

January 2026

Dear Student Leader:

Congratulations! We are pleased to inform you that you have been nominated to participate in the **UthMpack Leadership Program**, an exciting program offered by InnerAct Alliance, StandUP Polk Coalition, UthMpack Coalition, and key business partners designed to help youth develop crucial leadership skills.

Approximately 40 Polk County high school students will be chosen, based on demonstrated scholastic achievement and community leadership experience, to take part in this 9-month program that offers a unique opportunity to experience the inner workings of local government, health and wellness, business (for and not for profit), and law enforcement. Involvement will help to further cultivate leadership skills and may be advantageous to you in other ways, including valuable exposure to top employers in the county and possible future scholarship opportunities. Additionally, you will have an opportunity to share the knowledge and skills you learn with peers at your high school.

Participants will spend six school days (with excused absences) once per month (September through March, excluding January) traveling throughout the county to meet with key community leaders, learn about the services they offer, and discuss the challenges that face our community now and in the future. The program is provided at no cost to the school system or to the participating students. Participants are required to attend a retreat in the summer for a fee of \$30 (scholarships are available).

Themes for the UthMpack Leadership days include: Volunteerism; Health & Wellness; Law Enforcement; Government; Business; and Planning Day. Participants will enjoy behind-the-scenes facility tours and participate in hands-on learning experiences. Each day will conclude with a general meeting at which students will meet with their peers, report about their experience, and address issues and solutions to better our community.

The Polk County School Board and your school Administrators support this effort and have empowered us to reach out and invite you to apply for this great program.

Here is what you need to do.

- 1) Fill out the attached application.**
- 2) Submit 2 essays.**
- 3) Return your application and 2 essays to your school office (then to be sent through the school courier), mail them in with the enclosed envelope OR email them to Samantha.barwig@inneractalliance.org by Friday, February 27, 2026.**
- 4) Before sending, be sure that you and your parent/guardian have signed the application.**

Again, congratulations on your nomination! If you have any questions about UthMpack and/or the UthMpack Leadership Program, please contact Samantha Barwig, UthMpack Coalition Coordinator, at (863) 802-0777. Applications will be reviewed by current UthMpack members, and you will be contacted in early/mid-April 2026 via email and by letter sent via regular mail regarding acceptance.



Application for Leadership Program (please print neatly)

Name: _____ Nickname: _____ Gender: F or M

School: _____ Age: _____ Birthday: _____ Graduation Year: _____

Do you speak a second language fluently? Check: Yes No What language(s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ **Student's Cell #** _____

Student's Shirt Size: (Circle) S M L XL 2X 3X

Student's Email Address (*Main form of communication*):

Student's Social Media: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ **Parent/Guardian Contact #** _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ **Parent/Guardian Contact #** _____

Parent/Guardian Email Addresses: _____ / _____

The **UthMpack Leadership Program**, spearheaded by InnerAct Alliance, the StandUP Polk Coalition, the UthMpack Coalition, and key business partners, is designed to help youth develop crucial leadership skills. Approximately 40 students will be chosen to participate in this 9-month program that offers a unique opportunity to experience the inner workings of local government, health and wellness, business (for and not for profit), and law enforcement. Participants will spend 6 school days (with excused absences), once per month (September through March, excluding January), meeting with key business, government, and community leaders across the county to discuss the challenges that face our community now and in the future.

The students chosen for the UthMpack Leadership Program must have demonstrated scholastic achievement and/or community leadership experience and possess a desire to further cultivate their leadership skills. **It is also required that participants pledge to be alcohol, tobacco, and drug FREE to set an example for their peer group.** Additionally, any and all schoolwork that is missed on days spent taking part in the UthMpack Leadership Program must be completed.

Eligibility will also require missing 6 days of school, with each day lasting from 6:45 a.m. – 6:45 p.m.

If you meet the above requirements and wish to participate in the UthMpack Leadership Program, please sign below, along with your parent or guardian.

Deadline: Please return signed form and essays by **Friday, February 27, 2026.**

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature



Application Essays for Leadership Program

Applicants for the UthMpack Leadership Program are required to complete 2 essays using the subject prompts listed below. ***You must respond to one question in each of the two sets of questions listed below. Each of the essays must be a minimum of 250 words, typed in double-space, with a maximum of 500 words, and be submitted on separate sheets of paper. No handwritten essays will be accepted.***

Set One

1. Describe one significant impact you can make on your community. Why is this important?
 2. How have you been a leader in your community? How do you perceive that this program could help you to become a better leader?
 3. Define what teamwork means to you.
-

Set Two

1. Describe your past community service experiences. How have they benefited your community?
2. Describe, in detail, one specific time that you solved a problem.
3. What qualities make someone a good leader? Why?



UthMpack Leadership Program 2026 - 2027

Parent and Student Information Meeting	April 29, 2026
Personality Training + Training Retreat	July 22, 2026
Business Etiquette Dinner	August 26, 2025
Leadership Day	September 2, 2026
Project HOCO Distribution Days	TBD Saturdays in September/October 2026
Leadership Day	October 7, 2026
Red Ribbon Run (5:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the very latest)	October 31, 2026 (Saturday)
Leadership Day	November 4, 2026
Leadership Day	December 2, 2026
Leadership Day	February 3, 2027
Project Prom Distribution Days	TBD Saturdays in February/March 2027
Leadership Day	March 3, 2027
Leadership Graduation (Evening event)	April 7, 2027 (parents/guardians invited)

Things to Remember:

- UthMpact Members will receive an excused absence from school for each Leadership Day (i.e., September 2nd , October 7th , November 4th , December 2nd , February 3rd , March 3rd).
- There are 6 UthMpact Leadership days and Coalition meetings. Each day begins at **6:45 a.m. and will end at 6:45 p.m.** at the Polk County Sheriff's Office, 1891 Jim Keene Blvd., Winter Haven.
- UthMpact Members can only miss **one** Leadership Day during the entire year. Leaving early at any time during a Leadership Day will be considered an absence. No student can drive themselves, they must be picked up from current location IF leaving early!
- Please **eat breakfast** before you arrive. Lunch will be provided. **Parents will share the responsibility for dinner and snacks.**
- Community Service Hours will be earned during the Leadership Days, the Coalition Meetings, and all other events attended.

Leadership Class XVI Graduation Requirements:

There are 5 mandatory events outside of the 6 Leadership Days. They are:

1. The **Parent and Student Information Meeting on the evening of April 29th** at the Polk County Sheriff's Office (1891 Jim Keene Blvd., Winter Haven) – attendance at this meeting is **mandatory** for the parent/guardian, as well as all UthMpact Leadership Class XVI members. Before the parent meeting, all paperwork and the \$30 retreat fee must be turned in.
2. **Personality Training on July 22nd** – during this half day training, students will learn about their personality and how it applies to leadership. They will learn how to communicate with others who may differ from them and explore different scenarios through various exercises.
3. **UthMpact Leadership Retreat on July 22nd** – this half day retreat will feature nationally-known motivational speaker, Mr. Patrick Grady, as well as team building activities and a chance for the members of Class XVI to get to know each other.
4. **InnerAct Alliance's Annual Red Ribbon Run** will take place on the morning of **October 31st** at Lake Mirror in Lakeland. InnerAct Alliance allows UthMpact to have a concession stand to raise funds for college scholarships for qualified members. **Every UthMpact student will be there from 5:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. - NO Exceptions!**
5. Complete an additional **30 hours** within UthMpact through various events. Events will be announced at each Coalition Meeting.