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JULY 8 & 9

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self-directed  
LEARNING  
FOR TEENS  
[northstar teens.org](http://northstar teens.org)

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# North Star

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For gifts that made the Smirkus experience accessible to low-income families, we are grateful to River Valley Co-op and Peter Danford.

## **Thank you to:**

Jodi Lyn Cutler  
Gary Bernhard  
Tara Brewster  
Heather Hemphill  
Albie Murri  
Loran Saito  
Sue Sumner

...and all the volunteers and  
homestay families who  
made this possible!

...and YOU for coming to  
see the show!

## **North Star's Board of Directors**

Gary Bernhard, Chair  
Tara Brewster  
Anan Eisenstein-Bond  
Emily Harding-Morick  
Heather Hemphill  
Mark Kopulos  
Sue Sumner  
Maria Vijil-Davis



what is

# NORTH STAR?

North Star is a **customized educational program** for students ages 12–18 who prefer to pursue their learning **outside of traditional schools.**

North Star is committed to working with any interested family, regardless of their ability to pay the full membership fee. Your ticket purchase to Circus Smirkus today helps make that possible. **Thank you!**



# Summer Family Programs *at the Co-op*

Join us at our Easthampton location on select Thursdays this summer for **FREE** family-friendly programs led by Julia Latady, a local micro-farmer, environmental educator, and the owner of Mud & Mycro.

These programs are designed for kids, but everyone in the family is welcome to attend! Registration is not required. To see the full list of dates and classes, scan code or visit [rivervalley.coop](http://rivervalley.coop)



**river valley co-op**

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# how does **NORTH STAR** work?

## **A New Way to Approach Learning, Education, and Life**

North Star staff focus on the individual's particular strengths, needs, and goals. We meet teens where they are and support them in becoming who they want to be.

## **A Customized Academic Plan**

Together we envision and map a personal educational approach based on the teen's interests, while also fulfilling the family's needs.

## **Personal Advisor**

Through regular meetings with an assigned advisor, we help teens imagine and realize goals, track progress, and facilitate tutorials and community connections.

## **Parent Conferences**

North Star staff support families in the transition out of traditional school. Regularly scheduled meetings are opportunities to envision possibilities and review achievements.

## **Classes, Workshops, and Tutorials, and Beyond**

North Star offers a rich schedule of classes, workshops, and private tutorials. Most classes have fewer than ten students. Each student chooses his or her schedule based on personal interests. North Star also supports opportunities for learning through other programs, internships, volunteering, and community colleges.



# We Support North Star



**We support North Star Teens  
and their Families  
and offer them all our best wishes  
for fulfilling, successful lives.**





the story of  
**NORTH STAR:**  
teens, parents, alumni & staff

**EACH** teen and each family experiences the benefits of North Star differently. Here are a few notes we've received:

*"North Star changed my life. It propelled me down the pathway of self directed education, and enabled me to pursue my interests in an unbounded way. During my time at North Star, I was exposed to many positive ideas and possibilities.*

*North Star represents a culturally significant shift in how we view education, from centralized and standardized, to decentralized and flexible. I'm excited to see a future where we adopt the North Star approach for quality learning experiences for people across the world."*

—Crew F., alum

*"Attending here made me the successful adult I am today. It saved my passion for learning that was getting tamped down in a local high school. The excellent staff, teachers, and mentors exposed me to a broad array of knowledgeable passionate people who served as role models. This environment helped me take my passion for learning and grow it into the ability to quickly turn my hand to new tasks, whether it's a new technology for work, fixing something around the house, or trying a new recipe in the kitchen, North Star gave me the skills to pick it up quickly. This skill has served me well throughout my life, in college, at home, and in my job as a software developer."*

—Sphennings W., alum

*"Our daughter was not thriving in school. I had heard about North Star and thought it might be a good fit for her. It turned out be a great choice! She has made friends, she has had the opportunity to debate philosophy, learn psychology, and pursue her love of math. She actually wants to go to North Star in the morning!"*

—Suzanne C., Alumni parent

*"I've just received news that I got accepted as a transfer into Rochester Institute of Technology's game design program, one of the most competitive departments in the country, that doesn't even consider transfers most of the time. This wouldn't have been possible without all your help and encouragement! [North Star] helped me through my roughest and darkest time of my life. I don't know where I'd be if it weren't for you. You have an amazing program that allows kids to learn in an environment that is more personable and allows you to do what you want, based on your choices and passions!"*

—Alex R., Alum



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# what about **COLLEGE?**

You do need a high school diploma to go to college. It's true.

For twenty-three years, North Star has been helping teens pursue admission to a variety of colleges and other institutions of their choosing. We help teens who wish to prepare for the HiSET and SAT.

Here are just a few of the colleges, professional schools, and other institutions that North Star alumni have attended:

The Five Colleges: Mount Holyoke, Smith, Hampshire, and Amherst Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst

Greenfield Community College  
Holyoke Community College  
Springfield Technical Comm College

Bennington College  
Bard College  
Berklee College of Music  
Brown University  
Colorado State University  
Columbia University  
Earlham College  
Ithaca College  
Lesley College

Manhattan School of Music  
Marlboro College  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)  
The New School, New York City  
Northeastern University  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Simon's Rock at Bard  
Springfield College  
Sterling College  
UMass Medical School  
University of California at Berkeley  
University of Connecticut  
University of Vermont  
Warren Wilson College  
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# NORTH STAR

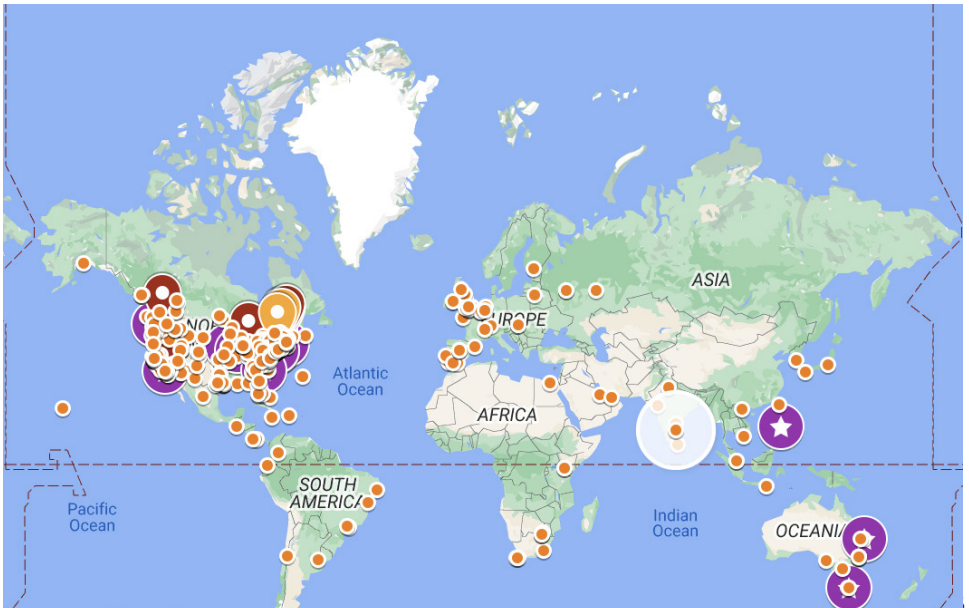
is leading a movement

North Star is the flagship organization for an international movement in educational reform. Programs all over the world are replicating the North Star model to enable more teens in more communities to be agents of their own learning.

To see them on an interactive map, or for more information, visit [www.LiberatedLearners.net](http://www.LiberatedLearners.net)

*“Settling for ‘normal,’ and using all of one’s energy to cope is no way to thrive during adolescence. How about waking up excited? Taking risks? Declaring interests? Going places that matter?”*

—From a TedX Talk by  
North Star Co-Founder and Executive Director Ken Danford  
(Hear Ken’s entire talk on YouTube!)



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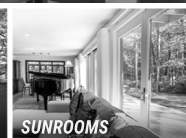
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a few

# NORTH STAR

facts

North Star was founded in 1996 by **TWO MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS.**

Most North Star teens go on to college, including schools such as **BROWN, COLUMBIA, MIT, and AMHERST COLLEGE.**

North Star students are **NOT REQUIRED TO TAKE THE MCAS.**

North Star offers **INDIVIDUAL TUTORING** in a wide variety of subjects.

North Star families report **LESS STRESS, INCREASED COMMUNICATION, and IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS.**

Our staff to student ratio is usually about **1:4.**

A traditional high school diploma is not necessary for success in any area of life. All doors are open to non-traditional learners, **AND OUR MEMBERS PROVE IT.**





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a few of the

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in 2022-2023

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North Star Band  
Homebrewery (for  
Dungeons & Dragons)  
Introduction  
to Computer  
Programming with  
Video Games  
Hiking Group  
Yoga Practice  
Garden Club  
Anatomy & Physiology  
is Just the Beginning  
Social Issues  
Film Analysis  
Self-Directed Math

Desserts (Sweets &  
Treats)  
Science: Matter &  
Motion  
Bread  
Advocacy for  
Neurodiverse and  
Neurodiverse-Allied  
Individuals  
Plato for Tyrants  
Liberated Learners  
Restorative Practices  
Let's Build a World  
Community Meeting  
The Scientific  
Revolution

Service Trip to  
Washington, DC  
Hands-On Math  
Open Maker Room  
Volunteering at  
Amherst Survival  
Center  
Playmaking  
Creative Writing  
American Sign  
Language Study  
Group  
Electronics  
Banned Queer Book  
Club  
Dungeons & Dragons





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a glimpse into

# LIFE at NORTH STAR

Classes





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# LIFE at NORTH STAR

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## Theatre





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# LIFE at NORTH STAR

## Community Meeting





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## Visit from UMass Fernald Club (Insects!)



# LIFE at NORTH STAR

## Annual Bake-a-Thon for Amherst Survival Center



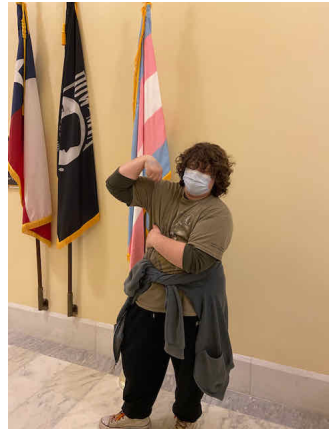


# LIFE at NORTH STAR

## Trans Day of Visibility



# DC Service Trip





# LIFE at NORTH STAR

## Hikes







# LIFE at NORTH STAR

## Friends!







# LIFE at NORTH STAR









# Learn more about **NORTH STAR!**

Make an appointment for a tour and information session. Meet our Executive Director Ken Danford, and ask questions of staff and current teen members.

Ken@NorthStarTeens.org  
(413) 582-0193  
45 Amherst Rd.,  
Sunderland, MA 01375

You can also learn more from our website:  
[northstarteens.org](http://northstarteens.org)

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