



Legislative Watch List for 2011 targets actions that impact business

The Chamber constantly monitors government actions that impact local businesses. This means the creation and support of business-friendly initiatives as well as discouraging proposals that hurt business.

Elected officials rely on the Chamber as the “voice of business” --and they pay attention, since job creation--that businesses provide--is a top priority for voters.

This monitoring is a major benefit of Chamber membership, and one of the tasks that most business owners very much want, but are unable to do themselves.

So, on behalf of all members, the Chamber’s Government Affairs Committee devises action strategies in its annual Business Plan. The creation of a Legislative Watch List is included in that plan.

This is the thirteenth consecutive year that the Chamber has established a legislative watch list. This list serves as a starting point. The Government Affairs Committee may recommend positions on additional issues pending before the legislature during

their 187th session--if they either positively or negatively impact the region’s economy.

The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce considers the following initiatives to be our top legislative priorities and form the Chamber’s 2011 Legislative Watch List.



Ken Gurge, Esq.
Chairman
Government Affairs
Committee

- Support efforts to control healthcare costs while minimizing the financial and administrative burden on Massachusetts businesses. Momentum continues to build behind efforts to control the cost of health care through innovations such as tiered networks and payment reform.

The committee is exploring several proposals now before the General Court, including: impose a moratorium on health insurance benefit mandates; change the definition of Minimum Creditable Coverage by allowing deductibles to keep pace with medical inflation; change the Fair Share Contribution statute to exempt employees with spousal coverage; requiring Medicaid patients to enroll in managed care to better manage and coordinate the care, particularly for those patients with multiple chronic conditions; requiring Medicaid to lead payment-reform efforts through a pilot program; merge the Medical Security Trust Fund with the Health Connector’s Commonwealth Care (the state’s primary health insurance program for uninsured adults); and repeal section 304 of Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004, which requires the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to produce

a list of employers who have 50 or more employees using public health assistance each year.

- Resist legislative efforts to mandate a paid sick-leave and any other mandated employee benefits that discourage job creation.
- Support legislation to provide cities and towns with the authority to determine plans and change health insurance co-pays and deductibles--at least up to the level of the co-pays and deductibles in comparable plans that the commonwealth offers to state employees.
- Support efforts to realign Unemployment Insurance benefits so they are more comparable to other states and reduce costs to Massachusetts employers. Beacon Hill lawmakers are poised to freeze Unemployment Insurance rates and head off a 40 percent increase that took effect January 1.
- Oppose any attempt to alter the Workers Compensation Reform law that would result in increased premiums for employers.
- Support legislation to increase state funding for public higher education while preserving the autonomy of local boards of trustees at state and community colleges.
- Support increased funding from the state rooms-tax for regional marketing through the state’s Regional Tourist Councils.
- Encourage efforts to repeal the burdensome federal IRS 1099 reporting requirements for small businesses included in the health reform bill. A key objective of

Continued on Page 3

New Members

Please welcome & patronize these businesses--

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Ms. Jean Hubbard
(978) 627-4299
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Fitchburg, MA 01420
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Mr. Dave Wojnas
(508) 341-3285
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ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Sponsored by  **LCU**
Leominster Credit Union

Holiday Blue Laws

-- Memorial Day is Monday, May 30

- Federal, state and municipal offices, the Chamber office, schools & most banks are closed.
- Retail stores and businesses may not open on Christmas.
- Retail, grocery stores and package stores as well as manufacturers and other non-retailers--if open--may be restricted to voluntary employment or overtime pay. For specific exceptions concerning mandatory/voluntary hours or extra, holiday compensation, or for more information, see: www.mass.gov/dos/bluelaw/index.htm

Legislative Watch List... *Continued from page 1*

the Chamber this year is rescinding an onerous provision of federal health care reform that requires businesses to file 1099 tax forms for every vendor that sells them more than \$600 worth of goods or services. Recently the US Senate voted, 81 - 17, for an amendment that would do away with the reporting requirement. The US House of Representatives is now expected to move forward with legislation to rescind a provision of the health reform law.

- Support efforts to secure state and federal funds for key local infrastructure projects that support economic development including, but not limited to: high-speed passenger rail service; improvements to Route 2; and, upgrading sewer capabilities for the Johnny Appleseed Visitor's Center.

- Support funding for Regional Economic Development Councils as outlined in the Economic Development Reorganization Act, unanimously enacted by the General Court and Governor in 2010.

McKeehan to head ACCE Benefit Trust

Chamber President David McKeehan, CCE, has been elected chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) Benefit Trust—ACCE's insurance and retirement plan. Representing more than 7,300 chamber professionals, ACCE is the only national association serving the professional development needs of individuals managing chambers of commerce throughout the United States and Canada.

ACCE Benefit Trust, led by a volunteer board of trustees composed of seven chamber executives from across the country, oversees the ACCE insurance and retirement plans, with assets over \$200 million, on behalf of the ACCE chamber-member participants. Their loyalty is to every ACCE member employee participating in the many ACCE benefit plans.

Committed to the chamber profession, McKeehan has served as a trustee of Benefit Trust; chairman of ACCE's Fringe Benefits, Inc.; and vice chair of ACCE's board of directors. He is past president of both the New England Association of Chambers of Commerce Executives (1998-99) and Massachusetts Association of Chambers of Commerce Executives (1998). In 2001 and 2007, he was recognized by ACCE with the Chairman's Professional Leadership Award.

- Stand firm against efforts to increase the tax classification rates for cities & towns and continue to encourage cities & towns with dual rates to roll them back.

- Oppose efforts to raise taxes, especially the personal income tax rate, sales tax, and capital gains tax.

- Support full funding for the state's \$21 million workforce training grant program. In recent report the Massachusetts Secretary of Labor announced news about increased opportunities to address the skill needs of businesses and workers in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund program is seeking applications from businesses for grants of up to \$250,000 for investment in employee training. See <<http://www.mass.gov/wtf>>

Plastics firms showcased at region's largest industry event

Area businesses that are involved—in any way—with the plastics industry, will have plenty to see and do at the upcoming massPLASTICS trade show on March 15 & 16, 2011. Three diverse seminars are being offered at no charge to attendees and exhibitors—and attendance is free with pre-registration. Reserve online at www.massplastics.com.

The event is produced by the Chamber every 18 months, and exhibitors consistently rave about their success and positive experience, citing numerous leads—and sales—that result from contacts on the show floor. It has proven to be the most cost effective way to reach customers and prospects in the Northeast marketplace.

The Chamber has been able to keep the cost of a booth at the 2009 level. It's not too late to reserve a booth by going to http://www.massplastics.com/exhibiting/floor_plan/default.cfm or call show manager Dick Quinlan at 978-353-7600 x 234.

The show this year is being sponsored by Autodesk, Inc. a California-based firm that creates 2D and 3D design software for the manufacturing, construction, and media markets.

After the last massPLASTICS show many exhibitors were so impressed they reserved for the March 2011 show right away. As one example, Mark Hamilton, president of Hamilton Plastics, Inc., based in New Hampshire, stated, "Three days into the post show follow-up and we have already 'more than paid for' the investment from new and existing accounts. Great job to the massPLASTICS crew for pulling this together, especially during this economic environment..."

On the show floor, seminars will feature several experts, including speakers from the Plastics Engineering Dept. at UMass Lowell discussing bio-engineered polymers; representatives from Nypro, Inc., on the future of plastics worldwide; and Robert Pojasek, PhD, on sustainability plans, resource management and the positive affects on ROI.

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Guest for March 11 is Lt. Gov. Tim Murray

Tim Murray has had a diverse public career dealing with Worcester's, and the state's, challenges of economic development, improving public education, and protecting the environment. He will be the featured guest at the March 11 "Good Morning" breakfast.

Prior to his election as lieutenant governor, Mr. Murray was first elected to the Worcester City Council in 1997 and became mayor in 2001. He served as mayor of Massachusetts' second largest city for three terms.



Tim Murray

As Lieutenant Governor, Tim works closely with Governor Patrick on the important issues facing our commonwealth. He is the liaison to cities and towns and is working hard on transportation issues, particularly the improvement and expansion of commuter rail, disaster recovery policy and brownfields redevelopment.

Mr. Murray is a Worcester native and the oldest of five children. He attended Worcester public schools, St. John's High School in Shrewsbury, and graduated from Fordham University. Tim earned his law degree from the Western New England College School of Law in Springfield and became a partner in the Worcester firm of Tattan, Leonard and Murray.

Prior to his elective service, Tim was active for many years in a wide range of community initiatives. He served on the boards of the Worcester Public Library, Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Community Action Council, the Worcester Working Coalition for Latino Students and Preservation Worcester.

Tim is married to Tammy (Sullivan), an occupational therapist who works with school-age children. Tim and Tammy live in Worcester with their daughters, Helen and Katerine.

This breakfast will take place on Friday, March 11th. The sponsor is Medical Arts Hearing Instruments.

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Good Morning Breakfast

Breakfast events start at 6:45 a.m. with coffee and buffet breakfast, at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel Leominster, 99 Erdman Way off Route 12 at Rte 2. To reserve, see the back page or for more information call 978-353-7600, ext. 235

May 13 breakfast slated for Chamber Foundation scholarship awards

The region's most outstanding high school seniors are recognized at graduation time each spring with scholarships from the North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation.

On May 13, Chamber members meet the scholarship winners when a total of \$45,500 in 24 scholarships will be awarded at the "Good Morning" breakfast. HealthAlliance is the sponsor for the breakfast, which is moderated by Barbara Foster.

Chairman for the Scholarship Committee, Jack Doolin, senior vice president of human resources at Workers' Credit Union, works with his group to select scholarship recipients from among college-bound seniors in the Chamber's service area.

A number of scholarships are permanently endowed. Some of these were established to honor individuals in the business community. Endowed scholarships include: Edward C.J. Healey Scholarship for \$2,000; Roderick W. & Donna M. Lewin Scholarship for \$2,000; Salny Family Scholarship, for \$2,000; Benjamin Asher Scholarship for \$2,000; Ronald Ansin Scholarship for \$2,000; Barbara Silva Scholarship for \$2,000; and, two from the Chamber Foundation at \$2,000 each.

Several annual scholarships are funded by donors this year. These include: Adams Family, \$2,000; Chamber Golf Tournament, \$4,000 (two at \$2,000 each); Enterprise Bank & Trust, \$2,000; Harry Doehla Foundation, Inc., \$4,000 (two at \$2,000 each); Micron Products, \$1,500; Rollstone Bank & Trust, \$2,000; HealthAlliance Hospitals, Inc., \$4,000 (two at \$2,000 each); Ramsey Rehabilitation, \$1,500; Ross Mortgage, \$2,000; and, Workers' Credit Union, \$2,000.

Our newest scholarships are in memory of Ruth Lee. For more information about the scholarship program, call Marissa at 978-353-7600.

To reserve for May 13 use the back of this newsletter.

HUMAN RESOURCES COUNCIL **HRC**

HRC events are from 11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. in the Chamber Conference Room and include lunch. Use Page 8 to reserve.

The Chamber's Human Resources Council hosts a monthly seminar series that focuses on a wide range of labor issues and employer/employee relations. These topics are important whether you have a single employee or 1,000. All business owners and managers are encouraged to take advantage of this very affordable program. Guest speakers are top experts in the fields of HR, labor relations and the law.



Bob Vear

March 16 topic is 'Conflict: Causes & Solutions'

Bob Vear is president and founder of Change Dynamics Inc., a Training and Organizational Management Consulting company in Ayer, in business since 1996.

Mr. Vear became interested in consulting and organizational education as a High Performance Organization participant at Digital Equipment Corporation in 1992, setting the strategic direction for 25,000 employees of the services group. Bob has worked as a manager, project manager, coach and individual contributor in high-tech, customer service, engineering and manufacturing organizations, and has lead several successful product teams and programs.

In this interact presentation, he states, "We'll talk about what conflict is, what generally causes conflict, and what happens if conflict is left unchecked. We'll also discuss how people sometimes react to conflict situations, discover tactics of avoidance or resolution, and finally provide a suggested approach to managing and resolving conflict effectively at work, or even at home.

Conducting an HR audit is presented on April 20

Participants will learn about, "Performing a Human Resources Audit" at the April 20 HRC seminar. This important task involves checking your employment practices and policies for compliance and consistency.

Presenting the topic is Atty. Marylou Fabbo, a partner in the firm Skoler, Abbott & Presser, PC, of Worcester. Ms. Fabbo joined the firm in 1995 and became a partner in 2001. Her practice is concentrated in employment law with an emphasis on employment litigation. She has successfully defended employers in civil actions involving many areas of employment, including sexual harassment, discrimination, wage and hour, FMLA, breach of contract, and wrongful discharge.

Marylou is admitted to practice in Massachusetts and Connecticut. She is the co-author of "Insurance Coverage for Employment Claims in Massachusetts," 18 WNEC L.Rev. 255 (1996). In addition, she is an associate editor of the Massachusetts Employment Law Letter. Marylou was an adjunct faculty member at Western New England College School of Law and is a frequent speaker on employment-related legal topics for a wide variety of associations and organizations. Boston Magazine has recognized her as a "Super Lawyer."

It's **HYPE**, and it's **COMING SOON**

The Chamber is gearing up for a new networking group for young people in business--under forty--called HYPE (Helping Young Professionals Emerge). This new effort will connect fun, energetic, business-minded people.

If you are interested in learning more about this group . . . please come to our first meeting -- see Page 8 to reserve:

6 p.m., Thursday, March 31, at Apple Hill Farm & Country Club, 143 Joslin Street in Leominster

join us for

- spectator sports, outdoor sports and activities
- art gallery/museum visits, concerts, wine tastings
- career development
- networking & happy hours
- educational presentations
- CEO roundtable discussions
- community involvement—volunteering

Feedback sought: What does your company need?

The Chamber's Human Resources Council is here for all members with employees, whether it's one or 1,000.

The purpose of the North Central Mass Chamber's Human Resources Council (HRC) is to bring timely and informative seminars to all HR professionals, managers and employees who are responsible for compliance. Hosted monthly (September through May), we work to keep all the businesses in the region up-to-date on the latest governmental and regulatory changes.

Our HRC programs are a great, low cost, local way to keep you and your employees educated. HRC allows you to get the training you need, right here in Fitchburg. No need to travel to Worcester or Boston.

We are currently looking for *your feedback*. Tell us what your company needs, to stay ahead of the curve.

To find out more about our programs, to offer topic suggestions or get involved, please contact Marissa at (978) 353-7600 X235 or e-mail TORRES@MASSWEB.ORG.

New Chairman Profile

Gordon Edmonds heads team at Leominster CU

As president of Leominster Credit Union, Gordon R. Edmonds sees the mission of his organization mirroring that of the Chamber. He states, "We view the credit union's role as... supporting whatever the city's initiative is--or the Chamber's."

"We have 125 employees here who can help the city out. We can provide a team and [participate in projects] that give back to the community."

He describes activities his employees do behind the scenes. "One Saturday, we sent people to unload a tractor trailer for Habitat For Humanity. [Local support] does not always come down to the check you can write... It can go way beyond a check. LCU is a great corporate citizen."

Serving on the Chamber Board of Directors is a great way to connect with business owners, he adds, "I need to be out in the community... creating opportunities, supporting my organization and supplying resources."

LCU has seven branches, two of which are in high schools. "We do make small business loans," he notes, "It's a new thing for a lot of credit unions that are getting into it recently. The credit union industry," Mr. Edmonds points out, "can be a pleasant change from commercial banks [since there are] no stockholders... or mergers to worry about."

Mr. Edmonds has been at the helm of LCU for almost 10 years and worked at a number of financial institutions before that, including Hanscomb Federal Credit Union, CFX Bank in Keene and a Vermont bank. He was born in North Adams and graduated from Southern Vermont College after a stint in the U.S. Air Force, which he refers to as "my other career." since he spent 16 years in the USAF Reserves.

For time outside work, Mr. Edmonds says he enjoys, "travel, golf, biking and kayaking. I love sports, not that I participate in a lot of them. I also volunteer on the boards of R-Cap Solutions, Habitat For Humanity, the President's Council at HealthAlliance and Fitchburg State University." He and his wife Gail have two grown children.



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

April 13 - Wednesday -- 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Anwelt Heritage Apartments
One Oak Hill Road, Fitchburg

Do you know about Fitchburg's newest eco-friendly living community? Come check out one of our hidden gems, Anwelt Heritage Apartments, as you make new contacts and reconnect with friends at the Chamber's Business After Hours networking event. It will be on Wednesday, April 13, from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Anwelt Heritage Apartments, located at One Oak Hill Road in Fitchburg is a living community along the Nashua River, offering spacious one and two bedroom apartment homes.

Members are encouraged to bring clients and associates to enjoy a relaxed, casual atmosphere. Bring plenty of business cards. Hot hors d'oeuvres and other treats will be offered and beverages will be available. Meet other Chamber members, and get the word out about your company.

May 19, Thursday -- 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Buffalo Wild Wings, 150 Whalon Street
K-Mart Plaza, Fitchburg

See what's happening at Buffalo Wild Wings as you make new contacts and reconnect with friends at the Chamber's Business After Hours networking event on Thursday, May 19, from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Buffalo Wild Wings, located at 150 Whalon Street in Fitchburg is the newest tenant in the K-Mart Plaza. BWW offers its famous wings as well as other fare including burgers, wraps and flatbreads. Come check out the patio and enjoy some spring weather!

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HealthAlliance Hospital, 60 Hospital Road, Leominster MA 01453
www.healthalliance.com



Executive Women's Network

'No Time, No Waste Marketing' is focus for March 2

At the March EWN event, participants will discover "No Time, No Waste Marketing – No Kidding!"

Presenting this topic is Alyssa Dyer, She is currently the chief executive for Mint Green Marketing which provides affordable expert marketing help to companies ranging from large multinationals such as Nokia, Pitney Bowes, IBM and Choice Hotels to up-and-coming smaller companies all over the world. Dyer is the author of several books including, No Time Marketing and Software Product Management Essentials. She is a regular contributor to Software Magazine and has also been published in numerous media including Forbes, BusinessWeek, Entrepreneur, and Chief Marketer.



Alyssa Dyer

During her presentation, she will discuss key points, including: how and why strategic marketing makes all the difference in every business decision; the different dynamics and methods of marketing – social media, traditional, online, etc.; a simple process for developing a quick and useful marketing plan for your business; and, the key questions you need to answer BEFORE you invest time or money on anything.

She states, "Do you know the best marketing strategies for your business? Should your company be on Facebook, use direct mail, create a newsletter, utilize e-mail, or simply continue cold calling?"

This workshop will help you save critical time and money by helping to construct a clear and concise plan that will identify the best possible marketing methods for your specific business."

"Following the No Time Marketing process," she continues, "we'll discuss how to take digestible strategic steps towards achieving your highest marketing ROI ever!"

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Executive Women's Network seminars are free *guests bring their own lunch*

These lunch events are from 11:45 a.m. - 1.30 p.m. and unless indicated otherwise, are held at the Leominster Lodge of Elks, 134 North Main Street in Leominster.

Each EWN brown bag lunch event includes the opportunity to promote your business or service with a tabletop display for the duration of the lunch and workshop. Exhibitors may set up on a 2' x 6' table, available to Chamber members for \$30 and nonmembers at \$50.

Use the back of this newsletter to reserve a table top. Contact Marissa Torres at (978) 353-7600, ext 235 or tores@massweb.com for more information.

Learn 'poise & power' at the podium on April 6

Learn how to engage and impress your audience with tips on managing nervousness, organizing your material, presenting strong arguments, and delivering a speech with pizzazz! Professor Gail Steele provides guidelines and suggestions for becoming a more polished speaker in the classroom, at meetings, and in your community.

Gail Steele has been professor of speech and theatre at Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner since 1977. She has a B.A. in speech and theatre from Bridgewater State College, and an M. A. in communications from Miami University in Ohio. Besides teaching courses in public speaking and theatre, Ms. Steele is director of Theatre at the Mount, the premier, regional theatre of Central Massachusetts.

For May 4, EWN 'goes' to the Bolton Fair

Rose Darden, manager of The Bolton Fair will address the group on May 4. She will speak briefly about the history and day-to-day running of the Fair as well as the year-long preparation for organizing this event. She will also focus on how she balances her life with spearheading one of the country's oldest fairs. What are the challenges she faces? They may be the same, or radically different from what you deal with in your business.

One recent challenge the Fair suffered was a fire in December, and the staff is working diligently to get everything "back on track."

Attendees will also find out how to market your own business while helping out at the Fair, an opportunity can expose your business to 25,000 attendees... *at no cost.*

Coming Events

Season Ticket holders must confirm attendance—
Please call (978)353-7600

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NorthCentralMass.com (USPS 773-650) is published quarterly by the North Central Mass. Chamber of Commerce, 860 South Street, Fitchburg, MA, for \$5.00 per year which is withheld from annual membership dues. Periodicals postage paid at Fitchburg, MA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NorthCentralMass.com, c/o North Central Mass. Chamber of Commerce, 860 South Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420.

Thursday, March 3 **BEN 'Energy Efficiency' Seminar**

830 - 10 a.m.
Chamber Conf. Rm.
Free for members

March 11, Friday *Good Morning*

6:45 - 8:30 a.m.
Four Points Hotel
by Sheraton Leominster
99 Erdman Way

March 31, Thursday

HYPE

6 - 8 p.m.
Apple Hill Farm
143 Joslin St., Leominster

Mar. 2, Wednesday Apr. 6, Wednesday May 4, Wednesday

EXECUTIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK

'Brown Bag' lunch seminar
11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

April 13, Wednesday Business After

Hours
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
One Oak Hill Road
Fitchburg

Mar. 16, Wednesday Apr. 20, Wednesday May 18, Wednesday

HRC

noon-1:30 p.m.
Chamber Conf. Rm.

May 13, Friday *Good Morning* Scholarship Breakfast

6:45 - 8:30 a.m.
Four Points Hotel
by Sheraton Leominster
99 Erdman Way

May 19, Thursday

Business After Hours

4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Buffalo Wild Wings
K-Mart Plaza, Fitchburg

Return the entire following portion of this page, including address label. **Please include payment.**

date	event	#tix	members	non-members	total
3/2	EWN ['BrownBag' free] Table Top	_____	\$30	\$50	\$ _____
3/3	Bus. Envir. Network seminar	_____	--	--	\$ _____
3/11	GOOD MORNING Breakfast	_____	\$21	\$40	\$ _____
3/16	Human Resources Council	_____	\$20	\$35	\$ _____
3/31	HYPE networking under-40	_____	--	--	\$ _____
4/6	EWN ['BrownBag' free] Table Top	_____	\$30	\$50	\$ _____
4/13	Business After Hours	_____	\$10	\$15	\$ _____
4/20	Human Resources Council	_____	\$20	\$35	\$ _____
5/4	EWN ['BrownBag' free] Table Top	_____	\$30	\$50	\$ _____
5/13	SCHOLARSHIP Breakfast	_____	\$21	\$40	\$ _____
5/18	Human Resources Council	_____	\$20	\$35	\$ _____
5/19	Business After Hours	_____	\$10	\$15	\$ _____

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CHAMBER ACTIONS

This section samples activities of Chamber departments & committees in recent weeks.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUNDING: Staff worked with other regional EDCs, across the commonwealth, to secure a line-item for \$400,000 in the Supplemental Budget Bill adopted on the last day of the legislature's session and signed by the Governor. As one of eight recognized such organizations in the state, the North Central Mass. Development Corporation will be considered for some funding in this fiscal year (ending June 30th).

ELECTED OFFICIALS RECEPTION: The North Central Chamber in conjunction with the Greater Gardner, Nashoba Valley and Wachusett Chambers of Commerce hosted the Elected Officials Reception on November 18th. This event saw over 130 members and elected officials from all over the North Central region. It was a great opportunity for members to meet and greet officials as well as business men and women from other chambers.

WELCOME HELP: Chamber staff is very pleased to have the assistance of three interns, from Fitchburg State University, this semester. Russell Antoine will be working on several economic development projects. Vanessa Montiero will bring her graphic design skills to all areas of programming. And, Julianne Richard will bolster PR and marketing for JATA and the Chamber.

GOOD MORNING BREAKFAST SERIES: We are more than half-way through our breakfast season. January's guest, social entrepreneur Alan Khazei, co-founder of City Year, brought in

90 business men & women. The Sentinel & Enterprise was the sponsor. We look forward welcoming Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray as our featured guest on March 11.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP: As one of the Chamber's ongoing efforts to replenish the business community's farm-team of future leaders, a committee, chaired by Darlene Bailey, senior VP at ModuForm, was established to explore the possibility of offering our highly successful Leadership Development Program. The group has met several times to plan a program for next fall. As part of this effort, they have surveyed 150 alumni of the program's last run to identify key elements from their experience.

SMALL BUSINESS SEMINARS: We continue to run free small business seminars as well as workshop style QuickBooks classes. Our free seminars are quite popular with both members & non-members, with our January growth seminar drawing almost 40 attendees. Our QuickBooks classes hit capacity at 12 for each night. We are planning another such offering in the spring.

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS: Manor on the Hill hosted an after hours event in October, attracting 53 members. The first business after hours of 2011 was February 3rd at J.D. Associates in Leominster, with 35 attendees filling the space.

UNDER 40 MAKING CONNECTIONS: A committee co-chaired by Ashleigh Gelinis, Esq. and Justin Gelinis, Esq. (The

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Energy-efficiency services and incentives for businesses outlined at free seminar on March 3 at Chamber

The North Central Massachusetts Business Environmental Network is offering a free seminar to review the energy efficiency services and incentives available to business customers. This event is for anyone interested in improving the efficiency of their current building. The agenda includes a quick environmental regulatory overview and update.

It will be March 3, 8:30 – 10 at the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce office, 860 South Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

Speakers John DiNapoli of Unifit and Mark Siegal of National Grid will review services and incentives for business customers, including systems and processes when constructing a new building. In addition, the speakers will discuss how customers can finance their share of project costs through

Mass. Bankers Association members.

Rick Reibstein, manager of outreach for the Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance (OTA), will present a "matrix" of regulatory requirements and a new funding opportunity for TUR projects

For the past few years, facilities across the commonwealth have been switching to more efficient lighting, cooling, heating, and process equipment with the help of utility incentives. But many companies were still unable to muster the capital for equipment purchases. Under the Green Communities Act of 2008, the Massachusetts Program Administrators provide common, state-wide, electric and gas programs. For those businesses where capital constraints have precluded participation in the Mass Save Commercial and Industrial Energy Ef-

iciency Programs this option removes that barrier, providing the necessary financing to allow customers to improve their operations and their energy efficiency.

The North Central Massachusetts Business Environmental Network is an informal organization open to all businesses in the region. It is intended as a safe forum for learning about opportunities to avoid or reduce costs related to environmental matters, for improving efficiency in using resources such as energy or water, and for staying up to date on requirements. It is facilitated by the North Central Mass Economic Development Council and the Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance, a confidential, nonregulatory state agency dedicated to helping companies improve environmental performance by increasing operational efficiencies.

CHAMBER ACTIONS ...CONTINUED

Law Offices of Gelinas & Ward) has been formed to establish a “young people in business” networking program for the area. This is another in the Chamber’s efforts to address the region’s leadership needs, while fostering connectivity among this demographic of our local community of business people.

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS: This year the Chamber Foundation will award 24 scholarships to high school youth, totaling over \$45,000. The Scholarship Committee held a meeting with school guidance counselors on January 28 to distribute applications and communicate any other important information. The winners will be awarded at a Scholarship Breakfast on May 13, 2011.

LOANS: Development Corporation granted two loans totaling \$85,000 since September. The newly funded companies include a new organic food distributor which will link New England organic farmers to local users (restaurants, grocery outlets, institutional users, etc) and a bowling establishment in Cleghorn. Between the two new borrowers, there will ultimately be a total of 36 jobs either created or saved.

GOLF TOURNAMENT 2011: The 2011 Golf Tournament where it has been held for the past two years. The committee is chaired by John O’Brien, senior VP at Leominster Credit Union, this year’s tournament sponsor. Our effort to solicit sponsors has just begun. Our goal this year is to exceed the revenue of 2010 in order to produce more annual scholarships.

EXECUTIVE WOMEN’S NETWORK: The Executive Women’s Network has been meeting monthly at the Leominster Elks, consistently bringing in upwards of 65 women. Topics for the remaining part of the program year will include estate planning and public speaking and presentation, in accordance with this year’s theme: Keeping on Track.

TOURISM FUNDING: The Mass Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) has informed us of first year funding for marketing by the Johnny Appleseed Trail Assn. (JATA), as our newly designated Regional Tourism Council. The JATA Board met to consider last year’s reviewed financials and adopt a budget for use of the MOTT funds.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: Real estate tax-attorney Ken Gurge, Esq. has been tapped to be the new Chairman of the Government Affairs Committee. The committee met to discuss several issues of concern and prioritize those items into a set of “Watch List” items for consideration by the Chamber’s Board. They are also planning several meetings with the area’s new state representatives and other legislators.

SALES LEADS GROUP: The Sales Leads Group continues to meet the second and fourth Wednesday of each month with approximately 25 members attending regularly. Unlike typical sales leads groups, there is no cost to chamber members, nor are there any rules regarding the number of leads provided or

meetings attended. In our on-going efforts to grow the group, as well as chamber membership, members are encouraged to bring a guest to the meetings. Non-members may attend one meeting before joining the Chamber.

CHINA 2011: Eleven people have signed up for the nine-day China Orientation visit, departing April 11th for Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou.

MAYORS MEETINGS: A joint meeting and regular monthly meetings with the mayors of Fitchburg and Leominster continue through the program year. These sessions allow business leaders from the respective cities talk about ongoing municipal projects and issues of the day.

AMBASSADORS: The Ambassador Committee, chaired by Leslie DeMonaco of Century 21 Realty Team, is limited to 10 members and continues to meet monthly. They make retention calls three to four months prior to a member’s renewal date to ensure that their expectations are being met -- allowing the Chamber time to address issues before a renewal invoice is sent out. Ambassadors meet new members at networking events and introduce them to other members to ensure a positive first experience with the Chamber.

HUMAN RESOURCES COUNCIL: The Human Resources Council hosts topics ranging from “Background Screening” to “Employing Individuals with Disabilities.” We continue to look for suggestions from members for HR-related topics.

INSURANCE OPEN ENROLLMENT: The Chamber is preparing for the open-enrollment frenzy of health insurance customers. Letters were sent out to all employers that insurance rates and plans are changing effective April 1st. We expect February through April 1st to once again be quite busy with employers looking for the best plans and rates possible

CHAMBER HOLIDAY SOCIAL: The Chamber held its Annual Holiday Social at The Fay Club in early December. The event brought in 95 members and guests for a relaxed evening of food, fun and networking. We have heard nothing but positive comments regarding this event and the host site.

VISITORS & HOSPITALITY: The production of the spring/summer edition of The Guide to Johnny Appleseed Country is nearing completion and will be available mid-March. A Facebook page has been created for JATA and is being used to promote member news as well as sales and events happening at the Center. A initiative for the displaying of banners has brought in new revenue to the Center and has offered new advertising opportunities to our members. New energy-efficient vending machines are in place, bringing in revenue while cutting operational costs. The online “store” will be in place on appleseed.org shortly, allowing customers, near and far, to purchase some of our branded items.