

chamber

north central massachusetts report

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Chamber launches new strategic plan



Government
Affairs News
page 6

Chamber
Updates
page 10

Summer 2023 Edition

Top Scholars
page 16

Tourism
Update
page 26

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north central massachusetts report

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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For Editorial & Advertising

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About the Cover:

For this edition of The Chamber Report, we highlight our new three-year strategic plan approved by the Chamber and our affiliate boards. It builds off the work completed in our last strategic plan and the One North Central regional economic blueprint. In this edition, you will also find profiles of our 2023 Chamber scholarship recipients, news and updates from the Chamber and more. We continue to focus on growing our local economy and making sure the business climate in North Central Massachusetts is strong and helps your business grow. Thank you for taking the time to see what your Chamber and our members and partners are up to. We hope you enjoy reading The Chamber Report!

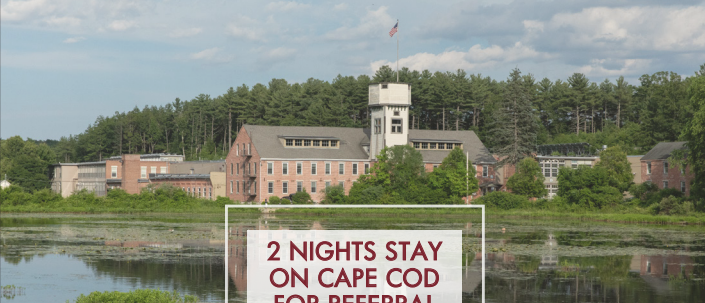
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JAMES VANDER HOOVEN TO CHAIR CHAMBER'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James L. Vander Hooven, Ed.D., president of Mount Wachusett Community College, has been elected Chair of the Chamber's Board of Directors for 2023-2024. The announcement was made at the Chamber's Annual Meeting on June 15, 2023.

Dr. Vander Hooven was named president of Mount Wachusett Community College in 2017. Headquartered in Gardner, Mount Wachusett Community College is a public, two-year college that was founded in 1963 to serve the people of North Central Massachusetts. The college is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) and offers 70+ credit-bearing degree and certificate programs, non-credit, personal enrichment classes for lifelong learners, and workforce development that includes custom, on-site training.

Dr. Vander Hooven earned his Bachelor of Arts degree

in English from Ohio State University and his Master of Arts degree in American Studies from the University of Wyoming. In 2009, he was awarded his Doctorate in Higher Education Leadership from the University of Maine, where he focused on student access.

In addition to his involvement with the Chamber, Dr. Vander Hooven also serves on a number of boards and charitable organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club of Fitchburg/Leominster, United Way of North Central Massachusetts, Wachusett Business Incubator and the GFA Federal Credit Union Supervisory Committee.

He succeeds Christopher McCarthy, president of Fidelity Bank who now moves to the position of Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Directors.

"I am incredibly honored to have been elected Chair of this dynamic and respected

organization that plays such a leadership role in advancing North Central Massachusetts," expressed Dr. Vander Hooven, "I am excited to continue Chris McCarthy's efforts and look forward to working alongside an incredible Board and staff to make sure the Chamber remains a strong resource for our business community."

Dr. Vander Hooven was first elected to the Chamber's Board of Directors in 2018 and has held several leadership positions including Vice Chair, Treasurer and has served on the Chamber's Leadership Council, the One North Central leadership committee and the executive committee. As the Chair of the Chamber's Board of Directors, Dr. Vander Hooven will work with the Board, Chamber staff, and membership to champion the Chamber in its mission to serve the region's business community.

In the same election, Barbara Mahoney, president



James Vander Hooven.

& CEO of Leominster Credit Union was elected Vice-Chair and Dr. Richard Lapidus, president of Fitchburg State University was elected to the position of Treasurer. New members elected to the board were Nick Haritos, president & CEO of AIS, Inc. in Leominster; John Heroux, president of Micro Machine & Electronics, Inc. in Leominster; and Nicole Moorshead, general manager of the Chocksett Inn in Sterling and the Colonial Inn in Gardner. ♦

North Central
MASSACHUSETTS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**NEWLY ELECTED
BOARD MEMBERS**



John Heroux
President
Micro Machine &
Electronic, Inc



Nick Haritos
President & CEO
AIS, Inc.



Nicole Moorshead
General Manager
Chocksett Inn &
Colonial Hotel

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE



Pictured (L-R): Nick Haritos, President & CEO of AIS, Inc.; Aaron Birt, CEO of Solvus Global; Roy Nascimento, President & CEO of the Chamber; and Congressman James McGovern meet during the Chamber's recent Washington D.C. Fly-In.

Federal Affairs: At the time of this writing, Washington D.C. continues to remain divided as evidenced by the latest rounds of talks on how to handle the debt ceiling. For the first time in a number of years, the Chamber held a D.C. Fly-In, bringing a group of members to meet with the federal delegation. While there, members met with Congressman Jim McGovern, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the New England Council on a number of issues vital to North Central Massachusetts including workforce issues, immigration, manufacturing and education. We also participated in Congresswoman Lori

Trahan's Third District Day and heard from a number of Congressional leaders from across both sides of the aisle, including Minority Leader of the U.S House of Representatives Hakeem Jeffries; Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut; Democratic Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar; Chair Cathy McMorris-Rogers of the House Energy & Commerce Committee; Chair Mark Green of the House Homeland Security Committee; Chair Mike Gallagher of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies and Innovation; Representative Richard Neal

of Massachusetts, ranking member on the House Ways & Means Committee; and Senators Warren and Markey of Massachusetts. AIS, Inc. also welcomed our group to their D.C. showroom for a cocktail reception.

State Affairs: In March, Governor Maura Healey unveiled her inaugural budget to the tune of \$55.5 billion incorporating the \$1 billion anticipated from the new Fair Share Amendment. The House followed suit in the latter half of the month with a \$56.2 billion budget proposal following three days of debate. The Senate unveiled their \$55.8 billion ways and means

budget proposal in May. The Chamber spent the bulk of April and May leveraging our relationships with the regional delegation and our multiple coalitions to advocate for a number of priorities in the areas of economic development, workforce, education and tourism throughout the budget process. At the time of this writing, we are waiting for the Senate to begin debate as they work on their amended version. Once approved, the budget will then head to a conference committee where House and Senate leaders will negotiate their differences

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

and produce a final budget for both branches to vote on. Then the budget will be sent to the Governor for her signature.

In an effort to better address the housing crisis in the Commonwealth, the State announced the separation of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development into the Executive Office of Economic Development and the newly created Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. In Mid-May former Worcester City Manager Ed Augustus was announced as the state's first Housing Secretary in more than 30 years. Augustus begins his new role on June 1, 2023.

The Executive Office of Economic Development began a series of listening sessions across the state in May as part of their economic development planning process. Members of the Chamber staff testified at a listening session held at WPI for the Central Massachusetts Region. We intend to monitor this planning process closely and look forward to providing input whenever possible.

Local Affairs: The Chamber continues to attend local city council meetings in both Leominster and Fitchburg on a regular basis to monitor legislative actions and continue to engage with our local elected officials. As we work to strengthen our relationships with the communities within our



Pictured (L-R): Roy Nascimento, President & CEO of the Chamber; Karen Davis, Executive Assistant of Devens Operations; Meg Delorier Acting EVP, Devens Operations & Director of Military Initiatives for MassDevelopment; and Travis Condon, Public Affairs Manager at the Chamber.



Ellen Racine, Leominster's CDBG and Housing Rehab Coordinator, briefs the Leominster City Council on the latest CDBG plan at a recent city council meeting. The Chamber regularly attends local city council meetings to keep a pulse on important issues

footprint, we have also begun meeting with local economic development officials to discuss efforts and provide an update on our One North Central regional economic development plan. Most recently, we met with the MassDevelopment

leader for Devens and we have also had meetings with the economic development committees in Groton, Hubbardston, Lunenburg, Sterling and Pepperell. We are working on meetings with a number of additional communities.

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. ◇

Chamber Welcomes Babcock to its Professional Staff, Bids Fond Farewell to Cruz and Goulet

The Chamber is pleased to announce the addition of Maureen Babcock to the professional staff in the role of Executive Assistant. She will be responsible for managing the Chamber's database, providing administrative and operational support, and coordinating special projects. Maureen lives in Devens and has been very active in the community, including volunteering with the Boy Scouts and Harvard Parks & Recreation. She has also served as the Chair of the Educational Advisory Committee that advises MassDevelopment on education related matters in the Devens community.



Maureen Babcock.

She holds a Bachelor degree in Political Science & Business from Mount Saint Mary's College and is a Certified Financial Planner. Members can contact Maureen Babcock at 978.353.7600 ext. 222 or via email at mbabcock@northcentralmass.com

"Maureen brings a wealth of skills and experience to this dynamic and essential role, including over a decade of experience in project management, registration and program coordination," said Roy Nascimento, President & CEO of the Chamber. "We are excited to have her join our team and contribute towards our efforts to support our members and advance our communities."

The Chamber also announces the recent departure of Maribel Cruz and Lauren Goulet. Cruz has served as Economic Development Manager for the Chamber for over two years and recently accepted the position of Housing and

Community Development Director for the City of Fitchburg. Lauren Goulet worked for the Chamber for nearly fifteen years as Operations Manager and recently accepted a position with the Azzur Group, a life sciences company expanding in Devens.

"We are saddened to lose Maribel and Lauren, but also excited for them and these new opportunities," said Nascimento. "They have been important and dedicated members of our team and contributors to our success. I want to thank them for their hard work and commitment to the Chamber and wish them well in their new positions." ♦

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CONSTRUCTION, HOME
INSPECTION

Baldarelli Realty Group/RJB Appraisals

Rudolph Baldarelli Jr.
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Leominster, MA 01453
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CONSTRUCTION, REAL ESTATE/
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Lowell, MA 01851
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E L HARVEY & SONS

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Westboro, MA 01581
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RECYCLING

Edward Jones/Kelley

Cailte Kelley
113 Central Street
Winchendon, MA 01475
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33 Lyman Street, Suite 210
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Flynn Petroleum/Al's Oil

Carol Reebenacker
307 Hartford Pike
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
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Fitchburg, MA 01420
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FEBRUARY — APRIL

CHAMBER UPDATES

NORTH CENTRAL COMPACT:



March Compact Meeting.

In March, the Chamber reconvened the North Central Compact, formerly called the Education Compact. This group is a collective impact coalition formed to address the complex talent and workforce challenges facing the region. The group consists of a group of prominent business, education, workforce and community leaders who are committed to collective action and leadership. The Chamber believes that it is important to reengage this region in a meaningful discussion regarding these complex challenges. At this meeting we provided an update on efforts, and more importantly we explored collective strategies to continue to address these challenges. To this end, we presented a brief overview of a Workforce Study that the Chamber commissioned last year that helped to inform our discussion and collective action. We also discussed working collectively on our Career and Hiring Event that will happen in October of this year.

NEW LOANS:

The North Central Massachusetts Development

Corporation (NCMDC), the Chamber's economic development arm, has approved and closed five small business loans for a total of \$123,500, since Jan. 1, 2023. Two of the loans were granted to fund start-up businesses and three were to help existing businesses expand. These loans leveraged \$115,000 of private borrower funds and from our banking partners. An additional loan for \$30,000 was approved, but has not closed yet. There are eleven total new loans for FY23 for \$410,000.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

During the last quarter, our economic development team provided 719 hours of direct technical assistance to existing and start-up businesses in the region. We also continue to connect our clients to partners such as NewVue Communities, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Center for Women and Enterprise (CWE) for services such as business plans, projections, marketing plans, growth and others subjects. When necessary, we also connect clients with professionals who can provide TA beyond the scope of what we can do directly, including services for marketing, public relations, website/media design, bookkeeping and legal.

MINI-GRANTS:

The NCMDC continues to offer mini-grants between \$500 - \$5,000 to our borrowers to assist with technical assistance. Examples of professional

services that the grant can help cover include accounting/bookkeeping, marketing, and legal services. Prioritization is given to existing loan clients but we will consider other small businesses in North Central Massachusetts with a demonstrated need. For the quarter, NCMDC has awarded 6 mini-grants totaling \$21,858 for bookkeeping, marketing and signage assistance.

LATINX OUTREACH:

The Chamber and NCMDC launched this effort two years ago to engage more with Latinx business owners/entrepreneurs and connect them with financial resources, programs and business networks. The Latinx is the largest minority group in the region and increasingly playing a larger role in our economy, starting businesses at three times the rate of the general population. Since launching this initiative, we have provided 44 micro-loans totaling \$958,605; \$25,000 in micro-grants; and over 300 hours of direct technical assistance which resulted in the creation or retention of 57 jobs. We have also assisted Latinx businesses in securing state grants and convened several roundtables, forums and workshops in Spanish. We have also developed several new partnerships in the Latinx community that have helped further our goals with this initiative and other engagement efforts.

STRONG ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM:

MassTech is awarding the NCMDC a \$100,000 grant to continue our Strong Entrepreneurship Ecosystem project which builds off of the work of our One North Central Regional Economic Development Plan, which prioritizes efforts to grow the region from within through small business support programs and initiatives.



Tricia Pistone of UMass Health Alliance Clinton Hospital is interviewed for a recent podcast.

PODCAST:

The Inside North Central Massachusetts podcast series is now dropping new episodes weekly. Each week Travis Condon and Kat Deal interview a different member and have been supported by Maribel Cruz as she has hosted two podcasts in Spanish, first with Irene Hernandez at Active Life, and Rodrigo Souza, owner of Comeketo. Our podcasts are available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify,

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

Podbean, and Google. Listenership is up across all channels. Thank you to all the members who have participated in interviews and/or listened to the new Podcast series.

JOBS BOARD:

Over 10,500 jobs have been posted since we launched the WorkNorthCentral.com online jobs resource. The jobs board continues to be one of the most visited sections of our website. We are promoting the jobs board with paid advertising on Facebook and Google AdWords.

Postings are complimentary for members, and can be self-posted or sent to the Chamber to post for you. Contact us if you would like more information.

CHAMBER GIFT CARDS:

We currently have 37 member merchants that are participating in the new Gift Local eGift Card program and can accept the new cards. The new Yiftee platform has been well received so far, making it much easier for merchants and gift card recipients to redeem their gift cards. We continue to honor the old plastic gift cards and exchange them for the new electronic gift

cards. Members interested in accepting the new gift cards should contact the Chamber. There is no charge to participate.

SOLAR:

From its inception in August 2014 through March 2023 the solar field on Pleasant St. has produced 12,241,426 kWh of Net Metering Credits to the manufacturers participating in the program. The collective savings to participants totals

\$2,372,951.

REACCREDITATION:

The Chamber submitted our reaccreditation application and supporting materials to the accrediting board in early March. We expect to hear back from them in June. This extensive, self-review process occurs every five years and we can only earn accreditation by meeting rigorous standards for leadership, staff development, chamber policy and procedures, and programs – including governance, government affairs, technology, planning and finance. ◇

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COMMUNITY Leadership Institute

*Now Accepting Applications
For the Class of 2024*

The Community Leadership Institute is now accepting applications for the 2023-2024 program year. The Community Leadership Institute began in 1988, known then as Leadership North Central. Over the last 35 years, more than 300 participants have graduated from the Institute and become leaders in their communities, with over 100 in the last five years. Participants for the Institute are sponsored by their business and are seen as leaders or potential leaders within that company. The

best leaders know that training their successors to be competent, knowledgeable and well-connected community leaders is crucial for their business and for the advancement of North Central Massachusetts. The Community Leadership Institute was developed to support the access to the region's many organizations, industries and business leaders as part of the succession plan not only for individual businesses but for the community at large in this 21st century technology and knowledge-driven economy. ◇



Deadline to apply for the 2023-2024 Community Leadership Institute is August 31, 2023.

Please contact Kat Deal with questions regarding the Community Leadership Institute at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or by email kdeal@northcentralmass.com.

Pictured: The CLI Class of 2022-23 at the Fay Club following one of their monthly classes.

FEATURED MEMBER PROFILE

JOSHUA ALLEN DESIGN BRINGS A NEW TWIST TO INTERIOR DESIGN



Joshua Allen Design.

With new growth comes new opportunities, and Joshua Allen Design (JAD) does exactly that with the recent launch of their kitchen cabinetry in 2022 and their mobile app, set to release to the public in Summer 2023.

Established 5 years ago by owner Joshua Allen Halterman, Joshua Allen Design is consistently reaching new heights. Originally a home-staging company, the business grew to the point where interior design started to take over, launching the business into a full-scale interior design firm. The current staff includes 3 full-time designers, a project manager, business manager, and marketing manager.

“I’m proud to say that over the course of five years, we’ve flipped the business on its head and turned it into an interior design-based business for all of central Massachusetts, but New

England as well,” said Halterman. The business has designed in, but not limited to: Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.

“We help bring people’s spaces to life,” he said. “That is our number one goal.”

Designing with the Client in Mind

According to their website, JAD handles everything from kitchen, bathroom, living spaces, remodels, and renovations, and more. Based in Sterling Massachusetts, the business combines transitional style with a modern twist and a unique New England flair. They believe that listening, understanding, and building strong relationships with their clients take priority.

“Our goal is to make the interior design process as easy and as

comfortable as possible for our clients, as well as attainable. This is something that I believe in firmly,” Halterman said. “Interior design should be as important as selecting a contractor, or plumber, whenever you are doing something to your home. Everyone should know an interior designer just like everyone knows a plumber or electrician.”

If a client is new to the interior design process, the design team will help to build you a roadmap and be a part of every step of the design process. The process begins with a design consultation, so that they can better understand what the client is looking for, and what their needs and goals are.

“Our goal is to ensure that our clients’

Continued on page 13

Continued from page 12

spaces are as unique and as personal as they are. We help them decorate, space plan, build out new rooms and go over architectural layouts and drawings, finishes and tiles, and much, much more,” he said.

The design process is unique to every potential client that JAD encounters, ensuring the full experience and customization that is unique as each individual looking to design their space.

COVID just could not stop JAD

When COVID-19 first arrived in the states, many small business owners were unsure of what to do. There were a lot of questions unanswered for many, and for some businesses, it was detrimental to their success.

“We were still relatively new at the time that COVID came around and were really impacted because our business is client-facing and in the clients’ homes,” Halterman said. And while Joshua Allen Design certainly felt that at the business’ core during a two-month furlough, the interior design firm came back stronger than ever. In fact, they were able to add to the team to provide the highest quality interior design services for their clients.

“We noticed this insane uptick of business out of nowhere. Clients would come to us in need of design because they need to redo their kitchen and have been putting it off for 10 years, and now that they’re staring at it every day, they need to have it done. There was a need for a client to have a comfortable living and working space because they were now stuck in the house all the time,” he said.

Additionally Halterman noted that the JAD team learned a valuable lesson with the importance of mental health as it relates to the design of a space. Having a messy, cluttered space or home that is outdated or worse can impact a person’s clarity of mind.

Most of the interior design firm’s clients are those that are looking to “rehab, refresh, or renovate” – those

that just bought a home and are looking to add or update it, or those who have lived in their homes for a handful of years and looking to renovate. And for those clients who are looking to build their own home, JAD eliminates the extra step of coordinating with the contractor and eases the design process to ensure that progress is made the way you want it to be.

While the pandemic was scary for every small business owner, not only in Massachusetts but across the world, Joshua Allen Design benefited from it in the end as clients really wanted to connect with their spaces and make it their own.

New Opportunities Arise for Joshua Allen Design

In 2022, JAD started offering kitchen cabinetry from brand names Starmark Cabinetry and Mantra Cabinets, in addition to their interior design process. You can view the product information on their website joshuaallendesign.com.

“We are proud to be able to offer kitchen design on top of interior design because we are truly a full-service interior design business. A lot of times, kitchen designers will only focus on cabinetry. So, what we do is we marry the two together, and we are thinking about how the bathroom relates to the living room as it relates to the kitchen, and how the flooring goes throughout. That’s a really rare business model to have,” said Halterman.

Additionally, Joshua Allen Design will be releasing their own branded mobile app in Summer 2023. This application will be free to everyone, and is an opportunity to not only grow the business, but also be in touch with clients and potential clients directly.

“What we are trying to do is bring exclusive content to the general masses about interior design – what are the best colors of the month, best pieces of the month, or best deals of the month?” stated Halterman. “Our clients are going to have a better user experience because our designs are presented to them in a client portal designed by us. The client portal will be at their fingertips instead

of having to always be on their laptop.”

Rooted in the Local Community

A vital aspect of the Joshua Allen Design values is being rooted in the local community. A portion of all proceeds are donated to the Rise Above Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that responds to the growing need to give youth in foster care opportunities that will give them a sense of normalcy, provide comfort and build self-esteem. By funding individual wishes for requests like prom expenses, soccer registration, and clarinet lessons, Rise Above provides positive experiences for children in foster care.

Halterman himself sits on the Board of Directors for the Rise Above Foundation, and according to their website, JAD donates 100% of their time and expertise multiple times a year to install design projects for youth transitioning from foster homes to their own as they start college and enter adulthood. Last but certainly not least, JAD releases a candle every year in honor of the Rise Above Foundation.

You can learn more about the Rise Above Foundation on their website by clicking joshuaallendesign.com.

Halterman added that they have the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce to thank for being a part of the business’ growth.

“The [North Central Massachusetts] Chamber of Commerce has been a great resource because whenever you’re starting a business, it can be really hard to know who to talk to and who to connect with. The marketing opportunities have also been really great because we’ve been featured on their podcast, networking events, and it’s nice to get to know the community. The chamber is really business-oriented and we love that about them.”

If you are looking to refresh or design your space and home, look no further than the Joshua Allen Design team. You can contact JAD on their website, www.joshuaallendesign.com, or by giving them a call 508.901.9919 or emailing them at josh@joshuaallendesign.com. ♦

Chamber Launches New Three-Year Strategic Plan

Plan aligns with One North Central Regional Economic Development Plan

In April, the Chamber unveiled a new strategic plan designed to build upon the considerable momentum generated through the keen vision and steady execution of the prior plan announced in 2018.

“Our new strategic plan capitalizes upon the successes experienced over the past four years while also acknowledging a significant number of emerging opportunities and challenges currently facing our region,” said Roy Nascimento, President and CEO, North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. “At the same time, it incorporates many of the

Massachusetts Development Corporation and Visit North Central Massachusetts, was prepared via a comprehensive process that included input from members, the Boards, staff and other stakeholders. The new strategic plan complements the One North Central plan while aligning with the Chamber’s advocacy agenda.

“We made great strides in achieving key goals set forth in our previous plan,” said Nascimento. “From launching a localized online jobs resource and a Latinx business initiative to better engage and support Latinx small businesses to securing nearly four million dollars

“The new strategic plan capitalizes upon the successes experienced over the last four years...”

invaluable recommendations of One North Central, our comprehensive regional economic development plan commissioned by the Chamber in concert with our local partners and unveiled in 2021.”

The plan, vision, and mission serve as a blueprint for the future success of the Chamber and its affiliate organizations as well as help drive programs, services and value the Chamber is creating for members. The 2023-2025 plan includes five overarching goals focusing on specific areas with accountable metrics and targets.

The strategic plan, which was approved by the Chamber Board and the Boards of the North Central

in state, federal and private funding to supporting lending efforts and regional economic development, we are pleased with our work and look forward to continuing the momentum over the next three years.”

Programs and projects will be undertaken with care and consideration of actual resources of the Chamber and its members. The plan is also a fluid document of which the Chamber will update as needed to reflect the changing world.

Members are encouraged to contact Roy Nascimento at 978.353.7600 or via email at rnascimento@northcentralmass.com with any questions or feedback on the strategic plan. ♦

GOAL 1:

Strengthen the regional economy and improve the overall business climate;

GOAL 2:

Promote the region as an ideal place to live, work, visit and invest;

GOAL 3:

Partner with educational, business and non-profit communities to address the region’s growing workforce development needs;

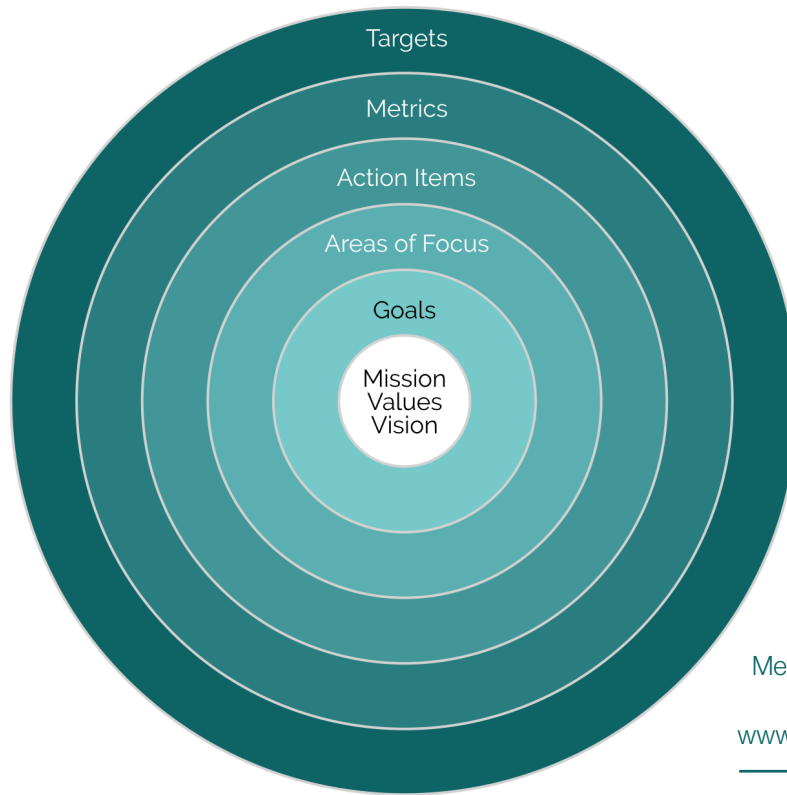
GOAL 4:

Deepen the region’s understanding of complex issues, identify collaborative solutions and advocate to key decision makers and stakeholders;

GOAL 5:

Position the Chamber for long-term sustainability and success.

STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL



Members can view the new
strategic plan by visiting
www.northcentralmass.com.

• MISSION:	What is the Chamber's enduring sense of purpose?
• VALUES:	To which standards does the Chamber hold itself?
• VISION:	What is the desired, long-term impact of the Chamber's work?
• GOALS:	How is the Chamber advancing its mission and reaching for its vision while reflecting its values?
• AREAS OF FOCUS:	What is the Chamber doing to better align itself with the evolving needs of its members and the region?
• ACTION ITEMS:	What discreet and achievable steps is the Chamber taking to pursue its goals?
• METRICS:	What measures does the Chamber use to gauge its progress in advancing goals?
• TARGETS:	How far does the Chamber intend to advance its metrics?

Chamber Celebrates the TOP SCHOLARS in North Central Massachusetts

Congratulations to the 2023 Scholarship Recipients

In May, the Chamber recognized twenty-six of the most outstanding high school seniors in the region at our popular annual Scholars Breakfast. A total of \$52,000 in scholarships from the Chamber Foundation were also distributed to these seniors. These awards were either endowed or funded by companies and individuals. The Scholarship Committee selected the scholarship recipients from among college-bound seniors in the Chamber's service area. The sole basis for selection was merit—in all aspects of students' endeavors, from academics and sports

to volunteer work and employment.

Congratulations to the scholarship recipients for their impressive achievements, as well as their parents for the support they provided that helped make their success possible, and the educators and community leaders that invested in nurturing this future generation of leaders.

The Chamber would like to acknowledge the following members for sponsoring the 2023 Scholars Breakfast. The proceeds from the breakfast support the Chamber Foundation. *(See box to the right.)*

Thank you also to the following businesses for advertising in the Scholars Breakfast Program Book: Baystate Financial;

Guardian Information Technologies; Health Alliance Guild; Protective Services, Inc.; DoubleTree by Hilton; Enterprise Bank and Trust Company; Mediation Services of North Central MA, Inc.; and Sitka Creations LLC.

The Chamber wishes to also thank the many members who contributed towards the scholarships. Since 1985, the Chamber Foundation has awarded over a million dollars in scholarships to 665 students.

Members interested in establishing a scholarship for next year or contributing towards the Chamber Foundation can contact Terry Young, Manager of Talent and Education Initiatives at ext. 244 or via email at tyoung@northcentralmass.com. ♦

SCHOLAR BREAKFAST SPONSORS

PREMIER SPONSOR
Rollstone Bank & Trust

RECIPIENT TICKET SPONSOR
Great Wolf Lodge

PROGRAM SPONSOR
North Central Massachusetts
Development Corporation

CENTERPIECE SPONSOR
Leominster Credit Union

SUPPORTING SPONSORS
AIS, Inc
Steel-Fab, Inc

GIFT SPONSOR
Fitchburg State University

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS



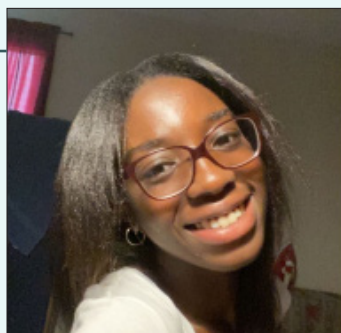
Claire DiGiovanni, a senior at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School, has been awarded the Chamber Foundation Scholarship for \$2,000. Claire is the daughter of Elizabeth and Brian DiGiovanni. Claire is a member of the National Honor Society, St. Jude Club all four-years and volunteers with Best Buddies. She plans to attend the University of Vermont to study nursing.



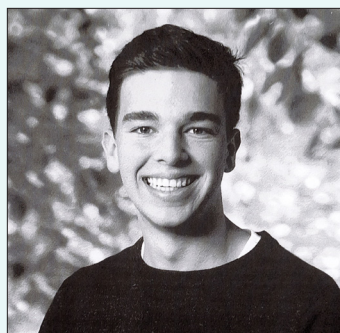
Ro Dudevoir, a senior at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School, has been awarded the IC Credit Union Scholarship for \$2,000. Ro is the daughter of Mari-Paz Miralles. She has been a competitive swimmer since the age of 7, is a member of the National Honor Society and volunteers her time at UMass Memorial Health Alliance Hospital. She plans to attend Harvard to study Integrative Biology, Global Health and Health Policy.

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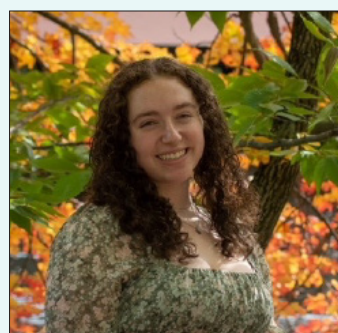
Continued from page 16



Nana Okyere, a senior at St. Bernard's High School, has been awarded the Chamber Foundation Scholarship for \$2,000. Nana is the daughter of Nana Afriyie Bonsu. She is President of Photography and Yearbook Club, coaches soccer at Oakmont Youth Soccer and volunteers at the Leominster Public Library. She plans to attend Boston University to study Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.



Sawyer Madison, a senior at the Bromfield School, has been awarded the Adams Family Scholarship for \$2,000. Sawyer is the son of Risa Goldman and Gary Madison. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, and is the recipient of the Eagle Scout Rank through the Boy Scouts of America. He plans to attend Northwestern University to study Engineering.



Shayna Zibel, a senior at Leominster High School, has been awarded the Leominster Credit Union Scholarship for \$2,000. Shayna is the daughter of Heidi and Scott Zibel. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Student Government, Class Secretary, and volunteers her time as a Religious School Teacher. She plans to attend Northeastern University to study Physics/Astrophysics.



Marcus Kelly, a senior at Fitchburg High School, has been awarded the Benjamin Asher Scholarship for \$2,000. Marcus is the son of Joanne and Jim Kelly. He is a member of the National Honor Society, FHS Math and Garden Club, played Varsity Lacrosse, Indoor Trach and Lunenburg Archers and volunteers his time with the 21st Century After School Tutoring Program. He plans to attend UMass Lowell to study Electrical Engineering.



Sahara Suliman, a senior at The Bromfield School, has been awarded the Barbara Silva Scholarship for \$2,000. Sahara is the daughter of Suraiya and Aron Suliman. She is a member of the National Honor Society, The Spanish National Honor Society, Captain of her Field Hockey team and volunteers her time as a tutor at The Bromfield School. She plans to attend Northeastern University to study Neuroscience.



Thomas Gosson IV, a senior at Leominster High School and Center for Technical Education and Innovation, has been awarded the Rollstone Bank & Trust Scholarship for \$2,000. Thomas is the son of Gina and Thomas Gosson III. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Best Buddies International, plays Varsity Baseball and Basketball and Golf and volunteers his time at the Leominster United Methodist Church food pantry. He plans to attend Bentley University for Business.



Madeline DeCesare, a senior at Lunenburg High School, has been awarded the Health Alliance Guild Scholarship for \$2,000. Madeline is the daughter of Emily Gammel and Phil DeCesare. She is a member of the National Honor Society, has been the recipient of several awards including, Academic Excellence in Math, Science, English and French, participates in Best Buddies and volunteers her time with Special Olympic Gymnastics, and the Lunenburg Food Pantry. She plans to attend the University of UMass Amherst to study Biochemistry or Global Public Health.



Darius Daniels, a senior at North Middlesex Regional High School, has been awarded the Chamber Foundation Scholarship for \$2,000. Darius is the son of Deena and Damian Daniels. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, and Best Buddies, he won the National African American Recognition Award. He plans to attend UMass Lowell to study Atmospheric Science/ Meteorology.

Continued on page 18

Continued from page 17



Ani Seppelin, a senior at Oakmont Regional High School, has been awarded the Roderick W. and Donna M. Lewin Scholarship for \$2,000. Ani is the daughter of Gayane and David Seppelin. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Class President, School Council Representative & Student Ambassador, and earned recognition by both Leominster and Fitchburg mayors connecting the two cities through art, culture and community. She plans to attend Northeastern University to study Biochemistry.



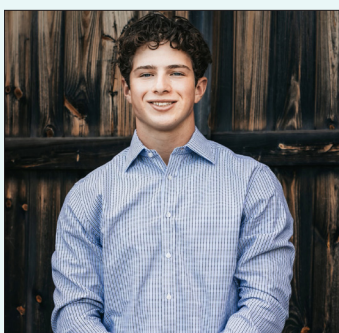
Abigail Flynn, a senior at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School, has been awarded the M. Ruth Lee Scholarship for \$2,000. Abigail is the daughter of Nicole and Robert Flynn. She is a member of the National Honor Society, National Art Society, Best Buddies & Mind Matters, she volunteers her time with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. She plans to attend the College of Charleston to study Biology.



Aidan Nelson, a senior at Oakmont Regional High School, has been awarded the George R. Wallace Scholarship for \$2,000. Aidan is the son of Natalie and Peter Nelson. He is a member of the National Honor Society, played Varsity Soccer since freshman year, and volunteers his time with the United Way and Project 351. He plans to attend California Polytechnic State University to study Construction Management.



Elizabeth Adunah, a senior at Leominster High School and Center for Technical Education Innovation, has been awarded the UMass Memorial Health Alliance Scholarship for \$2,000. Elizabeth is the daughter of Joyce and Albert Adunah. She is a member of the National Honor Society, is Vice President and Treasurer of the Black Heritage Club and volunteers her time as a Tutor and Youth Choir Leader. She plans to attend Boston University to study Biochemistry.



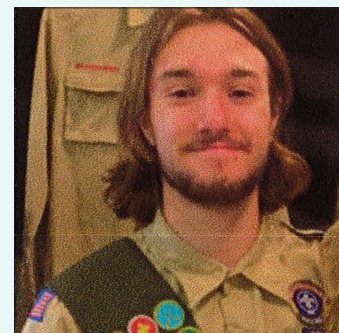
David Nurmi, a senior at St. Bernard's High School, has been awarded the Chamber Foundation Scholarship for \$2,000. David is the son of Lauri Tocci and Rick Nurmi. He is a member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Club, Secretary of Campus Ministry Club and volunteers his time with Haitian Outreach, and Saint's Against Hunger. He plans to attend UMass Amherst to study Kinesiology.



Michelle Nguyen, a senior at Nashoba Regional High School, has been awarded the Chamber Foundation Scholarship for \$2,000. Michelle is the daughter of Kim and Tin Nguyen. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Robotics Team, Students for Social Justice and volunteers her time with Kits for Kids, Nashoba Care Closet, and Mystic Learning Center and the Dance Garden. She plans to attend Cornell University to study Chemical Engineering.



Cole MacEwen, a senior at North Middlesex Regional High School, has been awarded the David McKeehan Scholarship for \$2,000. Cole is the son of David and Tonya MacEwen. He is a member of the National Honor Society, High School Drama and Best Buddies, he volunteers his time as a Middle School Music Tutor. He plans to attend The University of British Columbia for Neuroscience with a Pre-Med track & Trombone Performance.

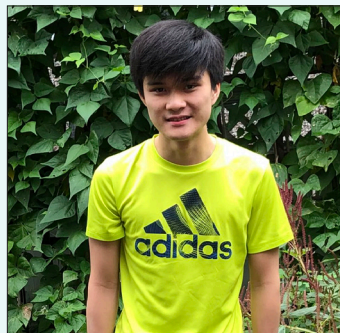


Frank Gallo IV, a senior at Fitchburg High School, has been awarded the Edward C. J. Healy Scholarship for \$2,000. Frank is the son of Kristen Canterbury and Frank Gall III. He has been Class President the past four years, Student Representative to the School Committee, Math Club President and he volunteers his time as Altar Server, Cameraman at FATV, and earned the Rank of Eagle Scout. Frank plans to attend Dartmouth College to study Ecology & Mathematics.

Continued from page 18



Meghan Boucher, a senior at North Middlesex Regional High School, has been awarded Ronald Ansini Scholarship for \$2,000. Meghan is the daughter of Kathleen and Jeffrey Boucher. She is a member of the National Honor Society, a member of the Student Council, Member and General Coordinator of New Orleans Service Learning, and volunteers her time with WHEAT Soup Kitchen, Sleep in Heavenly Peace and Habitat for Humanity. She plans to attend Emerson College to study Journalism.



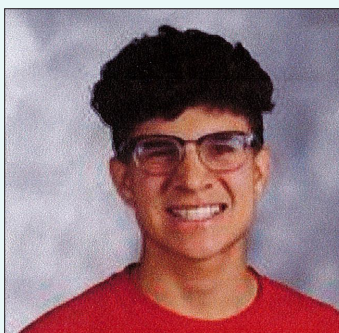
Minh VU, a senior at Leominster High School, has been awarded the UMass Memorial Health Alliance Scholarship for \$2,000. Minh is the son of Hang Le and Hung Vu. Minh is a member of the National Honor Society, French Club, Student Council, all 4 years and volunteers his time with Sholan Tree Farm and the Library. He plans to attend MIT to study Biomedical Engineering.



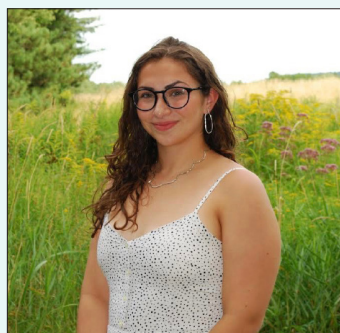
Maggie Bourgeois, a senior at Fitchburg High School, has been awarded the Elizabeth & Anthony DiGeronimo Family Scholarship for \$2,000. Maggie is the daughter of Marianne & Paul Bourgeois. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Captain of Varsity Softball & Varsity Field Hockey, and she volunteers her time for Reingold Supper Market and Holiday Fair, Helping Hands Club, that supports homeless student. She plans to attend Fitchburg State University to study Criminal Justice.



Helen Yan, a senior at Oakmont Regional High School, has been awarded the Enterprise Bank & Trust Scholarship for \$2,000. Helen is the daughter of Mei Jin Weng and Yu Hui Yan. She is a member of the National Honor Society, and has been the recipient of their Outstanding Service Award, President of Debate Club and is the Legislative Intern and Campaigner of the office of Jonathan Zlotnik of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. She plans to attend Harvard University to study History and Government.



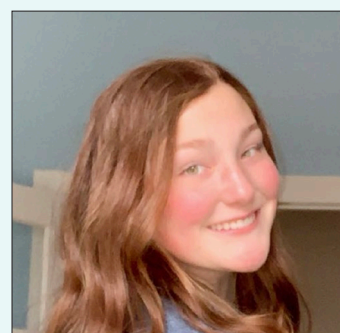
Mateo Emilio Quintero, a senior at Fitchburg High School has been awarded the Workers Credit Union Scholarship for \$2,000. Mateo is the son of Maryanne and Ramiro Quintero. He is a member of the National Honor Society, TRIO Upward Bound, Class Treasurer, Student Council Club Vice President, and he volunteers his time with the Leominster City Hall as an Intern. He plans to attend Harvard University to study Government & Economics.



Cassandra Cohen, a senior at Lunenburg High School, has been awarded the Salny Family Scholarship for \$2,000. Cassandra is the daughter of Lisa and Richard Cohen. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Current Events Club, and Best Buddies, she volunteers her time as a Religious School Assistant Teacher. She plans to attend Bentley College to study Actuarial Science.



Destiny Rodriguez a senior at Leominster High School is the recipient of the Elizabeth & Anthony DiGeronimo Family Scholarship for \$2,000. Destiny is the daughter of Cecilia Moreno. She is a member of the National Honor Society and volunteers her time at her church, helping with Kids Club. She plans to attend Mount Wachusett Community College to study Education



Lindsey Arseneau, a senior at Leominster High School, has been awarded the Patricia S. Alario Scholarship for \$2,000. Lindsey is the daughter of Megan and Randy Arseneau. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Senior Class Vice President, played Varsity Soccer all four years of High School and volunteers her time with Career and Community Service Learning as a TA and Outreach Program for Soccer, which serves children with intellectual, emotional and physical disabilities. She plans to attend University of South Carolina to study Engineering.

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ABOUT

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NORTH CENTRAL CHAMBER RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

Diane Burnette, Manager of the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center; Kat Deal, Program & Events Manager; and Roy Nascimento, President & CEO were recently recognized with Distinguished Service Awards by the Massachusetts Association of Chamber Executives. Diane and Roy were recognized for twenty-five years of service in the chamber of commerce industry and Kat was recognized for five years of service.



CHAMBER AFTERHOURS EVENT A HUGE SUCCESS!

We had a great night full of networking, appetizers and drinks at our Business After Hours at Wachusett Brewing Company. Thank you Wachusett Brewing Company for hosting the event!



THE LAZY BUBBLE'S RIBBON CUTTING.

Congratulations to The Lazy Bubble Restaurant on their Ribbon Cutting Celebration on Saturday, April 1, 2023! Opened in 2019 by Chef Chris Finn and his wife Ann-Marie, they unfortunately had to postpone their ribbon cutting celebration due to the pandemic.

This scratch kitchen restaurant in the Town of Pepperell offers a unique culinary experience. All recipes are made on-premises, using the freshest local ingredients whenever possible.

CUTIQUES MAKES A BIG MOVE!

Congratulations to Chamber member ECI Stores for the grand opening of their new location of Cutiques Etc. on 901 Central Street in Leominster.



QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



CHAMBER VISIT TO BEACON HILL

At the end of May, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce traveled to Beacon Hill to advocate on behalf of our members. The morning began with the Massachusetts Small Business Day event featuring Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll as keynote speaker before moving over to the State House where we were able to engage a number of our region's representatives and senators.

NEW SHOWROOM FOR JOSHUA ALLEN DESIGNS

Joshua Allen Designs held an Open House to showcase their new showroom located at 153 Clinton Road in Sterling.

The Joshua Allen Design team combines transitional style with a modern twist and a unique New England flair. Covering all of your interior design and property marketing needs, we bring a friendly, approachable, and sincere attitude to the design process.



FATV RIBBON CUTTING IN DOWNTOWN FITCHBURG

We celebrated Fitchburg Access Television (FATV) moving into their new location at 780 Main Street in downtown Fitchburg with a ribbon cutting and dedication of the David Clark Community Room.

FATV is an independent non-profit 501(C)(3) organization. As the PEG Access Television station of Fitchburg, MA, they are comprised of Public, Education, and Government programming for the citizens, by the citizens.

QUICK HITS CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



PIPER ELECTRICAL'S RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Piper Electrical, LLC to celebrate the grand opening of their new location located at 186 Main Street in Leominster.

Piper Electrical Company Inc. has been a well-established electrical contracting firm since its inception in 1929.

GORGEOUS NEW SPACE AT MT. WACHUSETT

Congratulations to Mount Wachusett Community College on the grand re-opening of their beautifully renovated Leominster Campus at 100 Erdman Way.



GOVERNOR SPEAKS ON NEW FLIGHTS FROM WORCESTER

The Chamber was on hand for a Massport press conference at the Worcester Regional Airport with Governor Maura Healey along with a handful of federal, state and local officials announcing the expansion of flights from the airport to Orlando and Fort Myers.

ECONOMIC FORECAST — GREAT SUCCESS!

The 10th Annual Economic Forecast Breakfast was a great success with over 250 business and community leaders in attendance from across the region! Attendees gained insights into the economic future of North Central Massachusetts. Thank you to our speakers — Yvonne Hao, Massachusetts Secretary of Economic Development; Dr. Mark Melnik, the Director of Economic & Public Policy Research at the UMass Donahue Institute; and Joseph Silva, the Chief Lending Officer for Fidelity Bank. A big thank you to our sponsor, Fidelity Bank! The Economic Forecast Breakfast was presented in partnership with The Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce; Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce; North Quabbin Chamber and Visitors Bureau; & Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc.



QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



ROLLSTONE BANK OPENS NEW OFFICE

Congratulations to Rollstone Bank & Trust on the opening of their new Mortgage & Loan Center located at 4 Central Street in Leominster! As a Chamber member, we're thrilled to see your continued growth and commitment to serving the local community.



SPANISH AMERICAN CENTER CELEBRATES NEW FOOD TRUCK

Congratulations to Chamber member, Spanish American Center, Inc. on the launch of their new food truck! Thanks to support at the federal and state level, the Spanish American Center was able to purchase and outfit the food truck. Congressman Jim McGovern secured \$110,000 in federal funding, while State Representative Natalie Higgins secured \$50,000 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

ENTERPRISE BANK'S FITCHBURG BRANCH IS 20

The Chamber recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of Enterprise Bank in Fitchburg. Enterprise opened its doors on John Fitch Highway in May 2003 and has been happily serving the Fitchburg area ever since making a profound impact on the community of businesses, individuals and non-profits throughout the city. Congratulations to Enterprise Bank for their continued success.



FATV'S NEW LOCATION AFTER HOURS

We had a great night full of networking, appetizers and drinks at our Business After Hours at Fitchburg Access Television (FATV). Thank you, FATV for hosting the event!



CHAMBER WELCOMES UKELELE J TO FITCHBURG

The Chamber recently celebrated the grand opening of Ukulele J's Music Studio, located at the Fitchburg Cultural Alliance on 675 Main Street in Fitchburg. Ukulele J is excited to introduce its new pre-K music program, Song Time Fun. This interactive program is designed for both children and their parents/caregivers. Additionally, Ukulele J will be hosting a free round-robin style Ukulele Group.



QUICK HITS CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

QUICK HITS CONTINUED...



COMEKETO CELEBRATE 14 YEARS

The Chamber celebrated the 14th Anniversary of Comeketo Brazilian Steakhouse. Congratulations to owner Rodrigo Souza on this accomplishment and best wishes for many years to come!



NCMDC ASSISTS SOTO HYDRAULIC

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC), the economic development arm of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber, recently approved a \$35,000 loan to Soto Hydraulic Repair LLC, located in Winchendon. Picture L-R: Steve Sugar, VP of Lending, Pedro Soto-Cruz, owner of Soto Hydraulic Repair and his wife Michel Cocuzza.



STERLING MEET & GREET

Thank you to the new members that were able to join us for our Meet & Greet in Sterling! It was a great opportunity to learn more about the benefits of the Chamber and connect with other businesses.



**We are
Better
Together!**
Join the NWCLA
TODAY!

- Informative Monthly Meetings, in person & virtual available
- Dinner Provided at Meetings
- Member Networking
- Attorney/Legal Updates
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- A Member-Only Website
- Rental/Lease Documents
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**Providing EDUCATION &
NETWORKING for MA Landlords**

North Central Calendar

EVENTS

June 15

**Annual Meeting
and Business Expo**

10:30 am – 2:00 pm

September 15

**Good Morning
North Central**

6:45 am - 8:30 am

*A complete list of events with details can be found
on our event calendar on northcentralmass.com.*

*Please contact Kat Deal with any questions at
978.353.7600 ext. 235 or via email at
kdeal@northcentralmass.com.*

August 28

**Young Professionals of
North Central Massachusetts:
Golf Outing**

2:00 pm – 7:00 pm

September 19

Human Resource Council

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

September 26

**Young Professionals of North
Central Massachusetts**

5:00 pm- 7:00 pm

September 12

Small Business Roundtable

8:00 am - 9:30 am

September 21

**Legislative & Candidates
Reception**

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

September 29

Connect North Central

8:00 am - 9:00 am

*Build Your Business,
the Workers Way.*

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obstacles and find solutions
for his lending needs.**

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978-855-5074 | gbrito@wcu.com

Gicelle, VP, Business Development Officer at WCU
Rob, WCU Member and Owner of Rob's Dyno Service



TOURISM update

Branding & Marketing Strategy

We have continued to focus our efforts on promoting the region as a unique and convenient destination through a mix of different strategies including digital, print, public relations, and trade shows. We have targeted consumers and groups within a 250-mile radius, particularly in our target markets of Boston, New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Southeastern Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

Advertising

Our spring advertising campaigns have been effectively running on MassLive; LocaliQ; Trip Advisor; Visit New England; Yankee Magazine; Boston Magazine; AAA; and Boston Spirit. We are also in the process of updating Visit North Central's prominent large-format display ad at Logan Airport to ensure maximum visibility and impact.

Marketing Collaboration & Partnerships

Visit North Central Massachusetts is joining Discover Central Massachusetts and the



Visit North Central hosted a familiarization tour of international group tour operators to promote the region.

MetroWest Boston Visitors Bureau on a significant marketing grant awarded from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and administered by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT). The newly obtained \$1 million Travel and Tourism Season Extension (TTSE) grant will facilitate targeted marketing initiatives over the next two years, aimed at increasing visitation to our collective regions during the shoulder season (November through April).

Winter Ski Campaign: This Winter we again partnered with MOTT, the Massachusetts Ski Areas Association, and several other Regional Tourism Councils that also host ski areas to promote the

state as a ski destination via a sponsored content dynamic digital ad campaign through the Hearst Audience Network and WCVB.com.

We also collaborated with the Hampshire County Regional Tourism Council on a joint print ad campaign catering to the LGBTQ audience in Boston. We also are working with them on consolidating the "OutinMA" micro website.

Visitor Guide

We expanded the printing of our popular Guide to North Central Massachusetts from 35,000 to 40,000 per edition to better meet demand. We are currently working on the Fall/Winter edition. This popular publication is a glossy, full-color magazine with

pieces that aim to inform and inspire readers, and brand North Central Massachusetts as a unique destination and a dynamic place to live, work, and visit. The guide is distributed at more than 450 high-traffic locations throughout the region and state, including 45 AAA offices and Logan Airport. A digital version will also continue to be posted on the website and shared via social media and email. Thank you to all the members who advertise in the Guide. Anyone interested in advertising in the Fall/Winter edition should contact Diane Burnette at dburnette@northcentralmass.com.

Social Media & Website

We maintain an active presence across various social media platforms – curating and sharing engaging content on our Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts. For the third quarter (January to March), our Visit North Central Facebook page had an organic reach of 207,799 and an additional paid reach of

Continued on page 27

Continued from page 26

126,699 and 544,414 paid impressions. During the same timeframe, we also garnered 2,656 new followers. Our Instagram posts had a reach of 6,088 during the third quarter and saw an additional 105 new followers. Our ongoing priority remains on expanding our social media reach.

Google Analytics indicates that we also saw an 82% increase in visitors to our website from January to March 2023, when compared to the same timeframe in 2022. During the same time period, we also had over 260,000 Google impressions. We have focused on refining and updating the content on VisitNorthCentral.com, a valuable resource for visitors seeking information on places to visit, lodging options, culinary experiences, and local services in the area. We enhanced our listings, event calendar, and created new seasonal landing pages to better promote the region and attract visitors. We also featured a dedicated section that showcases the communities within our region and published several engaging stories highlighting local activities and attractions.

Fam Tours & Travel Shows

In March, we partnered with Destination Groton, MOTT, and Discover New England to organize a familiarization tour for a group of tour operators from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, and France attending the Discover New England Summit in Boston. The itinerary included visits to New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, Groton Hill Music, The Groton Inn, and Gibbet Hill Grill.

We also worked with MOTT to coordinate another fam trip to the region in May. Their social media agency, ThinkArgus, brought a key influencer to the area to write posts on MOTT's social media platforms. She visited Red Apple Farm; Moon Hill Brewing Co.; Great Wolf Lodge; Jeffrey's Antique Co-op Mall; and Cherry Hill Ice Cream.

In March, we also assisted an award-winning freelance travel writer on a press visit to Great Wolf Lodge, Wachusett Mountain Ski Area, and The Fix Burger Bar.

We participated in the Dream Destination Travel Show, held in Springfield in April, as part of our efforts to promote the

region as a desirable travel destination. Thank you to all the members that partnered with us on these Fam Tours and Trade Shows.

Visitor Center

We have continued our efforts to modernize and improve our Johnny Appleseed Visitors Center. This was a key recommendation in the One North Central economic development plan and also a focus area in the Chamber's new strategic plan. Our vision is to not only be the best visitor center in the state, but to also transform the center from a highway rest stop into a unique and inclusive anchor destination that showcases our region and helps advance our economy. Thanks to grant funding we have received from the cultural council, we will be adding an additional outdoor interpretive sign on the grounds this summer. In addition, in recognition of the region's proud history in furniture manufacturing, we have commissioned a local wood sculptor to make a hand-carved bench for the grounds of the center. Thank you to all the members who continue to support the visitor center.

Lodging & Visitor Data

Smith Travel Research indicates that hotel occupancy year-to-date through March in the region was 69.4%, a 4.2% increase over the previous year; average daily rate (ADR) was \$194.35, which is a 14.4% increase; RevPar was \$134.94, a 19.3% increase over the previous year; total room revenue was up 19.3%; and rooms sold was up 4.27%. AirDNA data also showed that the supply of short-term rentals (vacation rentals) in the region increased from 134 in 2022 to 199 in 2023 through February. Occupancy through February of short-term rentals was 60%, a decrease of 3.4% over the prior year, and average daily rate (ADR) was \$209, a 4.3% increase over the prior year. RevPar was \$125, a 0.3% increase over the prior year. Arrivalist data for the quarter ending March 2023 indicates that the top four origin markets for the region were Massachusetts (22.9%); Connecticut (17.6%); New York (10%); and Rhode Island (8.4%). Day trips represented approximately 41.7% of trips to the region, with the remaining 58.3% spending one night or more in the market. ◇

North Central
MASSACHUSETTS

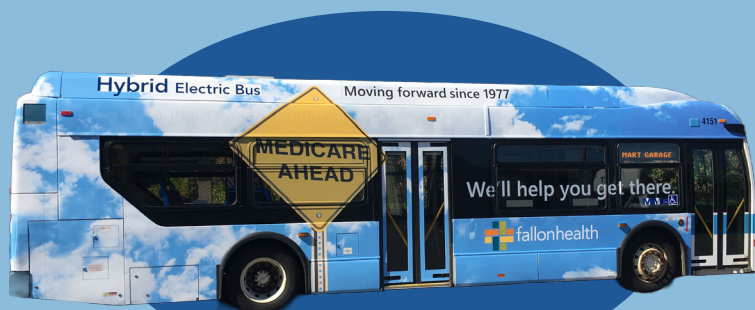
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