

Summer 2019 Edition

# chamber

*north central massachusetts report*

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## FEEDING THE ECONOMY

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# chamber

*north central massachusetts report*

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# North @ Central MASSACHUSETTS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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### About the Cover:

The cover image and feature story in this edition of the Chamber Report were selected to highlight the region's agricultural and food sectors. This complex cluster of industries has played an increasingly important role in enhancing both the character and the economy of North Central Massachusetts. See page 8 and 9 for more information on the contributions these industries are making to the region.

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# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

The Chamber continues to take an active role in advocating and engaging with policy makers on a variety of issues that impact businesses and the advancement of North Central Massachusetts. Below is an update on some of the more recent activities at the local, state and federal level.

**Federal:** The Chamber signed onto a letter from business and labor groups throughout the nation encouraging Congress to take action to address the long overdue issue of our nation's infrastructure modernization. The Chamber also continues efforts to engage with our federal delegation, most recently hosting Congresswoman Trahan at a meeting where we discussed issues such as workforce development, transportation, international trade and immigration reform.

**State Budget:** The State House is in the midst of its annual budget process. As of this printing, the Governor, House and Senate have each released their versions of the budget with mixed results for North Central Massachusetts. Several priorities around regional economic development were included, while others were not. Key legislative language that we supported was also not included. A conference committee will be appointed by the House and Senate to work out the differences and come up with a final budget.

**Education Reform:** The Chamber has taken a leadership role in



Public Affairs Manager, Christopher McDermott, testifies before the joint Committee for Education at the Massachusetts State House.

advocating for meaningful education reforms at the state level that would align with the needs of employers and better prepare students for the workplace. The Chamber testified before the legislature regarding the need to ensure every student is exposed to career exploration and workforce readiness programming while in school. We have also partnered with other business groups to advocate for greater funding for industry credentialing courses in the state's high schools.

**Transportation:** The Chamber has participated in several meetings of the Route 2 Taskforce that was formed by Senator Dean Tran. Transportation financing is shaping up to be a top issue for the legislature to address in this legislative session, so the meetings are timely and can help to better position the region for future improvements. The Chamber has also joined a



A delegation of Chamber staff and members met with Senate staff on Beacon Hill to discuss legislative priorities.

coalition of business groups from throughout the state to engage collectively on the issue of improving our state's transportation infrastructure.

**Regulations:** In addition to testifying, the Chamber also hosted a listening session on the new Paid Family and Medical Leave Act to provide local businesses an opportunity to voice any concerns they may have to state regulators. In related news, the Employer Medical Assistance Contribution (EMAC) assessment is scheduled to end on

December 31, 2019 and the administration has indicated that they are not planning to extend it beyond 2019.

**Local:** Last month, the Chamber participated in a meeting of elected officials from the tri-cities to discuss the importance of regionalism and economic development efforts. The Chamber has also been engaged in a number of issues in our local towns, most notably testifying in Sterling for proposed zoning changes that would help facilitate business growth. ♦



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## CHAMBER REGIONAL ECONOMIC STUDY

The Chamber and its economic development arm, the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation, have commissioned the UMass Donahue Institute to develop a robust data driven economic profile of the region. This economic profile is intended to provide focused data and research for North Central Massachusetts that will be used to support our economic development goals. We anticipate that the data

will be used to showcase the region, answer queries about the region, support ongoing projects and help make evidence based decisions. The customized profile is expected to combine detailed economic, labor market and socioeconomic data, as well as provide analysis on the economic conditions within the region. The project is expected to be completed by October, 2019. ◇

## CHAMBER SELECTED FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION & WORKFORCE PROGRAM

The Chamber is one of 35 state and local chambers chosen to take part in a prestigious national program aimed at addressing critical education and workforce issues. Sponsored by the U.S. Chamber Foundation, the Business Leads Fellowship Program trains and equips participants with resources, national expertise and a network of peers to build their capacity to address the most pressing education and workforce challenges.

“Businesses in North Central Massachusetts are struggling with the same challenges their peers are throughout the country,” says Christopher McDermott, Public Affairs Manager of the Chamber, who is participating in the third cohort of the program on behalf of North Central Massachusetts. “This is a great opportunity for the Chamber to actively contribute to the national conversation while learning best practices from our counterparts in other states that can help us make an impact locally.”

The Chamber was chosen through a competitive selection process. The four-month fellowship will cover the entire talent pipeline, including early childhood education, K-12, higher education and workforce development.

The objectives of this program align with the Chamber’s efforts around improving the workforce, which are most recently exemplified by the publication of our recent report Build North Central: Improving the Industrial Heart of Massachusetts. ◇

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# TOURISMupdate

## Sales Missions & Trade Shows:

International visitors account for over \$4 billion in direct spending for Massachusetts and the Chamber's tourism arm, Visit North Central Massachusetts, has been actively working to position the region as a welcoming destination to take advantage of the growth in this market.

In April, we participated in a Canadian sales mission to Toronto and Montreal that was sponsored by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. The sales mission included meetings and presentations to tour operators, travel media and other trade contacts. Visit North Central Massachusetts participated to help generate positive coverage for our region and establish meaningful media relationships. Canada is a strong drive market for the region.



Marketing and Communications Manager David Ginisi is pictured here at the Canadian Sales Mission with Keiko Orrall, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism.

In May, we participated in the 24th Annual Discover New England (DNE) Tourism Summit & International Marketplace held in Connecticut. Over 400 representatives from the travel industry participated in the event, including travel writers, receptive operators in the United States and international tour operators from the

United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and Sweden. This was the third year that North Central Massachusetts participated in the trade show and our staff had one-on-one sales meetings with over 30 international and receptive tour operators, educating them about the region and establishing important relationships and connections for our members and attractions.





**Marketing:** Visit North Central Massachusetts is conducting a spring destination marketing

campaign, which promotes spring/summer travel to North Central Massachusetts. The campaign includes a diverse mix of digital and print advertising in the Boston, NH, CT, RI and NY markets. These marketing programs – running now through July – include print advertisements in Bay State Parent Magazine; targeted digital ads; google ad words; social media giveaways; a direct email campaign; and website remarketing.

**Guide Redesign:** After the success of the launch of our recently redesigned new tourism website – VisitNorthCentral.com – we are now undertaking a major makeover of our popular print guide. The Winter/Fall issue of the Guide to North Central Massachusetts will feature a new cover layout, as well as new sections and more photos to highlight the region. The ad sizes and lay out are also getting a face lift. We are working to brand North Central Massachusetts as a great place to live, visit and play.

For more information on our tourism affiliate visit [www.visitnorthcentral.com](http://www.visitnorthcentral.com). ◇

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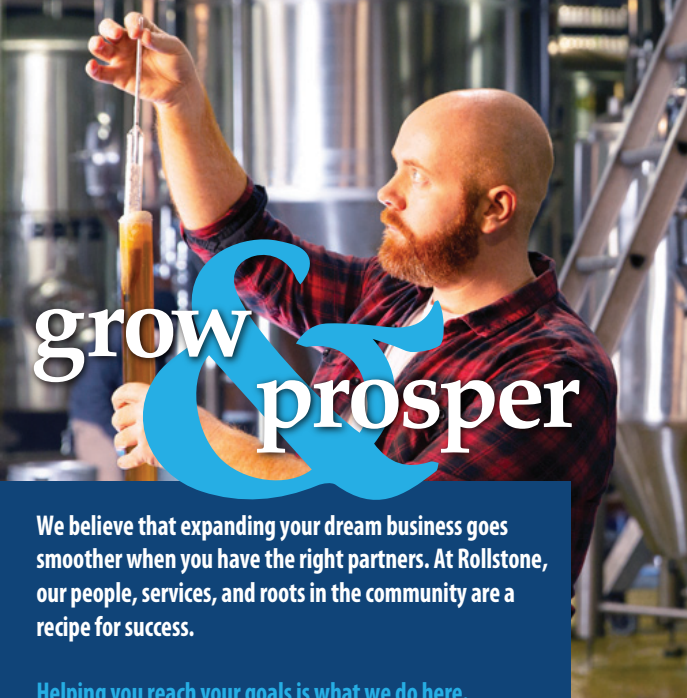


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# Feeding the Economy:

## FOOD & AGRICULTURE IN NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

Agriculture in North Central Massachusetts is deeply rooted in our history. That heritage is perhaps best symbolized with our connection to apples and that icon of American folk history – Johnny Appleseed. But it is more than just part of our past; the industry is still a major economic driver and a key part of our working landscape in the region. The food and agriculture cluster is also playing an important part in shaping the future of North Central Massachusetts and helping drive our economy.

The region is home to an estimated 800 farms, which employ over 1,700 people. Employment has increased nearly 60% in the industry since 2001 and is projected to increase another 11% by 2023. But this industry cluster goes well beyond just farms and includes food distribution, processing and related local industries that are closely associated or converge with the agriculture industry. In North Central Massachusetts, consumers can pick apples at a local orchard; enjoy craft beers from one of our local breweries or farms; experience a meal at a local farm to table restaurant; or buy their maple syrup, meats, cheeses or produce at local farms or markets to enjoy at home. When taking into account these related industries, this diverse economic cluster employs more 3,500 people and contributes over \$517 million to the region's economy. This cluster also accounts for



A father and son spend their afternoon apple picking at popular destination, David Farmland of Sterling.



A delectable display of nothing but the freshest greens and veggies courtesy of Roots Natural Foods of Leominster.

31% of the region's total job growth between 2001 and 2018.

The region's growing tourism industry is also closely tied to the food and agricultural industries in North Central Massachusetts and showcases the dynamic nature and complexity of the sector. Farms like Davis Farmland, Red Apple, Hollis Hills and many more have reinvented themselves as major destinations in the region. "At Davis Farmland, our mission is to connect people back to agriculture and preserve the rich farming heritage of New England", said co-owner Larry Davis. "We are a seven generation farm in Sterling, dating back to 1846. We started as a dairy and, over the generations, have been involved in virtually every form of sustainable agriculture this

*Continued on page 9*



*Continued from page 8*

area of New England has seen.”

The innovative nature of the industry, as well as its convergence with manufacturing, is perhaps best exemplified by Little Leaf Farms in Devens. In 2015, they built a five acre greenhouse facility that produces fresh lettuce and salad greens via a technologically advanced and automated process. The baby greens produced there are all seeded, grown, cut and packaged without being touched by human hands.

Consumer interest in sustainability, authenticity and buying local has helped to empower our food and agricultural sectors in the region. Roots Natural Foods in Leominster illustrates how the region’s strength and proximity to locally sourced



The famous “no human touch” lettuce of Little Leaf Farms in Devens is grown by state-of-the-art robotics leaving their lettuce fresh, crispy and delicious.

products has contributed to the growth of this economic cluster. Opened in 2002, Roots began as a market with nine employees that focused on selling and serving responsibly farmed, organic, local and sustainable foods and products. The market has since expanded to over twenty-five employees and now includes a popular sustainable kitchen that serves healthy foods and provides

catering services. “Our goal has always been to enrich our community by providing quality and locally sourced products”, said Owner Marieke Cormier. “One of the strengths of North Central Massachusetts is its incredible diversity of local products for consumers.”

North Central Massachusetts is home to one of the largest concentrations of food and agricultural

sectors in the state. Coupled with a thriving manufacturing cluster and burgeoning tourism industry, this unique position as a food and agriculture hub has enhanced the region’s character while creating new prosperity and employment. It is for that reason that we look forward to this sector’s continued growth and increased, statewide prominence for years to come. ♦

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# QUICK hits

## Ambassador Visit

Chamber Ambassador Kathleen Craigen of Fitchburg State University met with Scott Graves and Glenn Eaton of the Wachusett Business Incubator. We look forward to what's in store for them in the near future!



## Artist in Hue Ribbon Cutting

The Chamber was happy to celebrate a ribbon cutting for the opening of Artist in Hue in Downtown Leominster. Pictured: Owner Candice Churchill; Mayor Dean Mazzarella of Leominster; Chamber President Roy Nascimento; and several Chamber staff and ambassadors.



## Barbara Foster Boulder Award

The Chamber would like to congratulate Barbara Foster for being the recipient of Fitchburg Access Television's Boulder Award! For 24 years and counting, Barbara has been the Chamber's emcee for our Good Morning Breakfast Series and the chamber staff was happy to support her in this accomplishment. Congratulations Barbara!



## Sealed Air Tour

Judi Vazquez, HR Manager at Sealed Air hosted a tour with Chamber President Roy Nascimento at their Ayer Facility last month.



## Economic Forecast

For the eighth year in a row the Chamber was proud to partner with Fidelity Bank on our annual Economic Forecast — an event that saw over 300+ business professionals from North Central Massachusetts.





### Roberts and Goulet Recognized with Service Awards

Congratulations to our very own Teresa Roberts and Lauren Goulet for being recognized by the Massachusetts Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives for their 10th anniversary with the Chamber!



### CLI State House Visit

Our Community Leadership Institute Class visited the Massachusetts State House in March. They enjoyed a tour of the building, lunch with our local delegation, and a speaking program by cabinet members in the Baker Administration. Thank you Senator Dean A. Tran and Representative Jen Benson for being wonderful hosts and tour guides!



### Tourism Update Breakfast

The Chamber and Visit North Central Massachusetts hosted the fourth annual Tourism Update Breakfast, which included over 100 attendees from throughout the region and highlighted collective efforts to promote the region.



### Welcome to Fitchburg Sign

Last month, the Chamber, in partnership with the City of Fitchburg, unveiled a beautiful new sign welcoming visitors to the City of Fitchburg on Route 31 and Route 2.

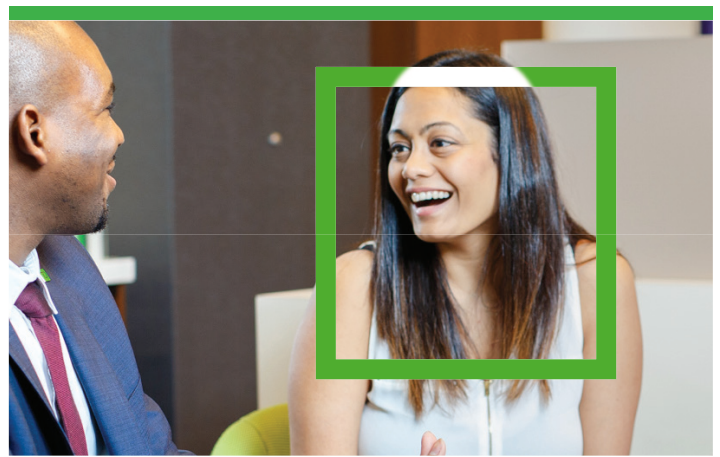


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## QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



### Farewell Spring Interns

The Chamber thanks our two spring semester interns: Christopher Gerardi and John Ronan of Fitchburg State University for all of their hard work! We wish them both the best in their future careers!



### Groton Inn GM Meeting

The Chamber was happy to meet with The Groton Inn General Manager, Tricia Tompkins, to discuss future partnerships and plans.



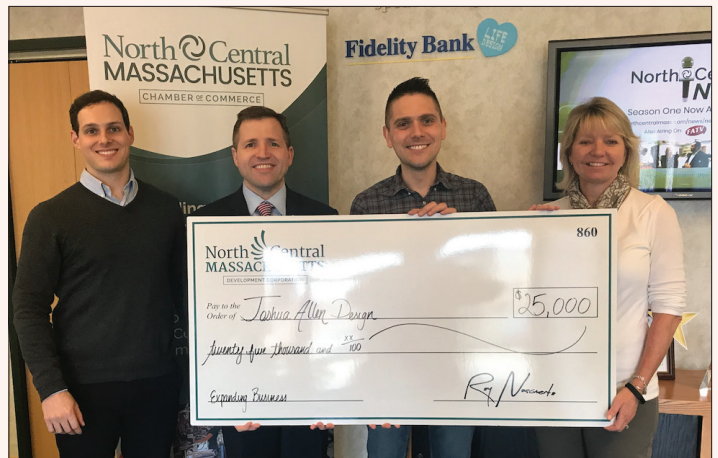
### Kat Deal Keynotes FSU Reception

Our very own Events and Programs Manager, Kat Deal, was the keynote speaker at Fitchburg State University's Student Staff Banquet in April.



### Visit North Central / FSU Collaboration

Students of the Fitchburg State University Communications Media Department proposed new marketing strategies and a rebrand for Visit North Central Massachusetts' Appleseed Country Fair. We were amazed at the level of talent these young men and women have and wish them all the very best in their future careers.



### Josh Allen Design Check Presentation

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC) recently approved a \$25,000 loan to Joshua Halterman, owner of Joshua Allen Design, an interior design and home staging business based in Sterling, MA.



### Chamber President Meets with Nashoba Valley Medical President

Chamber President Roy Nascimento recently met with new President of Nashoba Valley Medical, Korry Dow.



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## 8th Annual Appleseed Country Fair

### Sponsorship and Vendor Opportunities Available

The 8th Annual Appleseed Country Fair is scheduled for **Labor Day weekend – August 31, September 1 and 2 at Red Apple Farm in Phillipston, MA.**



The fair includes activities for all ages including face painting, crafts, animals, live music, craft beer and the 5th Annual FiddleFest – one of the largest fiddle competitions in New England. The fair features over 50 vendors that range from artisans and crafters to food, beer and wine.

Have you or your business ever considered participating in the fair? It

is a great opportunity to reach not only residents from the region, but also visitors from throughout New England. Applications for vendors are now being accepted. We are also offering a limited number of sponsorship opportunities.

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# North Central Calendar **EVENTS**

To register or for a complete list of events visit us at [www.northcentralmass.com](http://www.northcentralmass.com).

## June 13

**35th Annual Business Meeting and Community Leadership Commencement**

*Great Wolf Lodge, 11:30 a.m.*

## June 18

**Small Business RoundTable**

*Chamber Conference Room, 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.*

## June 19

**Human Resource Council Violence in the Workplace**

*Chamber Conference Room, 12 p.m.*

## June 25

**Sponsor Reception**

*Oak Hill Country Club, 4:30 p.m.*  
*\*Invitation Only Event*

## June 26

**Human Resource Council New to the Workplace**

*Chamber Conference Room, 11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

## September 12

**Business After Hours**

*Fitchburg Access Television, 5 – 7 p.m.*

## September 13

**Good Morning North Central Representative Robert DeLeo**

*Double Tree Hotel, 6:45 – 8:30 a.m.*

## September 19

**Legislative Reception**

*Chocksett Inn, 5 – 7 p.m.*



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