



2025 IMPACT REPORT



A Letter from Our Director

Across rural Maine, young people are showing us what it looks like to care deeply for the places they call home and the people who live there. At JustME for JustUS, we exist to protect and uplift this care. As I reflect on this year, I'm reminded that real change begins not with talking points, but with relationships, creativity, and the courage to show up for one another, even when it means taking the long way around.

Across Washington, Hancock, Piscataquis, Aroostook, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Penobscot counties, young people gathered in libraries, on shorelines, in living rooms, and around campfires to talk about what their communities are facing, and about what they're hopeful for. They discussed food security, advocated for Wabanaki self-determination, and made space for mental health and healing through art and nature. In places often described as divided, our Rural Youth Organizers led with curiosity and respect, reminding us that connection is not lost, but practiced. Through youth-led forums and community gatherings, Rural Youth Organizers turned conversations about housing, climate, and economic opportunity into action, showing that community engagement can be welcoming, nonpartisan, and deeply human.

We are grateful for the partners, mentors, educators, neighbors, and funders who continue to stand with JMJU and believe in the leadership of rural youth. Together, we are building something steady and lasting, rooted in trust, care, and shared responsibility.

As you read this Impact Report, I hope you feel what we feel every day: pride in rural youth, gratitude for community, and hope for what's possible when young people are given the space to lead.

With gratitude, *Laura Bither*



THE 2025 HIGHLIGHT REEL

- Convened a Wabanaki Sovereignty Legislative Team to foster cross-ideological learning, dialogue, and advocacy at the State House
- Engaged students in climate resilience and STEM learning in politically polarized communities
- Hosted art-and-action workshops blending creativity, civic learning, and nonpartisan dialogue
- Launched youth advisory groups and community forums focused on housing, affordability, healthcare, and livability
- Elevated youth leadership through tabling, workshops, and presentations at festivals, conferences, and statewide events
- Mobilized rural youth for statewide civic engagement, including the Youth Day of Action
- Co-hosted our first public training and fundraiser, Community Power in Polarized Times, with Building Bridges Maine, equipping communities with tools for depolarization while sustaining rural youth organizing



THE YEAR IN REVIEW



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Rural youth are the leaders and decision-makers in our work. We invest deeply in rural Maine so that young people can shape a thriving future for all.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our organizers lead meaningful nonpartisan civic engagement, expanding access, participation, and youth voice in decision-making.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our impact is only as strong as our partnerships. We are proud of our commitment to investing in rural Maine's future while remaining connected across the State.

BUILDING CONNECTION

JMJU creates bold spaces for learning, dialogue, and trust-building in often divided and isolated areas.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

For 47% of our Rural Youth Organizers, JMJU was their first experience with an activity or organization focusing on issues of community or environment. We invested over \$3,200 in youth stipends and supported youth-led projects that grew confidence and experience to build lifelong leaders.



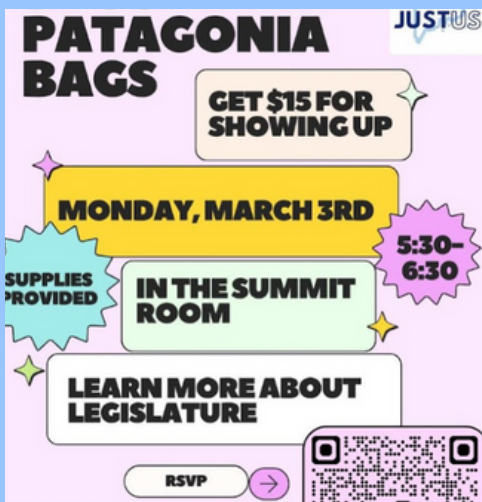
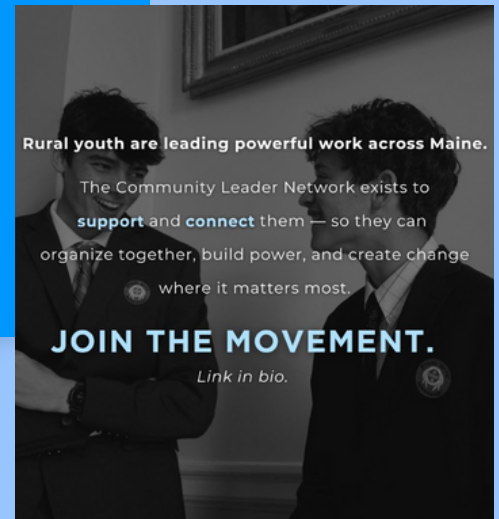
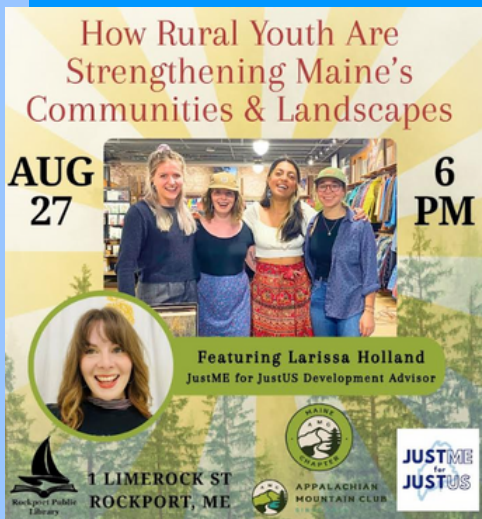
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2025, JMJU directly engaged 360+ rural youth. Our Rural Youth Organizers advanced meaningful nonpartisan civic engagement through legislative outreach, issue education, and youth-led forums, strengthening access to democratic participation and expanding youth voice in local and statewide decision-making.



PARTNERSHIPS

In 2025, we doubled our core partnerships and deepened collaboration with state-wide coalitions, schools, and community organizations. Our team led conference presentations, spoke as featured keynote speakers, and served on advisory councils and panels for organizations and government entities across the State of Maine.



BUILDING CONNECTION

JMJU convened 70+ youth-led discussions and events, including intergenerational spaces with 140+ non-youth community members. In events like our 20+ depolarization-focused conversations, we continue to equip communities with tools to navigate complexity, reduce polarization, and build shared understanding.



WE'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR DONORS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT.

We are deeply grateful to our funders, including the many individual donors who collectively make up one-third of our funding - a testament to our community's commitment to our rural youth. Your generosity and trust fuel youth-led programs, community conversations, and organizing efforts across rural Maine. By investing in young people, you help ensure rural voices are heard, valued, and empowered to lead.

Thank you for believing in our mission and walking alongside us.

Elmina B. Sewall
FOUNDATION

patagonia®



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026: BUILDING RURAL YOUTH POWER THAT LASTS

As we reflect on the momentum we've built together, we're excited to share our goals for 2026. A few things to look out for include:

- The first-ever Rural Youth Voter Guide
- Voter registration drives at rural high schools and nonpartisan youth-led vote work around the 2026 elections
- A scaled up statewide rural youth network built through trust-based relationships, the foundation of our work.

We need your support to make 2026 a year of transformative impact for rural youth - and for Maine's future! To donate today, please visit our [fundraising page](#). Together, we can ensure young people across rural Maine have the tools and resources they need to lead.



THANK YOU TO OUR TEAM

This work is only possible because of the care, commitment, and leadership of the people behind it. To our staff, organizers, and board: thank you for showing up with courage, creativity, and deep care for your communities. Your leadership, persistence, and willingness to learn and grow together are the heart of JMJU's impact.



Akouvi

Penobscot County RYO



Alison

Hancock County RYO



Bella

Kennebec County RYO



Camden

Oxford County RYO



Dani

Hancock County RYO



Grace

Aroostook County RYO



Isabelle

Franklin County RYO



Isi

Washington & Hancock
County RYO



Kai

Washington County RYO



Madeline

Aroostook County RYO



Megan

Kennebec County RYO



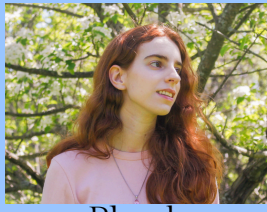
Nico

Kennebec County RYO



Nina

Penobscot County RYO



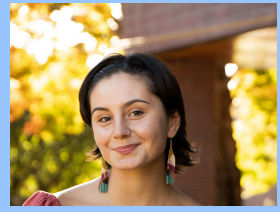
Phoebe

Somerset County RYO



Roz

Advocacy and Social Media
Coordinator



Ruby

Oxford County RYO



Rubyanne

Franklin County RYO



Larissa

Development Advisor



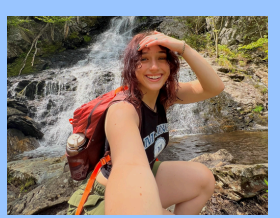
Whyatt

Oxford County RYO



Laura

Director



Zanna

Penobscot County RYO



Edgelynn

Board Chair



Red

Board Treasurer



Ella

Board Secretary