not Such a Silly Goose (pg. 126)

10. Ashley's Big Plans (pg. 127-130)

III. Testimonials:

The skills I learned will impact me for the rest of my life. Gave me a head start into my future.

H. -MyRise Alumni
(High School Junior)

This program has inspired me to do great things and follow my passion of computer coding.

M. -MyRise Alumni
(High School Senior)

They gave me the skills I needed to start making websites. They're great!

Y. -MyRise Alumni
(High School Junior)

IV. Projects

Each of the MyRise students worked in a group to complete a paid client project. They demonstrated their ability to interview a client, conduct independent research, and deliver an insight driven web solution. Two client projects completed:
1. The landing page for the Institute's TouchStone Leaders Platform
2. The Institute's project on Martha's Vineyard: MVYLI's Virtual Field Station

TouchStone Platform Landing Page   MVYLI's Virtual Field Station
    TouchstoneLeaders.com   VirtualFieldStation.com
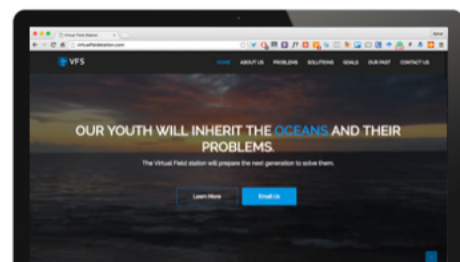
impact metrics are modeled through our theory of change. We measured:

• The students that go on to work in tech as (Hires/Founders)

• The amount of youth served;

• The amount of program grads that declare CS as a major or minor in college, the amount of paid projects completed;

• The number of people that our grads teach tech skills to in their communities;

• The number MyRise grads belief that they can work in/ study computer science, and the amount of grads that get internships.


Our theory is that providing youth from communities underrepresented with tech with access and opportunities to traverse the barriers that they have been subjected to can lead to a tech workforce that is representative of the U.S population.

These metrics provide us with an immediate, medium-term, and long-term insight

III. Outcomes
• 9 youth completed our program.

• 9 youth completed a client project that they were paid for.

• 100% of our seniors got into college (3/4 declared CS as a major).

• 100% of our graduates expressed that they would refer the program to a friend.

• 88% of our graduates expressed their perceptions of the tech industry changed.

• We delivered two client projects and completed our first cohort.

As our program graduates go on to do wonderful things in their lives and in the world, we will continue to monitor how many of them complete computer science degrees, enter the tech industry, and create jobs for others.

College	CS Degrees	Would Refer	Perceptions Changed
100%	75%	100%	88%
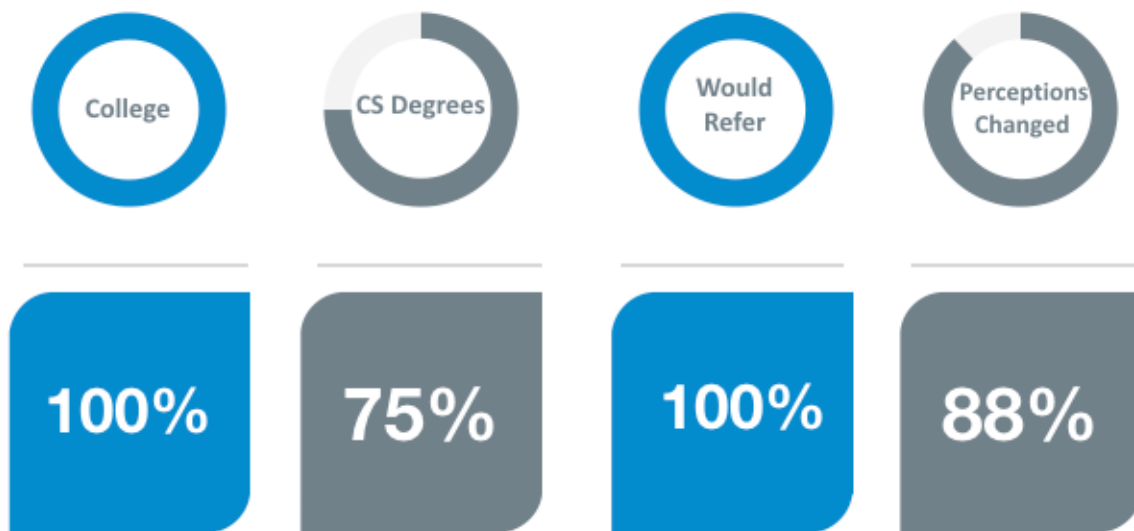
As we taught the Institute's curriculum based upon *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*, we tracked the progress of our students using performance metrics developed by the leadership institute. Our findings were that the program participants improved in 80% of the areas that were monitoring. These included: Project management skills, Communication, Teamwork, Conflict-resolution, Problem solving, Adaptability, and Critical-thinking.

We conducted pre and post exams using the Institute's Performance Metrics. On average students reported that they completed work on-time 11% higher than they did before completing MyRise.

On average students reported that they were 99% more likely to ask for help if they don't have enough time to complete a task than they did before completing MyRise.

IV. Lessons Learned

I am originally from Oakland California. I attended public schools my entire life, and I never considered a career in computer science until getting to Hampshire College. I

was never pushed to explore the topic and stumbled into it during a freshman course at Hampshire College. My exposure to web development provided me with a life changing opportunity. I founded MyRise to provide youth from underserved communities with the opportunity to enter an industry that they otherwise would not have access to. MyRise is quite literally my rise to where I am in life and my lived experience.

"Don't be a lone wolf."
The importance of building community relationships and a support network became clear the moment I entered the community. Whether it be recruiting students, learning about Holyoke's history, gaining support/credibility, or developing ways to holding fellows accountable. Community must be at the heart of community organizing. Without community, all efforts will be short-lived.

"Create a culture that represents what the program aspires to."
I've learned that when working with high school aged youth, setting the tone of the environment in the beginning of the program is incredibly important. Unlike a high school class, fellows do not have to attend the program. It is an opportunity that many of our community members and loved ones do not have. Establishing a space that students come to because they want to not because they are being told/forced to have an incredible impact on retention and assignment completion.

"Afford yourself more time than you think you may need."
Whether it be launching the program, recruiting students, distributing invitations, or planning field trips, things come up and it is important to afford yourself enough time to comfortably accommodate things that come up.

"It is ok to make mistakes…just learn from them."
I made many mistakes throughout this process, and I learned an incredible amount because of them. When making mistakes acknowledge them, reflect on them, and do your damnedest to not make it again.

"You need to be fully committed"
You cannot have one foot in and one foot out when doing this kind of work. It is not fair to the beneficiaries that you are working for or to the communities that you are working within to be anything else than fully invested in the youth you are working with and the intervention that you are building. The intention must be there to do the work and to learn from mentors, community members, and experienced organizations.

VII. Recommendations

• **Program Management:** When I began teaching in class, I soon realized that he needed more assistance in the classroom. We got away with having two instructors in the class, but really thrived when we had 3 instructors in class.

• **Motivators:** Gamifying the curriculum through a badge system would provide program participants with a goal based timeline for completing curriculums.

• **Build Local Partnerships:** Partnering with colleges and existing community organizations in or near intercity communities would allow the Institute and MyRise to build sustainable relationships and programs to support the needs of the community.

VI. MyRise Summer Program/Next Steps

The 10-week model during the school year makes sense, but isn't the appropriate or most accessible model during the summer. Reducing the length of the program and increasing its frequency youth programs to serve more youth. The suggestion for the summer is holding 2-week sessions that meet 5 days a week from 9:00am-4:00pm.

We will use the lessons learned to improve upon our program offerings and the experience of our program participants.

VI. Recommendations for other inner city communities

Below I have identified other cities that might benefit from our offerings:
Springfield, MA
Oakland, CA
Roxbury, MA
Bridgeport, CT
Hayward, CA
Poor Area's of Menlo Park, CA
Amherst, MA
Detroit, MI
Rochester, NY

VII. More Resources:
   • MassLive wrote an article on MyRise. The link can be found here: MassLive Link

- Video of MyRise's Graduation Ceremony can be viewed here: MassLive Link
- Photos of MyRise can be found at myrise.org/photos
- The Performance Metrics designed by the Institute are attached.