

Winter 2021-2022 Edition

chamber

north central massachusetts report

Building Businesses. Building Communities.

THE PULSE ON HEALTH CARE IN NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS



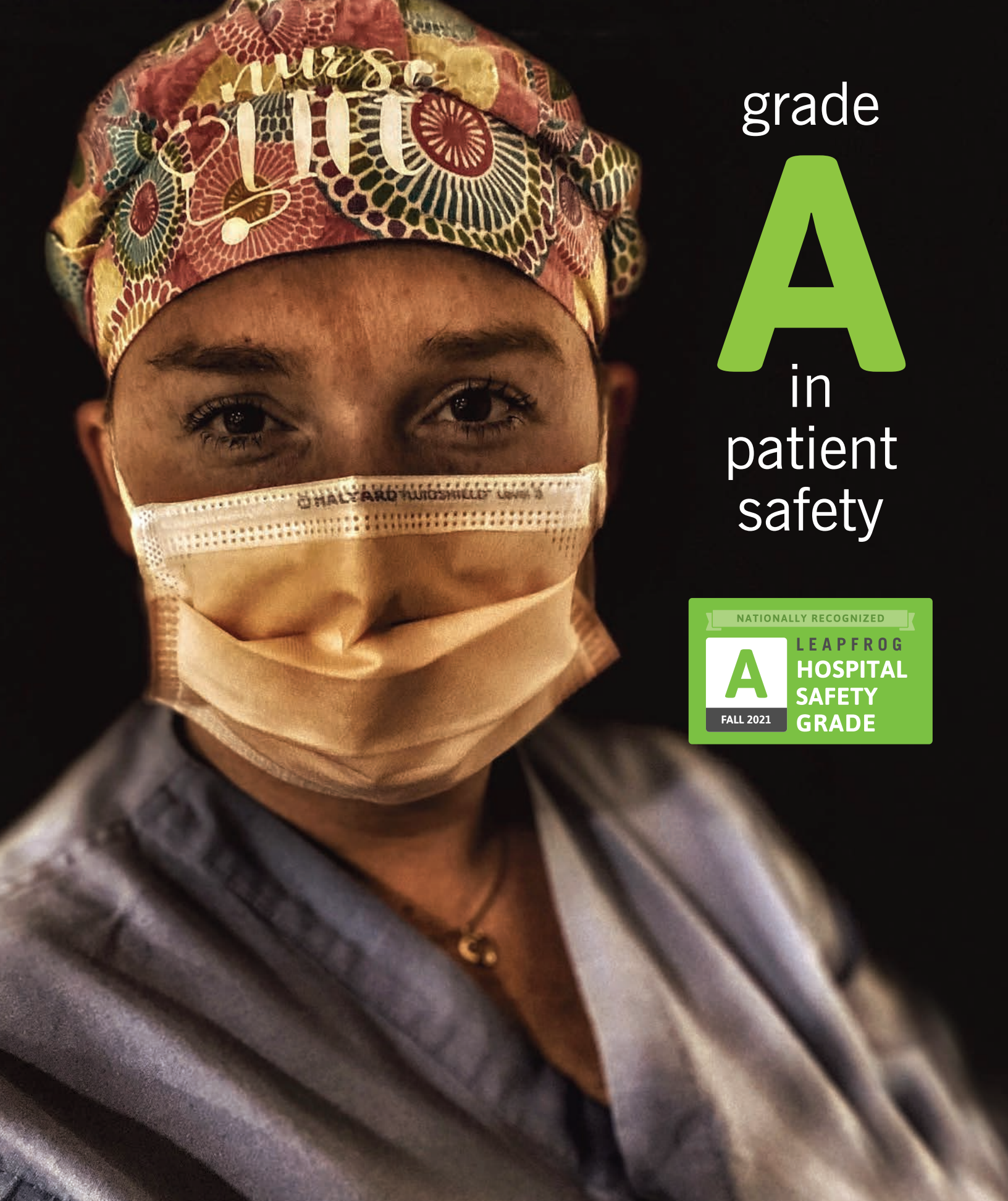
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grade

A

in
patient
safety

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north central massachusetts report

North Central MASSACHUSETTS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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For Editorial & Advertising

Contact Ryan Murphy
rmurphy@northcentralmass.com
978.353.7600 x240 | phone: 978.353.7600 | fax: 978.353.4896
www.northcentralmass.com

About the Cover:

In this edition of the Chamber Report we focus on the Health Care industry, one of the largest employers in the region and a growing and dynamic sector of our economy. For the feature article that starts on page 14, we interview the presidents of the three largest hospital systems in North Central Massachusetts for their perspectives and how they are responding to the tight labor market.

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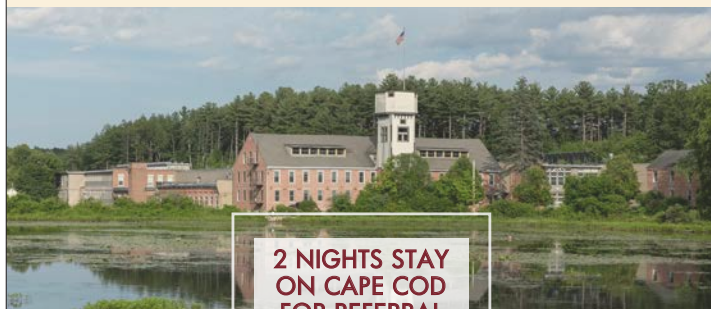
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CHAMBER'S DEVELOPMENT ARM CLOSES OUT A SUCCESSFUL YEAR



**North Central
MASSACHUSETTS**
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Chamber's economic development affiliate, the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC), completed its fiscal year on September 30, 2021. The NCMDC works in partnership with local banks, credit unions, chambers of commerce and area nonprofits to support emerging microenterprises, small businesses, and community projects in North Central Massachusetts with loans

and technical assistance. The NCMDC provided a total of 85 loans during the year totaling \$1,789,091 which helped retain or create a total of 174 jobs. These included 21 conventional microloans totaling \$930,250 and 64 loans under round 2 of SBA's Payroll Protection Program for \$858,841. The average size of the loans was \$21,048 with the smallest loan at \$2,296 and the largest at \$150,000. The conventional microloans were leveraged

by another \$892,411 in financing from local banks and credit unions and \$229,242 in equity from borrowers. The demographic breakdown for the conventional loans was 38% to minorities; 24% to immigrants; 29% to women; and 81% to low and moderate income. The demographic breakdown for PPP loans was 53% to minorities; 58% were to women; and 64% to low and moderate income. During the year, the NCMDC also provided

2,399 hours of direct technical assistance to start-up and existing small businesses and hosted several successful workshops and forums in partnership with the Chamber.

Since the microloan program was established in the 1990s, the NCMDC has provided a cumulative total of 313 microloans totaling \$10,132,302.00 which have helped create 647 jobs and retain another 300 jobs. The numbers do not include any 504 loans made during the early history of the NCMDC. When factoring in these loans, the NCMDC has made over \$22 million in loans.

The NCMDC is certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury under the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) program and is a micro-loan intermediary for the U.S. Small Business Administration. ♦

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Contact Sandie Cataldo at 978.353.7600 (ext. 232) or Maribel Cruz at 978.353.7600 (ext. 223) for more information



TESSMAN TO CHAIR CHAMBER'S TOURISM ARM



Henry Tessman.

Henry Tessman, general manager of Great Wolf Lodge New England, was recently elected Chair of the Board of Directors for the Johnny Appleseed Trail Association (DBA Visit North Central Massachusetts).

A strong champion of the region's economic development efforts, Tessman will work with the Visit North Central Massachusetts board, staff, membership and other stakeholders to champion the organization in its mission to market the region as a destination. He succeeds Al Rose, owner of Red Apple Farm, who

moves to the position of Immediate Past Chair.

Tessman began working at Great Wolf Lodge New England in 2014. In addition to managing more than 700 employees, Tessman oversees all operations, including an indoor waterpark, several restaurants and more than 400 guest rooms.

A 35-year veteran of the hospitality industry, he previously served in management positions with various hotel companies, including Marriott, Wyndham, Hilton and boutique properties. He earned a bachelor's degree in hospitality management from Johnson & Wales University.

In addition to his involvement with Visit North Central Massachusetts, Tessman also serves on the Board of Directors for the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, Greater Gardner Chamber

“ Henry has proven himself to be a great leader and advocate for our cooperative marketing efforts to grow the visitor economy in North Central Massachusetts.” — Roy M. Nascimento

of Commerce, ARC of Opportunity, and the Mount Wachusett Community College Foundation.

“Henry has proven himself to be a great leader and advocate for our cooperative marketing efforts to grow the visitor economy in North Central Massachusetts,” said Roy Nascimento, president of Visit North Central Massachusetts. “He will lead our organization through the recommendations of the recently published One North Central Regional Economic Development Plan as we look for opportunities to expand tourism in North Central Massachusetts.”

“It is an honor and privilege to be elected chair of Visit North Central Massachusetts, an organization with an important role in promoting North Central Massachusetts as a unique destination for individuals and families,” said Tessman. “I look forward to continuing the efforts of our immediate past chair to establish the region as a premier destination for visitors and groups.”

In the same election, Chris Stimpson, public relations manager at Wachusett Mountain, was elected to fill an open seat on the Board. ♦

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE



The region's elected officials at the Congressional Luncheon.

The Fall continues to be one of the busiest times when it comes to legislative engagement and advocacy on behalf of our members at the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. In September, over 80 local, state, and federal officials and candidates engaged our members during our Annual Legislative and Candidates Reception at the Chocksett Inn in Sterling. Attendees included several candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor who will remain on the radar in the wake of Governor Charlie Baker's and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito's decision not to seek another term. The municipal elections earlier this month saw the region's three mayors successfully fend off challengers while new blood was appointed to all three city councils. Fitchburg resident Sally Cragin

mounted a successful run for Councilor-At-Large, while Derrick Cruz won the seat for Ward 6; Gardner saw City Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas move up to Councilor-At-Large and Dana Heath fill her seat in Ward 2; while in Leominster, Todd Deacon became the newest Councilor-At-Large and Bill Brady was elected to Ward 1. The Chamber will continue to engage these newly elected officials with regards to Chamber activities and priorities.

In addition to discussions with our newly elected city officials, the Chamber continues to monitor municipal affairs across the region. Monthly mayor's meetings with Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale and Leominster Mayor Dean Mazzarella have resumed, and a joint meeting including Gardner Mayor Mike Nicholson was held earlier this month. In

“After months of negotiations in Washington D.C., the President signed the bipartisan \$1.2 trillion-dollar infrastructure bill into law.”

October, the Fitchburg City Council voted in favor of maintaining the single tax rate. Data presented by the Assessor's office indicated investment in the City is helping it to continue to diversify its tax base. Earlier this month, the Chamber ventured out to Sterling for a presentation on broadband internet now being offered by the Sterling Municipal Light Department. The new broadband offering will serve as a great economic

development tool to attract businesses to their main artery through town, and will also prove to be a benefit for area residents.

After months of negotiations in Washington D.C., the President signed the bipartisan \$1.2 trillion-dollar infrastructure bill into law. The Bill includes over \$550 billion in new federal investments to the country's infrastructure over the next 5 years

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

including funds for airports, bridges, mass transit, ports, rail, roads, and waterways. Sixty-five billion has been set aside for investments aimed at improving America's broadband infrastructure, and additional dollars have been set aside to improve the electric grid and water systems. Prior to its passage, Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan engaged the region's officials and Chamber members during the annual Congressional Luncheon. After being held virtually last year due to the pandemic, the two spoke to a full room at Great Wolf Lodge in Fitchburg about a number of issues impacting our members including the infrastructure bill, the American Rescue Plan, taxes and political division.

On Beacon Hill, the House and Senate failed to reach an agreement on ARPA legislation before the end of formal session. However, a \$4 billion compromise was announced at the end of November. This version includes a \$500 million payment toward the state's unemployment insurance trust fund, half the amount requested by Governor Charlie Baker, a \$500 million program to offer one-time bonuses to low-income essential workers who continued to provide in-person services during the COVID-19 crisis, funds to support workforce development and student

pathways for credentials, \$10 million for Regional Tourism Councils to support the hospitality and visitor industry, along with \$150,000 in an earmark sponsored by Senator Cronin for the Chamber's education compact initiative contained in the One North Central regional economic development plan. The region's delegation was extremely supportive of Chamber priorities and worked collaboratively throughout the process.

U.S. Census data released earlier this year was used to develop proposed redistricting maps for the House, Senate, and Congressional Districts. On a statewide level, population increases led to House and Senate representation shifting further eastward. The 27 communities represented by the Chamber and its affiliates will retain the same total amount of state representation, however, there will be some shifts within who falls into each district. On the federal level, Chamber members will continue to be represented by both Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Travis Condon, the Chamber's public affairs manager, at 978.353.7600, ext. 224; or via email at tcondon@northcentralmass.com. ♦

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CHAMBER WELCOMES BEATON AND SUGAR

The Chamber is pleased to announce the addition of Rebecca Beaton and Stephen Sugar to our economic development team.

Beaton joins the staff in the position of Vice President of Lending where she will be responsible for helping to manage the lending and technical assistance programs offered through the Chamber's economic development arm, the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation. She joins the Chamber from Fidelity Bank where she served as Vice President and Small Business Relationship Manager. Her prior experience also includes work with



Rebecca Beaton.

Colonial Cooperative Bank in Gardner, Clinton Savings Bank and Spencer Savings Bank. She holds a Master's Degree in Finance and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Clark University. She is active in the community, including serving on the Board of Directors for GAAMHA, Inc.; Gardner Square Two, Inc.; and the Greater Gardner Chamber.



Stephen Sugar.

Sugar will support the Chamber's lending efforts on a part-time basis. He joins the Chamber team after recently retiring from Main Street Bank, where he served as a Senior Vice President of Commercial Lending. He has over thirty years of experience in underwriting and managing business loans. He is a graduate of Franklin Pierce University

and has a record of community service, including serving on the Board of Directors of the Nashoba Valley Chamber and as a past member of the Finance Committee for the Town of Pepperell. He currently serves as Treasurer on the Board of the Devens Historical Museum.

"We are thrilled to welcome these two talented professionals to our team," said Roy M. Nascimento, President & CEO of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber. "Rebecca and Steve will be a great resource to the business community as we look to expand our programs and help support new and existing small businesses in the region." ♦

AMBASSADORS COMMITTEE



The Chamber's Ambassadors Committee.

Interested in connecting your business to the hundreds of member businesses and organizations in our region while supporting the Chamber's mission? The Chamber's Ambassadors Committee could be a good fit for you! Chamber Ambassadors are a volunteer committee

that meet monthly to serve fellow members by providing information, resources, member-to-member support, increasing awareness and promoting active participation in Chamber and affiliate programs and services. For more information, please contact the Chamber at 978.353.7600 ext. 244. ♦

SMALL BUSINESS COUNSELING AVAILABLE

Free one-on-one counseling and technical assistance is available to entrepreneurs and existing businesses in North Central Massachusetts through the Chamber and its economic development arm – the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation. The Chamber also has partnerships with a variety of organizations that provide counseling and assistance and are a resource to members, including the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network Central Regional Office (MSBDC) at Clark University; Center

for Women and Enterprise (CWE); Massachusetts Export Center; Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE); Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD); and New Vue Communities to name a few.

For more information or to schedule an online appointment, please contact Sandie Cataldo, Economic Development Manager at 978.353.7600 ext. 232. ♦

NEW NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS CHAMBER MEMBERS

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SEPTEMBER — NOVEMBER



We want to hear about the great things happening with our members.

Have you hired any new employees? Have you expanded? Has your business celebrated a new milestone or received an award? Do you have a special event coming up? Have you supported a local community group?

Send us your announcements, news, events and press releases and we will post it in our member news section on our website and share it on our social media. This is one of the many great perks that we offer members. The Chamber has a high-traffic website and strong social media presence. Our social media channels boast over 21,000 total followers and garners an average of 217,000 impressions monthly and over 2.4 million impressions annually. The Chamber's multiple websites have become a go-to resource for local stakeholders, business professionals, elected officials, visitors and groups in our region, averaging nearly 12,000 page views per month.

If you want to increase your exposure, send all business news and events to rmurphy@northcentralmass.com.

CHAMBER BIDS FOND FAREWELL TO BRENDAN HANNEN



Brendan Hannen.

The Chamber announces the recent departure of Micro-Loan Manager Brendan Hannen, who left the Chamber recently to accept a position as a Commercial Loan Officer with Berkshire Bank. Hannen worked for the Chamber for over three years and was strong contributor to our efforts to help support small businesses in the region.

“We are saddened to lose Brendan, but also excited for him and his new career opportunity,” said Roy M. Nascimento, President & CEO of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. “He has been a dedicated member of our team and contributor to our success. I want to thank him for his hard work and commitment to the Chamber and wish him well in his new position.” ♦



Worcester Business Journal is offering a free print subscription for one year, which is a limited time offer to chamber members.

They provide the top coverage of news, trends, data, politics and personalities of the Central Mass business community. Get the news and information you need from the award-winning writers at WBJ.

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FEATURED MEMBER PROFILE



empowered PR ribbon cutting in February 2021.

“When you have a strong brand and when you’re engaged in the community, if and when a crisis hits you, **you will have those relationships and trust.**”

— Lauren Howe —

“When you have a strong brand and when you’re engaged in the community, if and when a crisis hits you, you will have those relationships and trust,” she said.

Howe said she practices what she preaches.

She is an active member of the community, serving on the board of the American Red Cross of Central and Western Massachusetts, and she supports community organizations such as the Fitchburg Art Museum, Leominster High School Alumni Association, Warmer Winters, Fitchburg Holiday Lights and others. She previously served on the board of directors for Girls Inc. of Worcester and the Boys & Girls Club of Lunenburg. And every August, Howe rides in the Pan-Mass Challenge to raise money for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

empowered PR is located at 20 Main St., Suite 2E in Leominster. For more information, call 978.400.3036 or visit empoweredpr.com. ♦

PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED WITH empowered PR

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many businesses to shift gears or risk being left behind.

And while many businesses may not know how to navigate these new challenges, empowered PR in Leominster can help.

empowered PR, LLC, was founded by Lauren Howe, an award-winning public relations professional with more than 20 years of experience working in the healthcare, manufacturing and non-profit industries.

Her public relations firm, which opened in the midst of the pandemic, specializes in highly-tailored communications services to assist businesses and non-profit organizations to build a strong brand and reputation and to develop the tools needed to effectively respond to – and during – a crisis.

Howe left her job in corporate America on Valentine’s Day 2020. She took some time off to relax with her daughter before starting her own business.

She met with the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce in March 2020 looking for assistance and shared networking space. She also set-up appointments with a lawyer, accountant, and financial advisor. And then the state shut down.

She decided to hold off opening until July 2020 and rented space at the chamber.

“They were super helpful to me for everything,” she said. “My business has really grown a lot since then.”

In fact, Howe left her space at the Chamber in early 2021 and moved her office to downtown Leominster, the city where she was born and raised. She

recently hired an operations director to assist her with the day-to-day operations of her business which will enable Howe to focus on client services and continue to grow her business.

Her core services include brand strategy, crisis communications planning and support, reputation management, corporate social responsibility, media training and writing services.

One area in which she can help is preparing businesses for the unexpected.

“When the next thing happens, and it’s going to, whether it’s a pandemic, fire, financial loss or impact in reputation, we can help you navigate through that and weather the storm,” she said.

Another area of focus for Howe is sharing the importance of being a good corporate citizen.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE CHAMBER FOUNDATION

Applications for the 2022 scholarship program through the North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation will be accepted starting February 1, 2022. Students interested in applying for a scholarship through the Chamber's Foundation should contact their high school guidance department to submit an application. Each year, the Chamber Foundation distributes approximately 25 scholarships to local high-achieving high school students in North Central Massachusetts. A limited number of applicants are submitted by each school in the Chamber's service area each year for consideration by a committee of Chamber members. Deadline for applications is Monday, March 1, 2022.

Since the establishment of its scholarship program, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber

“Each year, the Chamber Foundation distributes approximately 25 scholarships to local high-achieving high school students in North Central Massachusetts.”

Foundation has awarded over a million dollars in scholarships. Many of these awards are made possible through contributions from members of the Chamber and proceeds from the Chamber's Scholarship fundraiser. Scholarships endowed through the Chamber Foundation are often named in honor of prominent members of the North Central Massachusetts business community

whose philanthropy and commitment to the community have helped shape North Central Massachusetts.

The Chamber's Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization focused on assisting in the betterment of the region through charitable activities. Funds raised by the Foundation are utilized primarily for education/workforce development initiatives and charitable activities in North Central Massachusetts, including scholarships to eligible applicants pursuing education and grants to support economic and community development projects.

For more information on the North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation's scholarship program or a list of the named scholarships, please visit northcentralmass.com or call 978.353.7600 ext. 222. ♦



Chamber Foundation Scholarship Class of 2019.

SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE — BE VISIBLE —

Participate in Chamber programs and watch your business grow.

The Chamber offers members the opportunity to showcase their products and services by sponsoring programs and events throughout the year. From the smallest to largest business, we provide multiple sponsorship opportunities and various programs to meet our member's marketing needs. Regardless of your budget, there is a sponsorship opportunity available for you at the North Central Massachusetts Chamber!

For more information on sponsorship opportunities, please contact Kat Deal, Events & Programs Manager at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or via email at kdeal@northcentralmass.com.



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE CLASS OF 2022 ANNOUNCED

The Chamber is pleased to announce the participants for the 2022 Community Leadership Institute (CLI). CLI is dedicated to providing participants with individual leadership skills and a deep understanding of the region. The nine-month program focuses on education, government,

health care, social services, justice system, media, arts and culture, environment and history. The Chamber created the Institute to inspire a new generation of men and women to enthusiastically assume important roles in their community. The program challenges individuals from diverse backgrounds

to be influential in our region's future.

The Community Leadership Institute began in 1988, known then as Leadership North Central. Over the last 25 years, more than 250 participants have graduated from the Institute and become leaders in their communities, with over

100 in the last five years. Participants for CLI are sponsored by their business and are seen as leaders or potential leaders within that company. Applications for each class are available in July and August of each year, and sessions are held once per month from October to June. ♦

PARTICIPANTS IN THE CLI CLASS OF 2022 INCLUDE:

Daisy Ayala, Enterprise Bank

Joshua Bedarian,
RCAP Solutions, Inc

Austin Brooks, TD Bank

Joseph Ferguson,
Fitchburg State University

Justin Goettsch, The
Arc of Opportunity

Ramon Gonzalez, Mount
Wachusett Community College

Brittany Haley,
Leominster Credit Union

Megan Heffernan, UMass
Memorial Health HealthAlliance-
Clinton Hospital

Kimberly LeBlanc, Resource
Management, Inc

Bea Lee, North Central
Massachusetts Economic
Development Corp

Christian Lopez, Sponsored by AIS

Stephanie LoSasso, Avidia Bank

Hannah Pollan, Aging Services of
North Central Massachusetts

Andrea Sampson, Aging Services
of North Central Massachusetts

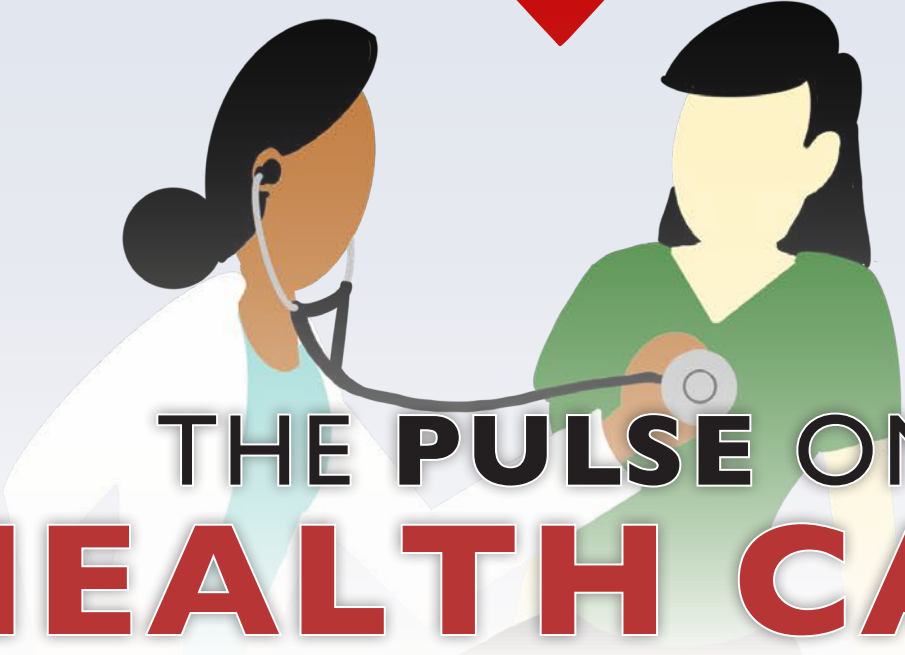

Melanie Sauvageau,
Rollstone Bank & Trust

Patricia Wayrynen,
Workers Credit Union

Marcus Williams, Mount
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THE PULSE ON HEALTH CARE IN NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

In North Central Massachusetts, we are fortunate to have three excellent health care organizations providing quality care and services to the more than 275,000 residents who call our region home. Even with their great reputation, our region's hospitals are experiencing challenges with staffing shortages and retention, responding to the unique needs of an aging population and providing increased mental health services, all of which are compounded with a global pandemic. But, despite these challenges, our hospitals are rising above, providing unique opportunities for recruitment and retention



Photo provided by Nashoba Valley Medical Center.

while investing in their facilities and giving back to their communities.

In September, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce released the results of our Regional Economic Development Plan, which placed health care as one of the top industries with a strong market to retain and expand toward the future.

“We certainly have market strength in the region,” said Steve Roach, President, HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital. “Health care is one of the most interesting business models because people

Continued on page 15

**We
have
the hardest
working staff
around and
we need to
make sure
they feel
appreciated,
understood
and heard.”**

— WINFIELD S. BROWN

Continued from page 14

will always need health care, but we are also at the mercy of an extremely tight labor market.”

Roach leads HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, a full service, acute care 163-bed community hospital serving North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. He said the hospital is navigating the recent COVID-19 vaccine mandate, which is putting an already tight labor market to its breaking point. “We are looking at our staffing levels to ensure our nurses are performing at the top of their game and also researching alternative staffing models to provide the continuity of care the community expects and deserves from our hospital,” he added.

Even with the renovated Emergency Department opening in 2019, which resulted in a total of 42 beds up from 24 beds, Roach said the hospital is continually over capacity due to mental health cases in the emergency room waiting for a bed at another facility. “We will always be here to provide care to all of our patients, and we are working daily to resolve these challenges,” he said. “We want our patients to receive treatment and care as quickly as we can.”

Heywood Hospital is also experiencing staffing challenges; however, Winfield S. Brown, President and CEO, said the hospital has a variety of strategies in place to retain its dedicated staff and improve the overall health of the community

despite the challenges from the pandemic.

A non-profit, community-owned 134-bed hospital located in Gardner, Heywood Hospital welcomed 60 new staff members in various roles in September and is also offering sign-on bonuses for certain positions. “We see health care as a growth market for the region and we are growing as a health care system while also identifying ways to improve economy and equality among our workforce,” said Brown.

In addition to being unique in size and geography, Brown said the hospital has relationships with local colleges and universities to provide development opportunities to current employees while also filling the

talent pipeline for years to come. In fact, Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) partners with Heywood Hospital to provide 40 to 50 students a training ground for practicum in pharmacy and radiology technology. And, through a workforce development grant with MWCC, Heywood Hospital can have up to 20 employees who are interested in pursuing a clinical track for nursing obtain education at the college with clinical experience at the hospital.

For current employees, the hospital has a variety of strategies in place to retain staff, such as providing a robust award and recognition program and daily “huddles” for staff to check-in with each

Continued on page 16



Heywood Urgent Care Testing Tent – Photo provided by Heywood Hospital.

Continued from page 15

other. “We have the hardest working staff around and we need to make sure they feel appreciated, understood and heard,” said Brown. “We established a President’s Advisory Council to learn the staff’s pulse on the institution and we listen and then act to make sure our employees know we heard their feedback.”

Heywood Hospital also boasts a robust behavioral health services program, with 20 geriatric psychiatric beds and a partial outpatient program that provides up to 40 participants with mental health support. In November, the hospital received approval from the Public Health Council to begin construction of a new surgical pavilion, which will replace the existing

operating room suite built in the 1960s. The pavilion will include six operating rooms, support state-of-the-art technology and provide an exceptional patient experience. “Our patients deserve first-class health care in a first-class facility,” added Brown.

Nashoba Valley Medical Center, a community hospital serving 16 communities in North Central Massachusetts, experienced tremendous growth this year as more people chose to obtain health care locally during the pandemic instead of going into the city.

Sal Perla, DrPH, President and CEO of Nashoba Valley Medical Center, said as the hospital experiences an increase in patient capacity, it is responding by growing

its physician roster. “This year, we’ve expanded the Steward Medical Group in all of our locations,” said Perla. “We’ve recruited ten medical doctors this year, including a board-certified orthopedic surgeon, several new primary care physicians and several other sub-specialists.”

While the use of emergency room services increased by 11 percent in 2021, Perla said the hospital has the lowest wait times in the region, which he attributes to a website where those seeking care can check on current wait times in the emergency department. “We are so proud of our staff,” added Perla. “And our five-star patient satisfaction results on Google prove that we are creating sustainable care models that reinforce our dedication to quality of care.” In fact, Perla said approximately 25 percent of their patients hail from the Leominster and Fitchburg area. Perla is also thrilled to announce that Nashoba Valley Medical Center earned an “A” Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade for fall 2021. This national distinction recognizes the hospital’s achievements in protecting patients from harm and error in the hospital.

With a niche in physical therapy, the medical center welcomes approximately 100 patients a day to its aquatics center in Groton for total joint replacement therapy. Recently, Nashoba Valley Medical Center was recognized with a 5-star rating for treatment of hip fracture and pneumonia outcomes by Healthgrades,

We can offer a level of care, comfort and compassion and are available to assist 24/7 with physical and emotional support.”

— STEVE ROACH

the leading resource that connects consumers, physicians and health systems. Additionally, the medical center reports that its GI center is performing colonoscopies and endoscopies within 1-2 weeks of initial requests which helps in the aid of detection of early stages of cancer.

Although the Regional Economic Development Plan reported that health care offers a variety of wages, with more than half of the 17,000 region's health care workers paid less than \$55,000 annually, Perla said the medical center instituted a minimum wage of \$15 per hour in 2019.

As the aging population



ICU Nurses — Photo provided by Heywood Hospital.

Continued on page 17



Photo provided by UMass Memorial Health Alliance Hospital.

Continued from page 16

continues to increase in the region, all of the hospitals stand ready to provide care and services to keep individuals at home as long as possible. Nashoba is proud to offer a 20-bed geriatric-psychiatric inpatient behavioral/medical unit which addresses higher level of care for individuals with Dementia/Alzheimer's associated disease.

Roach said HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital is well-equipped to respond to the needs of the aging population as the hospital operates HealthAlliance Home Health & Hospice (HAHHH), which aims to keep patients in their own homes. "We can offer a level of care, comfort and compassion and are available to assist 24/7 with physical and emotional support," added Roach. "We want our community to age in home versus aging in nursing homes."

Perla agrees. "We are learning about the future every day," he said. "We want to make sure people can retire and live out their years where they want to be and need to be."

In spite of the challenges and opportunities our hospitals must face now and in the coming years, all of the hospitals remain committed as engaged members of their respective communities.

At Heywood Hospital, Brown said they are dedicated to improving the health of the community, with special consideration of disadvantaged populations, by working collaboratively with community partners to increase prevention efforts, address social determinants of health, and improve access to care. Their Backpack Food Program supports more than 400 youth and their families with nutritious, non-perishable, easy-

to-prepare food choices over the weekend. "The Backpack programs provide more than just food," said Brown. "They also bring a sense of security economic empowerment, healthy food access and social inclusion for children."

HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital recently invested more than \$700,000 to fund community-based initiatives to support the urgent health challenges presented by food insecurity, substance abuse and workforce development. In 2019, the hospital also provided an investment of \$750,000 in the Fitchburg Arts Community, a 62-unit mixed housing project on the site of the former BF Brown School in downtown Fitchburg to aid in the pre-development phase of the project.

And, as a public health doctor, Perla is giving back to the community through volunteering and expertise as an epidemiologist to local businesses and

organizations to ensure a safe environment for social gatherings during the pandemic. "As a public health doctor, my job is to improve public health above all else," said Perla. "By providing risk assessments via surveys to help businesses thrive lowers the risk and establishes a comfort level and safe environment based on the survey feedback from the participants."

The pulse of any community rests on the trust it places in its residents and institutions. Through calm times and crisis, North Central Massachusetts' array of healthcare systems, administrators and physicians stand ready to keep that pulse alive and help it thrive. Their dedication and investment go far beyond business and hits at the heart of what makes this region a great place to live and work: people caring for people working together, not just to survive but to thrive. ◇

TOURISM update

FALL MARKETING CAMPAIGN



Fall is historically one of the most important travel seasons in North Central Massachusetts. The region's agricultural roots, natural outdoor amenities and beautiful foliage combine to make this one of our peak seasons for visitors and groups.

Recognizing the economic impact and competition for visitor dollars, Visit North Central Massachusetts worked hard to showcase the region and attract

visitors. We utilized an assorted mix of strong content, social media and digital and print advertising during the season. VisitNorthCentral.com saw strong traffic, with visitors increasing by 91% compared to the Fall of 2020 (and a 101% increase compared to 2019) and page views increasing by 109% (78% increase compared to 2019). The Visit North Central Massachusetts' Facebook page had 315,938 impressions from September to November and over 46,115 engagements,

which represents a 34% increase over the same period the previous year. Independent data sources that we use to track visitation shows that the region saw a 44% increase in visitors in the month of September compared to 2020 and an 8% increase over the same time period in 2019 (Data not available for months of October and November). Lodging data also indicates continued recovery for the region from the pandemic. The Fall months saw very

strong increases in occupancy rates, revenue per room (RevPar), average daily rate (ADR), room availability and rooms sold. Hotel occupancy for YTD through September was 58.9%, a 21.4% increase over the previous year. ADR increased through the season by 2.7%. Room availability was up 16.3%, RevPar was up 24.7%, total room revenue was up 45% and rooms sold was up 41.2% for YTD through September.

In other news, two new Taste of North

Continued on page 19

Go to www.visitnorthcentral.com to keep up-to-date!

Continued from page 18

Central videos also premiered during the quarter on our social media channels, showcasing Hollis Hill Farm in Fitchburg and Plain View Farm in Hubbardston. Our annual Appleseed Country Fair hosted over 6,000 visitors during Labor Day Weekend. Families from throughout Massachusetts and New England travelled to North Central Massachusetts for the full experience

The region's agricultural roots, natural outdoor amenities and beautiful foliage combine to make this one of our peak seasons for visitors and groups."

of family-friendly Fall fun. Visit North Central Massachusetts was also proud to partner with the Phillipston and Athol Firefighter Associations on the event and raised over \$10,800 to support first responders.

We are slowly making progress with some of the planned improvements to the Johnny Appleseed Visitors Center on Route 2. We hope to have the renovations completed by the Spring. Our vision is to

not only operate the best visitor center in the state, but to also transform the center into a destination that provides an engaging experience and encourages visitors to learn more about the region's communities, local attractions and businesses. Stay tuned for more details.

With Fall behind us, we now shift gears to promoting awareness and visitation to North Central Massachusetts during the Winter season. ♦

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QUICK hits



GEICO RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand opening of GEICO's new location in Leominster. Congratulations to the GEICO crew!



VISIT MASSACHUSETTS VIDEO

The Chamber recently recorded a video at Gardner Ale House for our friends at Visit Massachusetts. They are working on a special project highlighting the Massachusetts restaurant industry.



MAKING OPPORTUNITY COUNT RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand opening of Making Opportunity Count's new Counseling Center in Fitchburg. Congratulations to the Making Opportunity Count crew!



MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE APPOINTMENTS

The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce hosted state economic development officials for one-on-one appointments with local developers, manufacturers and business owners. The meetings were an opportunity to discuss any specific matters related to their business or the expansion of their business.



GAME ON FITCHBURG VISIT

Game On Fitchburg provided members of the Chamber team a sneak peek into the progress being made with construction of your facility and fields!

WORK NORTH CENTRAL HIRING EVENT

The Chamber held its first Work North Central Hiring Event in September at Great Wolf Lodge and over 40 hiring employers were in attendance!



QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



LEGISLATIVE AND CANDIDATES RECEPTION

The Chamber hosted its annual Legislative and Candidates Reception with a packed room of business and community leaders. Attendees met with their elected officials and candidates running for local office. This annual event was sponsored by Mount Wachusett Community College.



SEPTEMBER GOOD MORNING NORTH CENTRAL

The Chamber had a great turn out for the September edition of the Chamber's Good Morning North Central Breakfast which featured Johnathan Gulliver, Highway Administrator for MassDOT and Peter Kettle, Fitchburg Airport Manager.



ADVANCED MANUFACTURING PROGRAMS TOUR AT MOUNT WACHUSETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Chamber joined members of the region's delegation and representatives of private industry for a tour of the Advanced Manufacturing programs at Mount Wachusett Community College's Devens campus. The legislative delegation secured \$100,000 in the state budget earlier this year to increase support for automotive, robotic, and manufacturing career pathways at MWCC.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONNECTION

The Women's Leadership Connection was proud to host First Lady Lauren Baker. The program featured an interview with emcee Barbara Foster.



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS AT AIS

The Chamber would like to thank AIS for hosting a Business After Hours in honor of Manufacturing Month - it was a fun evening of networking and great food!

QUICK HITS CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



6TH ANNUAL MANUFACTURING AWARDS CEREMONY

The Chamber had the honor of attending the 6th Annual Manufacturing Awards Ceremony in October. The awards are presented each year by the Legislature's Manufacturing Caucus to honor manufacturers from throughout the state that stand out as employers, innovators, and business leaders. Congratulations to Chamber members Aaron Industries, Nypro, Micron Solutions, and Polar Beverages for being recognized with awards.

CONGRESSIONAL LUNCHEON

The Chamber hosted it's 2021 Congressional Luncheon featuring Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan to a packed crowd. The annual event was sponsored by Fitchburg State University.



HOMESTEAD MARKET RECEIVES LOAN FROM NCMD C

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMD C) recently provided a loan to Homestead Market in Winchendon. Pictured (L-R) are Norman Vigeant, Vice President of Lending, NCMD C;

Tony and Morgan Ruschioni, owners of Homestead Market; and Sandie Cataldo, Economic Development Manager, NCMD C.

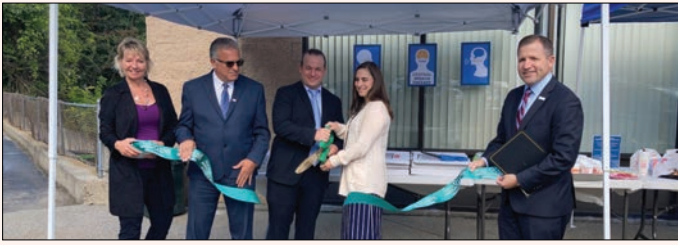


FITCHBURG HIGH SCHOOL'S ADVANCED MANUFACTURING INNOVATION PATHWAY PARTNERSHIP

The Chamber was recently invited by Senator John J. Cronin to tour Fitchburg High School's Advanced

Manufacturing Innovation Pathway partnership. City officials along with state officials including State Representative Mike Kushmerek and State Representative Meg Kilcoyne engaged in active dialogue with a number of community stakeholders.

QUICK HITS CONTINUED...

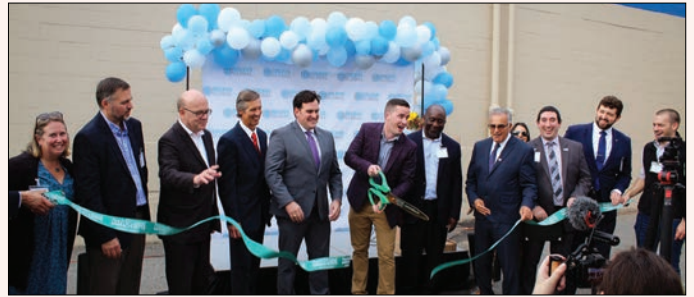


CENTRAL SPEECH THERAPY LLC RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand opening of Central Speech Therapy's new outpatient speech therapy center in Leominster. Congratulations to the Central Speech Therapy crew!

MIRANDA'S PUB RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand reopening of Miranda's Pub in Leominster. Congratulations to the Miranda's Pub crew!



SOLVUS GLOBAL RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand opening of Solvus Global's new Center for Scaled Innovation in Manufacturing (cSIM) in Leominster. Congratulations to the Solvus Global crew!



JP ELECTRIC RIBBON CUTTING

Congratulations to the J P Electric and Son, Inc. team, who held their ribbon cutting in October for their grand reopening of their new location on South Street in Fitchburg!



MASSHIRE NORTH CENTRAL CAREER CENTER RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand opening of MassHire's new renovations on their career center in Leominster. Congratulations to the MassHire crew!



873 TAVERN RECEIVES LOAN FROM NCMDC

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC) recently provided a loan to 873 Tavern, a restaurant in Ashby.

Pictured (L-R) are Brendan Hannen, Micro-Loan Manager, NCMDC; Sean Smith, owner of 873 Tavern; and Sandie Cataldo, Economic Development Manager, NCMDC.



YPNC NETWORKING NIGHT

The Young Professionals of North Central Massachusetts had a great time at their first networking event since the pandemic at River Styx Brewing!

QUICK HITS CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



CHECK PRESENTATION TO ATHOL AND PHILLIPSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Visit North Central Massachusetts was pleased to present the Phillipston and Athol Firefighter Associations with a check of \$10,828.50 to support first responders, which was raised from the Appleseed Country Fair.



SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY PROCLAMATION IN FITCHBURG

Members of the Chamber team joined Mayor DiNatale and City of Fitchburg staff to proclaim Saturday, November 27th as Small Business Saturday in Fitchburg.

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Save the Date



Business After Hours at Gardner Ale House January 20, 2022, 5-7 pm, 74 Parker Street, Gardner, MA. Come to taste the amazing line up of craft beer Moon Hill Brewing creates, enjoy tasty appetizers compliments of Gardner Ale House, and stay for dinner!

Space is Limited! Register today! Thank You Rick Walton and the entire Gardner Ale House Team for hosting this event! ♦



EXPLORE the North Central Massachusetts Chamber's on-demand online program library and access training sessions, workshops and seminars that will help your business succeed. Access the library at www.NorthCentralMass.com.

Save the Date



The NCMCC's longest running program, the Good Morning North Central Breakfast is a fast paced, executive networking and educational event held four times throughout the year. Join us on January 14, 2022 from 6:45am to 8:30am at the Great Wolf Lodge.

Our Guest speakers are New York Times Bestselling Author Michael J. Tougas and President & CEO of AAA Northeast John Galvin.

Michael Tougas best known for his non-fiction narratives of survival and rescue stories including *The Finest Hours*, *Ten Hours Until Dawn*, *So Close to Home*, *A Storm Too Soon*, *Overboard*, *Rescue of the Bounty* and *Fatal Forecast*. *The Finest Hours* has been made into a Disney movie starring Chris Pine and Casey Affleck.

John Galvin serves on the AAA National Board of Directors, its Committee of Club Officials, AAA/CAA Joint Committee, and RAP Steering Committee. He was formerly Chair of its Membership Business Committee.

The January breakfast is sponsored by Resource Management, Inc. ♦

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Full Calendar of Events on Page 26

North Central Calendar **EVENTS**

A complete list of events with details can be found at web.northcentralmass.com/events. Please contact Kat Deal with any questions.

The Chamber is following recommendations made by the CDC when it comes to in person events.

We look forward to seeing fully COVID-19 vaccinated individuals, as well as those not vaccinated – who are recommended to wear a mask and appropriately socially distance. If you are experiencing any signs of illness within two weeks of the event date, we kindly ask for you to not attend the event. Check www.NorthCentralMass.com for changes on upcoming events.

January 5

Women's Leadership Connection: Women Owned, Women Run

*Great Wolf Lodge
11:45 AM – 1:30 PM*

January 11

Small Business RoundTable

*Chamber Conference Room
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM*

January 12

Human Resource Council

*Chamber Conference Room
12:00 PM – 1:30 PM*

January 14

Good Morning North Central

*Great Wolf Lodge
6:45 AM – 8:30 AM*

January 20

Business After Hours: Gardner Ale House

*Gardner Ale House
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM*

January 25

The Young Professionals of North Central Massachusetts presents "Mark! Set! Go!" with Maria Milgros

*Chamber Conference Room
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM*

January 28

Connect North Central

*Chamber Conference Room
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM*

February 8

Small Business RoundTable

*Chamber Conference Room
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM*

February 25

Connect North Central

*Chamber Conference Room
8:00 AM – 12:00 AM*

March 8

Small Business RoundTable

*Chamber Conference Room
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM*

March 9

Human Resource Council

*Chamber Conference Room
12:00 PM – 1:30 PM*

March 11

Good Morning North Central

*Great Wolf Lodge
6:45 AM – 8:30 AM*



The Women's Leadership Connection will meet on January 5, 2022, from 11:45am – 1:30pm at the Great Wolf Lodge, for the quarterly meeting. The Women's Leadership Connection, a luncheon event held four times per year and focuses on business women empowering women in business. Core topics will include professional development and career advancement as well as social and philanthropic events. The January program will feature a panel of women who own their business and employee 100% women. Our panel will include Tamar Russell Brown, owner of Sitka Creations, Lauren Howe, owner of empHowered PR, and Lysa Miller, owner of Ladybugz Interactive Agency Organization.

The Women's Leadership Connection is Sponsored by Fidelity Bank. ◇

Advertise in the 2022 Spring/Summer Guide to North Central Massachusetts

Plans are underway to publish the 2022 Spring/Summer edition of the Guide to North Central Massachusetts. This well-known magazine is published by the Chamber's tourism arm – Visit North Central Massachusetts – to promote the region.

The guide is an effective and affordable opportunity to showcase your business to consumers in North Central Massachusetts and throughout New England. The guide is distributed at 250+ locations in New England, including the Johnny Appleseed Visitors Center on Route 2 in Lancaster and 46 AAA offices in the state. The guide is also distributed at travel shows, to visiting bus tours and posted on VisitNorthCentral.com and the state's tourism website.

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Diane Burnette at 978.534.2829 or via email at dburnette@northcentralmass.com.



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