

Summer 2024 Edition

North Central Massachusetts Chamber Report

Building Businesses. Building Communities.

Small Business Spotlight

A glimpse of summer fun here in North Central Massachusetts



Chamber
Updates
page 10

Government
Affairs News
page 12

North  Central
MASSACHUSETTS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Feature
Article
page 14

Tourism
Update
page 18



781.862.4400

info@lexvest.com

Our team of dedicated professionals recognize that commercial real estate is more than just bricks and mortar – they are **Great Places to Grow Your Business!**



**COMMERCIAL
PROPERTIES
IN THESE
COMMUNITIES**



Ayer, Concord,
Leominster,
Lexington,
Maynard,
Pepperell,
& Shirley



www.lexvest.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Chip Detwiller - Director of Leasing

cdetwiller@lexvest.com | 781.862.4400



Health Equity Partnership
of North Central Mass
CHNA 9

Join us at our quarterly partnership meeting

on June 13th to celebrate

THE NCMA ANCHOR COLLABORATIVE

Local institutions leveraging their employment, purchasing, and investing capacity to build community wealth

To register or stay up to date on other CHNA9 and Anchor Collaborative news and events, go to our website or follow us on Facebook!

www.chna9.org

Facebook: [@chna9northcentral](https://www.facebook.com/chna9northcentral)



Empowering Our Community with In-Demand Healthcare Training!

Explore The Mount's diverse range of programs, including degrees and certificates in Nursing, Medical Assisting, CNA, EMT, Paramedic Technology, Physical Therapy Assistant, Dental Hygiene and more. Our expert faculty and state-of-the-art facilities provide hands-on training and skills development, preparing students for rewarding careers in the rapidly growing healthcare industry.

Join us at MWCC and be part of the solution to healthcare challenges facing our community!

IP756-01 Rev.Feb24

AAVEO Institution



**Mount Wachusett
Community College**

mwcc.edu

admissions@mwcc.mass.edu

978-630-9447

Chamber Report

a publication of
The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber Report (USPS 773-650) is published quarterly by the North Central Mass. Chamber of Commerce, 860 South Street, Fitchburg, MA, for \$15 per year which is withheld from annual membership dues. Periodicals postage paid at Fitchburg, MA.

About the Cover: For this edition of the Chamber Report we highlight four small businesses. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and important to the vibrancy of our communities. We encourage members and the community at large to support small businesses whenever possible. In this edition you will also find profiles of our 2024 Chamber scholarship recipients, news and updates from the Chamber and so much more. We continue to be focused on growing our local economy and making sure the business climate in North Central Massachusetts is a strong one to help your business grow. Thank you for taking the time to see what your Chamber and our members and partners have been up to. We hope that you enjoy reading the Chamber Report!

CHAMBER BOARD

OFFICERS:

Barbara Mahoney, Chair
Tony Fields, Vice Chair
Allie Catlin, Treasurer
Roy Nascimento, President & CEO
James Vander Hooven, Past Chair

DIRECTORS:

Marieke Cormier

Melissa Glenny
Nick Haritos
Christopher Hendry
John Heroux
Mark Hettinger
Michael Johansen
Patrick McCarty
Nicole Moorshead
David Moura
Kayla Nault
Joshua Page
Rodrigo Souza

For Editorial & Advertising

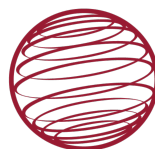
Contact Roy Nascimento
rnascimento@northcentralmass.com
phone: 978.353.7600, ext 225
fax: 978.353.4896
www.northcentralmass.com



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Five-Star Distinction

Accredited



ASSOCIATION OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXECUTIVES
CHAMBER OF THE YEAR
2023 WINNER



FRAMINGHAM
STATE
UNIVERSITY

OUR GOAL IS
TO HELP YOU
REACH YOURS



At Framingham State University you can find the right program to fit your life with our flexible online courses. With a rolling admission for spring and fall, 50+ graduate programs to choose from, and an average class size of 18, we'll help you succeed in your program of study with the tools, resources, and professional connections necessary. FSU offers a diverse student body providing a rich learning landscape and an endless network of opportunities.



Graduate Admissions. To learn more visit:
Framingham.edu/advance-now

**PROUDLY PUBLIC
TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE**

Chamber Welcomes Valerie Bruno as new Manager of Events and Programs

The Chamber is pleased to announce the appointment of Valerie Bruno as our new Manager of Events and Programs. In this role, Ms. Bruno will be responsible for planning and executing the many events and programs of the Chamber and its affiliate organizations. These include signature events such as the Good Morning North Central breakfast series; Annual Meeting; Legislative and Candidates Reception; Congressional Luncheon; Economic Forecast Breakfast; and numerous other special events geared towards supporting our members and advancing

the region. She replaces Kat Deal, who worked for the Chamber for nearly six years and departed in March for a new position with the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts.

“At the core of our membership benefits are the robust programs and events offering the opportunity for members to exchange ideas, expand horizons, and develop business relationships,” said Roy M. Nascimento, President & CEO of the Chamber. “With Valerie’s unique background of being an entrepreneur, our members can expect robust event and programming opportunities

geared with the business and community leader in mind under her leadership.”

Ms. Bruno brings a diverse background in events and entrepreneurship. She joins the Chamber from Originally Crafted Events, LLC, a small business she founded in 2020 specializing in the production and execution of small- to large-scale events. She previously worked at Redi, serving as Marketing and Community Engagement Specialist, where she was responsible for identifying and planning community and industry events.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in business management from Framingham State University



Valerie Bruno.

and an associate’s degree in business administration from Middlesex Community College. An active member of her community, she currently resides in Fitchburg.

Members interested in learning more about the Chamber’s events and programs can reach Valerie at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or via email at vbruno@northcentralmass.com. ♦

Community Leadership Institute *Now Accepting Applications for the Class of 2025*



The Community Leadership Institute is now accepting applications for the 2024-2025 program year. The Community Leadership Institute began in 1988, known then as Leadership North Central. Over the last 25 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 2024-2025 Community Leadership Institute is August 31, 2024.

Please contact Valerie Bruno, Programs Manager with questions regarding the Community Leadership Institute at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or by email vbruno@northcentralmass.com.



New to Main Street

FORGE & VINE FOOD TRUCK
SERVING AT THE GROTON INN | FORGE & VINE EVENTS THIS SUMMER

*Delicious bites from your favorite
Forge & Vine Chefs*

128 MAIN STREET, GROTON, MA | FORGEANDVINE.COM



**Mediation Services
of North Central MA, Inc.**

2024

BASIC MEDIATION COURSE

REGISTRATION DEADLINE 7/17/24

For more information see the Education
and Training Page on our website

**REGISTER TODAY!
SPACE IS LIMITED.**



978-466-9595 ext 1000



info@mediationncm.org



www.mediationncm.org

Chamber Celebrates the Top Scholars in North Central Massachusetts

Congratulations to the 2024 Scholarship Recipients

In May, the Chamber recognized twenty-three of the most outstanding high school seniors in the region at our popular annual Scholars Breakfast. A total of \$46,000 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 2024 Scholars Breakfast. The proceeds from the breakfast support the Chamber Foundation.



Premier Sponsor
Rollstone Bank & Trust

Recipient Ticket Sponsor
Great Wolf Lodge

Gift Sponsor
Fitchburg State University

Centerpiece Sponsor
Leominster Credit Union

Supporting Sponsors
AIS, Inc
Steel-Fab, Inc.

Thank you also to the members who advertised in the Scholars Breakfast Program Book and thank you to 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 Roy Nascimento, president & CEO at ext. 225 or via email rnascimento@northcentralmass.com. ◇

2024 Scholarship Recipients



Student Name: Aaliyah Cooper
High School: Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School
Scholarship: Benjamin Asher Scholarship
College: Brown University
Major: Environmental Science – Conservation Science & Policy



Student Name: Allyson Amari
High School: North Middlesex Regional High School
Scholarship: Chamber Foundation Scholarship
College: George Washington University
Major: Political Science



Student Name: Andrew Lucier
High School: Gardner High School
Scholarship: Rollstone Bank & Trust
College: Worcester State University
Major: Mathematics



Student Name: Audric Adonteng
High School: St. Bernard's Central Catholic High School
Scholarship: The Adams Family Scholarship
College: Harvard College
Major: Molecular & Cellular Biology and Global Health & Health Policy



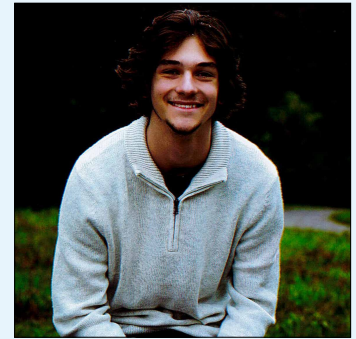
Student Name: Beckett Scott
High School: Fitchburg High School
Scholarship: Salyn Family Scholarship
College: Johnson & Wales University
Major: Dietetics & Applied Nutrition



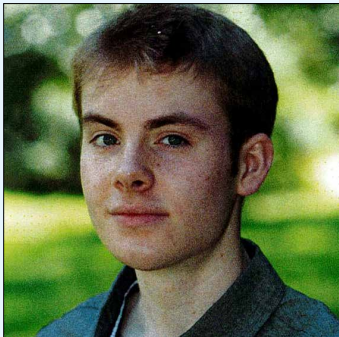
Student Name: Carolyn Brodeur
High School: North Middlesex Regional High School
Scholarship: Chamber Foundation Scholarship
College: Fitchburg State University
Major: Criminal Justice/Pre-Law or Business



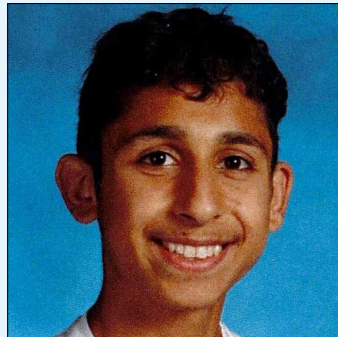
Student Name: Elyse Moores
High School: Groton-Dunstable Regional High School
Scholarship: Leominster Credit Union Scholarship
College: Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Major: Physics



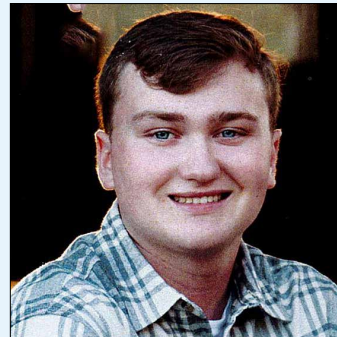
Student Name: Joshua Gauvin
High School: Fitchburg High School
Scholarship: George R. Wallace, Jr and Alice G. Wallace Scholarship
College: George Washington University
Major: Political Science



Student Name: Benjamin Schmidt
High School: Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School
Scholarship: Chamber Foundation Scholarship
College: Mount Wachusett Community College
Major: Business



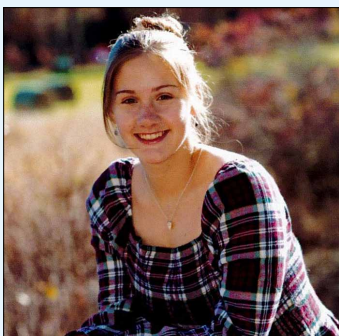
Student Name: Christian Altomonte
High School: Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School
Scholarship: David L. McKeenan Scholarship
College: Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Major: Mechanical Engineering



Student Name: Jamison Smith
High School: Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School
Scholarship: Patricia S. Alario Scholarship
College: Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Major: Electrical and Computer Engineering



Student Name: Leah Levensailor
High School: Leominster High School
Scholarship: Barbara Silva Scholarship
College: Smith College
Major: Computer Science



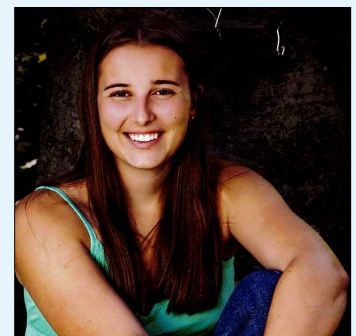
Student Name: Brionna Bowser
High School: Lunenburg High School
Scholarship: Ronald Ansin Scholarship
College: Undecided
Major: Business/Accounting



Student Name: Diesel Whitten
High School: The Bromfield School
Scholarship: Enterprise Bank & Trust Scholarship
College: UMass Amherst
Major: Civil Engineering



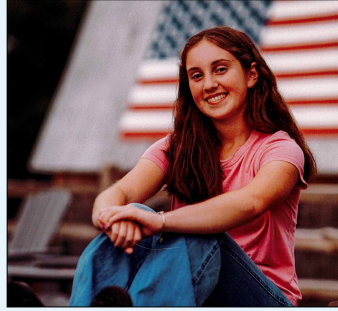
Student Name: John Terhune
High School: Groton-Dunstable Regional High School
Scholarship: UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, Inc.
College: UMass Amherst
Major: Chemical Engineering



Student Name: Madeline Davison
High School: Oakmont Regional High School
Scholarship: Edward C.J. Healey Scholarship
College: University Of Virginia
Major: Economics



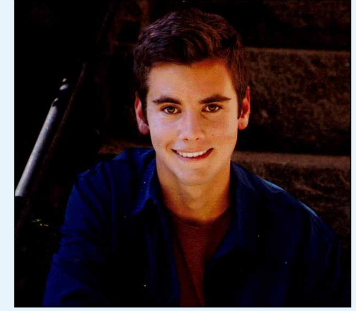
Student Name: Marielle Howlett
High School: Leominster High School-Center for Technical Education & Innovation
Scholarship: UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, Inc. Scholarship
College: Harvard University
Major: Engineering/Biology



Student Name: Mckinley Chabot
High School: Oakmont Regional High School
Scholarship: Roderick W. & Donna M. Lewin Scholarship
College: Montana State University
Major: Business Management



Student Name: Pavel Belakurski
High School: Groton-Dunstable Regional High School
Scholarship: IC Credit Union Scholarship
College: Northwestern University
Major: Computer Engineering & Physics



Student Name: Samuel Munkacsy
High School: Lunenburg High School
Scholarship: Chamber Foundation Scholarship
College: UMass Amherst
Major: Economics



Student Name: Maxwell Libby-Grantham
High School: Nashoba Regional High School
Scholarship: M. Ruth Lee Scholarship
College: UMass Amherst
Major: Biochemistry And Molecular Biology & Neuroscience



Student Name: Nina Marchetti
High School: Leominster High School
Scholarship: HealthAlliance Hospital Guild Scholarship
College: University of South Carolina
Major: Biology/Pre-Medical



Student Name: Rahim Rashid
High School: Leominster High School and Center for Technical Innovation
Scholarship: Workers Credit Union Scholarship
College: Boston College
Major: Computer Science

The Guide to North Central Massachusetts

ADVERTISE NOW VISIT NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

Affordable advertising starting at \$345!

To reserve your spot contact Diane Burnette
 dburnette@northcentralmass.com

Chamber's Ambassadors Committee

— Join us! —

Interested in connecting your business to the nearly 700 member businesses and organizations in our region while supporting the Chamber's mission? The Chamber's Ambassador Council could be a good fit for you! The Ambassador's Council is a volunteer committee of the Chamber that meets 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. 239. ♦

NEW NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS CHAMBER MEMBERS

Antonioni Consulting

Maria Antonioni
119 Merriam Avenue, First Floor
Leominster, MA 01453
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES/COACH - BUSINESS &
PERSONAL

Blive Cleaning

Alessandra Duarte
109 Constitution Drive
Fitchburg, MA 01420
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES, CLEANING SERVICE

Domination Plumbing and Heating

Natalie Arseneault
1330 Central Street
Leominster, MA 01453
REAL ESTATE AND
CONSTRUCTION,
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

E&S Services

Scott Kordas
36 Crestview Lane
Westminster, MA 01473
HOME AND GARDEN

EVOLVE BANK TRUST & MORTGAGE

Michael Virostko
76 Otis Street
Westborough, MA 01581
FINANCE & INSURANCE
MORTGAGE COMPANY

Nutrishop Fitchburg

Michael Voyer
18 John Fitch Highway
Fitchburg, MA 01420
SHOPPING AND SPECIALTY
RETAIL

Push The Rock Strategic Communications

Stephen Altobelli
79 Lanes Road
Westminster, MA 01473-1519
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES/COMMUNICATIONS
CONSULTANT

Quality Companies

Nicholas Pirro III
727 Lancaster Street
Leominster, MA 01453
AUTOMOTIVE AND AVIATION
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

ROI Industries

James Hicks
15 Oak Hill Lane
Fitchburg, MA 01420
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES, OFFICE FURNITURE

Shriver Job Corps Center

Colleen Lanza
270 Jackson Road
Devens, MA 01434
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES

Silvio's Masonry & Landscapes

Dave Petrucci
76 Otis Street
Westborough, MA 01581
HOME AND GARDEN

SOS Rescue Restoration

Michael Kirtland
23 Village Inn Road, Unit D.
Westminster, MA 01473
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES DISASTER RESTORATION

Team For The Soul

Ioana Popa
PO Box 143
New Ipswich, NH 03071
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES/COACH - BUSINESS &
PERSONAL

The Winchendon School

John Duncan
12 Ash Street
Winchendon, MA 01475
EDUCATION
PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Visionworks

Dean Ghannoum
90 Water Tower Plaza
Leominster, MA 01453
SHOPPING AND SPECIALTY RETAIL

World System Builder

Spe Mugakasana
1500 District Avenue
Burlington, MA 01803
FINANCE AND INSURANCE

MARCH — APRIL



Contact us for a quote today! GET NOTICED.
GET BUSINESS.

alphagraphics®

We make ideas come to life.

From business cards to billboards, and everything in between; If you can dream it, we can print it.

Print Services

Banners, Signs, Murals &
Window Graphics

Booklet Printing
and Binding

Brochures, Sales
Sheets & Collateral

Business Cards

Color Printing

B&W Printing

Labels, Stickers
& Decals

Presentation Materials

Promotional Products

AlphaGraphics • 2 Shaker Rd. Suite D103 • Shirley, MA 01464
978-425-3600 • us799.alphagraphics.com



**free
cabinet
removal
service**

ReStore®
Habitat for Humanity North Central
Massachusetts
637 Lancaster Street
Leominster, MA 01453
978.227.5556
www.restorencm.org
Open: Tues - Sat, 10am - 5pm

get started



CHAMBER updates



We had a great turnout for our March Manufacturing Council meeting! Thank you to the manufacturers that were able to join us. Special thanks to Burkart Flutes Inc. for hosting the meeting and providing a tour. Burkart-Phelan, Inc. was founded in 1982 and specializes in the precision manufacturing of high-quality flutes and piccolos.

MANUFACTURING COUNCIL:

In March we launched the Manufacturing Council of North Central Massachusetts to enhance the Chamber's support of the manufacturing industry and the regional economy. The council operates as a special interest group within the Chamber and is open to members and non-members working or interested in learning more about the manufacturing industry. Members will have the opportunity to network with peers, participate in tours of manufacturing facilities to learn best practices, attend quarterly meetings featuring experts in the industry, gain exclusive access to policy leaders, and collectively advocate for the industry. The first meeting of the council was held in March at Burkart-Phelan, Inc in Shirley. Christine Nolan, director of the Mass Center for Advanced Manufacturing was the featured speaker at the March meeting. A tour of Burkart-Phelan, Inc. was

also included as part of the program. The next quarterly program is scheduled for June 3 and will feature a legislative briefing geared towards manufacturers. Members interested in participating should contact Valerie Bruno at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or via email at vb Bruno@northcentralmass.com.

NEW LOANS:

The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC), the Chamber's economic development arm, has approved and closed 13 loans for a total of \$594,500 for the year to date through April. The majority of the loans were micro-loans made through our traditional lending programs and focused on supporting start-up and existing small businesses in need of capital. These loans leveraged \$50,095 of private borrower funds and from our banking partners. The RBIF loan was the largest loan at \$250,000 (See next section for details). The NCMDC has another \$1,405,000 in leads/deals in its pipeline and another \$200,000 in loans approved, but not yet closed. We currently have a total of 96 loans in our loan portfolio with a total principal balance of \$3,027,337.92.

REGIONAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT FUND:

The loan granted through the Regional Business Investment Fund (RBIF) for \$250,000 was made to a developer and owner of a three-story mixed use building in Downtown Gardner. The funding provided under the RBIF will be used to fit up commercial

space in the building for use as a restaurant. The developer is also converting the top floors into 14 units of housing. This loan is leveraged with an additional \$1.9 million in financing from a traditional lender.

LATINX OUTREACH:

As part of our effort to reach the LatinX community, we have strengthened our ties with organizations such as LABO (Latin American Business Organization) and Amplify Latin X. We participated in the Annual LABO Expo at the DCU Center on Saturday, April 27 as an exhibitor and will be attending Amplify LatinX's annual Latino Summit on May 21 as guests. On a local level, the Chamber/NCMDC sponsored an event hosted by Fitchburg based nonprofit organization "Centro Celeste" on April 20. Centro Celeste is a Uruguayan Non-Profit organization aimed to advance the dense Uruguayan population of North Central Massachusetts.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Our economic development team continues to provide guidance and support to existing and start-up businesses. For year to date, our team has provided 1,067 hours of technical assistance. 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. In addition, we also continue to connect with professionals who can provide technical assistance beyond the scope of what we can do directly, including services for marketing, public relations, website/media design, bookkeeping and legal.

ONLINE TRAINING:

In the Spring, we launched Initiate Prosperity, an on-line technical assistance program. Initiate is a proven online technical assistance tool with over 300 resources to include interactive tools, templates, videos and guides, also provided in Spanish. To date, we have had 13 small businesses that have signed to take advantage of the platform. Access to the platform is complementary for Chamber members and NCMDC clients to use. Email our team at chamber@northcentralmass.com to request access to the online platform.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS:

The NCMDC continues to offer scholarship mini-grants between \$500 - \$5,000 to our borrowers to assist with technical assistance. These Scholarship Grants can be used to pay for services such as training on social media platforms, understanding bookkeeping and QuickBooks, learning to create a strategic marketing plan, and more training opportunities provided by our trusted consultants. Since January, we have approved one new grant to a small business for software management training.



Christina DiRusso, vice president of commercial lending at bankHometown, was recognized with the NCMDC's Banker of the Year Award in recognition of her active involvement and support of the NCMDC.

ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS RECEPTION AND RESOURCE SHOWCASE:

We hosted our inaugural Entrepreneur Awards Reception and Resource Showcase event on March 28 at the DoubleTree Hotel. The event brought together NCMDC loan clients, entrepreneurs, community leaders, chamber members and resource partners for an evening of celebration and networking. From lending institutions to professional service providers, attendees had access to many resources and expertise to help them overcome challenges and achieve their entrepreneurial goals. The evening culminated with an awards presentation, where several NCMDC loan clients were recognized for their remarkable achievements and contributions. NewVue Communities was acknowledged as our Community Partner of the Year and Christina DiRusso was recognized as the 2024 Banker of the Year. The reception proved a valuable

opportunity for attendees to build new connections, find solutions for their businesses, and celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit that fuels economic growth. Thank you to the sponsors that helped support this new event.



Hundreds of college students, high school students and a diverse mix of job seekers from throughout the region were able to connect with employers and resource providers about employment and career opportunities at last year's Work North Central; Career & Hiring Event"

WELCOME SIGNS:

As part of our community development efforts, we once again were able to sponsor the construction of a number of welcome signs in member communities. Signs were recently completed in Lunenburg and Pepperell, and we are looking to continue this initiative in several more communities in the coming months.

CAREER & HIRING EVENT:

We have tentatively scheduled the Work North Central Career & Hiring Event for October 9, 2024 at the Mount Wachusett Community College Campus in Gardner. We are expanding the annual hiring event to include more

career exploration. We are hoping to include more schools this year and other organizations that focus on supporting individuals with employments, including supported employment agencies, veterans' groups and others. Members interested in

to post their opportunities or email them to sabbara.reyes@northcentralmass.com and she will post them for you.

SOLAR: From its inception in August 2014 through March 2024 the solar field on Pleasant St. has produced 13,610,346 kWh of Net Metering Credits to the manufacturers participating in the program. The collective savings to participants totals \$2,806,006.

CHAMBER GIFT CARDS:

We currently have 34 members merchants that are participating in the Gift Local eGift Card program. Since January 1, we have sold 52 gift cards valued at \$2,180. During the same timeframe, 29 cards valued at \$909.72 were redeemed at participating small businesses. Members interested in participating in the Gift Card program should contact Maureen Babcock for more information at 978.353.7600 ext. 222 or email mbabcock@northcentralmass.com. There is no charge to participate and accept the gift cards.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS:

Members interested in participating in the member to member discount program should contact Maureen Babcock at mbabcock@northcentralmass.com. This program is designed to encourage members to buy from other members to save money, increase visibility and promote new business for their company. We ask that any discounts offered be exclusive, or nearly so, to the member-to-member program. ♦

participating should contact Valerie Bruno at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or via email at vbruno@northcentralmass.com to learn more or to reserve space at the event.

JOBS BOARD: Nearly 300 jobs are currently listed on our WorkNorthCentral.com online jobs board and over 12,000 jobs have been posted since we launched the online resource. The jobs board continues to be one of the most visited sections of our website. We also continue to post the jobs on a Work North Central Facebook page that we have established. Postings are complimentary for members. Contact us if you would like more information. Members can visit WorkNorthCentral.com

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE



Pictured (L-R) Rep. Michael Kushmerek; Rep. Natalie Higgins; and Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne on the House Floor during the Chamber's annual State House visit for the Community Leadership Institute (CLI) program.

Federal Affairs:

At the end of April, the US Department of Labor announced a final rule from the Biden Administration dealing with salary workers and overtime pay. The new rule will raise the salary threshold under which salaried employees are eligible for overtime in two stages. The first, starting on July 1, will raise the threshold to the equivalent of an annual salary of \$43,888 or \$844 a week, and then to \$58,656 or \$1,128 a week on January 1,

2025. Starting on July 1, 2027, the salary threshold will be updated every three years. This rule updates the current threshold of \$35,568 or \$684 per week that was put in place in 2019 during the Trump Administration. The Chamber is continuing to monitor this issue.

State Affairs:

In March, the Chamber gathered members of the region's legislative delegation for our Annual Legislative

Briefing. We engaged in productive dialogue surrounding our priorities for FY25 in the areas of small business support, tourism, and education and workforce. The meeting also provided an opportunity to showcase the efforts of the Chamber and our members during the past year and provide an update on our One North Central Initiatives.

As highlighted in her administration's economic development plan, Governor Maura Healey is placing a focus on tourism as a way to bring more revenue to the Commonwealth. Following a decade long hiatus, the Healey-Driscoll administration brought back the annual Governor's Tourism Conference. The daylong event provided the opportunity for our tourism affiliate, Visit North Central Massachusetts, to showcase the latest version of our guide, and interact with other regional tourism councils and stakeholders. The administration also unveiled the logo for the Massachusetts 250th anniversary campaign.

The House passed their version of a budget bill for FY25 in late-April to the tune of \$58 billion. The budget aims to push overall state spending up by around 3.3 percent, but lawmakers are more conservative heading into this year with less than anticipated revenues coming in over the past year. The Chamber spent time in April leveraging our relationships with the regional delegation and our multiple coalitions we are a part of 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, the Senate is preparing to unveil their initial version of the budget which will be followed by debate, and then conference committee to reconcile the different versions. We will continue our advocacy efforts throughout the remainder of the budget process.

In April, members of the Chamber's Community Leadership Institute class were brought to Boston for their April session. The class was recognized in both the House and Senate Chambers with Senator John Cronin and Representatives Natalie Higgins, Meg Kilcoyne, and Mike Kushmerek and staff from Representative Kim Ferguson providing insight into the legislative process for both bodies. During a luncheon, Senator Jamie Eldridge also joined the delegation for a panel discussion on legislation they are currently working on. We were also joined by Secretary of State Bill Galvin, Secretary of Veterans Services Jon Santiago, and State Representative Kip Diggs for a policy discussion. The Chamber would like to extend our thanks to the regional delegation for their participation in this annual event and for taking the time to engage our CLI class.

Local Affairs:

The town of Sterling is looking to update its zoning, with a particular focus on their performance zone area



Thank you to the members of the North Central Massachusetts Delegation for coming out to our Annual Legislative Briefing in March. We engaged in a productive dialogue surrounding priorities in the areas of small business support, tourism, and education and workforce. Pictured (L-R) are Travis Condon, public affairs manager; Elizabeth Kazinskas from Rep Kimberly Ferguson's office; Senator Peter Durant; Senator John Cronin; Rep. Danillo Sena; Roy Nascimento, Chamber president; Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne; Rep. Jon Zlotnik; Rep. Natalie Higgins; Rep. Michael Kushmerek; and Rep. Margaret Scarsdale.

near the West Boylston line. Chamber staff participated in a forum held by the town in March and met with the town's Economic Development Committee in April where we discussed aspects of the One North Central plan that may be

beneficial while working on updates.

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. ♦



Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne answers a question during the Chamber's annual Community Leadership Institute (CLI) State House Day. Also pictured (L-R), Rep. Natalie Higgins; Rep. Michael Kushmerek; and Senator James Eldridge.

**free
estate
cleanout
service**





ReStore
Habitat for Humanity North Central
Massachusetts
637 Lancaster Street
Leominster, MA 01453
978.227.5556
www.restorencm.org
Open: Tues - Sat, 10am - 5pm

get started



A glimpse of summer fun in North Central Massachusetts!

*Ice Cream. Grandma's Favorites. Paddling Fun.
And Putting Your Green Thumb to the Test.*

From delicious treats, opportunities to learn about gardening, and even a salt room to enjoy for a little self-care, our region's small businesses are ready to welcome you and your family (and even your pets!) to engage, rejuvenate and enjoy the best our region has to offer this summer.

So, grab your hat and some sunscreen, and check out these small businesses and the many others found in our Member Directory online at <https://web.northcentralmass.com/search> to plan a summer of fun here in North Central Massachusetts.

ROTA SPRING FARM



**Farm, food,
and ice cream, oh my!**
ROTA SPRING FARM,
www.rotaspringfarm.com

What started as a family dairy farm in 1911, Rota

Spring Farm expanded its offerings in 1997 after David Rota wanted to diversify his business.

"As milk prices would fluctuate, I realized I needed to do something to diversify and maintain my cash flow," said Rota, owner of the farm. "I talked with friends in the farming industry who opened ice cream stands and built a four-window stand 27 years ago. Now, we are an eight-window stand providing ultra-premium ice cream you cannot purchase anywhere else."

In addition to ice cream, Rota dishes out traditional family favorites to customers, including

his Italian grandmother's meatballs and meat sauce. "We have tomatoes that were brought here from Italy by my grandfather many, many years ago," he added. "We also offer on-the-go meals featuring Shepard's pie, chicken pot pie, soups, grass fed beef, and our roast beef sandwiches are second to none."

The farm boasts more than 15 acres of vegetable fields, which include honeybees that provide honey for purchase in the Farm Store. Visitors can explore the property, watch the cows and goats, and in the fall, enjoy pick-your-own pumpkins and hayrides.

Where to indulge:
117 Chace Hill Road,
Sterling

When to visit:
Ice Cream Stand:
May to August:

11:30 a.m.
to 9:30 p.m.,

September:
11:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.,
October:
11:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.;

Farm Store:
open all season,
10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
(All hours subject to change
contingent on weather.)

Learn more:
www.rotaspringfarm.com,
on Instagram (@rota_spring_farm
and on Facebook

Extra toppings:
The limited-edition and very popular
lavender flavored ice cream is on deck
for June and July.

NASHOBA PADDLER



Building teams and having fun on the Nashua River
NASHOBA PADDLER,
www.nashobapaddler.com

Located in Groton, Nashoba Paddler has been offering canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboard experiences on the beautiful,

friendly Nashua River for nearly 30 years. Owner Diane Carson said the business offers something for people of all ages who want to enjoy nature and the beauty of the river.

“There is so much opportunity for outdoor recreation in our area, and I think this is something more people have become interested in,” she said. “Kayaking and canoeing are great for families, and we also welcome groups and businesses who want to get out of the office for team building activities, especially in a canoe.”

Nashoba Paddler also offers a summer camp for children aged 6 to 14, instruction for kayaking and canoeing, and they partner with the Nashua River

Watershed Association’s River Classroom school programs. “We offer guided tours on the river, full moon canoeing, and there’s always the opportunity to rent boats on your own from our rental base to explore and check out wildlife, too!”

While there are no specific places to enjoy a picnic on the

river, Carson said they have a couple of picnic tables at their rental base for people to grab a bite.

“The thing about the Nashua River that is really unique is that there is very little development along it so you can feel like you are in the middle of nowhere, but still be very close to home.”

Where to set sail:
 398 West Main Street,
 Groton

When to visit:
 On weekends and holidays in
 the Spring and Fall, daily in
 Summer

April 17 to June 16:
 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
June 17 to September 2:
 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

**September 3 to
 October 20:**
 9:30 a.m. to dusk

Learn more:
www.nashobapaddler.com,
 on Instagram @
 nashobapaddler and on
 Facebook.

Be on the lookout:
 Nashoba Paddler will be
 at the Groton Greenway
 River Festival on
 Sunday, June 9.

THE GOOD EARTH FARM AND GARDEN CENTER



Perfecting your green thumb
THE GOOD EARTH FARM AND GARDEN CENTER,
www.thegoodearthfgc.com,
 on Instagram @
 thegoodearth_fg

The Altobelli Family is all about education and community, so it felt natural for them to purchase the former Agway in Gardner

with the aim of helping people, whether it be with plants or animals, and implementing workshops designed to educate or just be fun.

The Good Earth Farm & Garden Center, which still displays the old Agway sign on its east wall as a nod to the past, was founded by Jacquelin Altobelli and five other family members in 2022.

“North Central Massachusetts needed this store to keep going,” she said “And while the old Agway provided high-level service, we’ve taken it to a different level. We realized we needed to improve offerings and make the business more community oriented with educational classes that bring people together. And don’t get me started talking about the plants in our side-yard and local pollinators—it’s

my Zen place come Spring! I drink a cup of coffee here every morning before we open.”

In addition to a vast array of annuals, perennials and vegetable plants, and everything to grow them successfully, the store offers farm animal feeds and supplies (they are a direct distributor of Poulin Feeds, a local, family-owned company), pet foods and

supplies, lawn care products and a variety of classes on everything from mineral mixing, raised bed and container planting, growing herbs, as well as some workshops for kids.

“We recently held an Easter egg decorating class and a May Day basket making class,” she added. “We offer classes aimed at

Continued on page 17

**Where to grow
 your garden:**

633 West Broadway,
 Gardner

Join a class:
 Enroll in a class on
 mineral mixing, creating a
 pollinated garden and feeding
 plants, and more by calling
 978-632-0991.

Find local treasures:

Be sure to check out the
 many local vendors on
 display at The Good
 Earth for honey, crafts,
 window boxes, wind
 spinners, wooden utensils,
 maple syrup,
 and more!

FEATURED Member Profile

Domination Plumbing & Heating Has a Passion for Serving the Community

Domination Plumbing and Heating of Leominster started in business just 5 years ago servicing resident and commercial customers. They now service much of Central Massachusetts and even stretch into Boston. They have grown their business specializing in both service work for home and business owners, as well as new construction and remodels for residential homes and commercial buildings, according to owner Dominic Arsenault.

As a testimony to Domination's achievements, Dominic notes "This company, from where we started of just myself as an employee to now over 15 employees, is my biggest professional achievement. Growing up I struggled with school and having my own company was really never in the vision. After working for multiple plumbing companies out of school and gaining meaningful experience, it gave me the passion to want to have my own business. It was not easy to get to where we are today but to see the growth over the years makes it all worth it. And knowing we have so much more growth left in this continuously evolving trade gives us something to always work towards."

In describing Domination's work environment, Dominic says "I would describe our company's culture as youthful and driven. We are a group of younger people that have the passion to serve our customers



till they are completely satisfied."

Supporting the local community is very important to the company, noted Arsenault. "We have increased our involvement in the local communities a lot over these past few years," he added. "Last year we were excited to be part of the Johnny Appleseed Fest and will continue to have a booth there again this coming year. We joined the North Central Chamber to help assist us in being more involved during 2024 and the years to come. We are excited for all the new faces, business, and ventures that the Chamber will bring us." He also noted that supporting the community was instilled on him at an early age. "Our mother was a Chamber member years ago when she was an independent sales director for Thirty One Gifts," he added. "We would watch her to go all these events

and form so many meaningful relationships, that we knew we needed to join as well to meet so many local people and businesses and start creating our own meaningful relationships."

When asked who has been your or your company's strongest influences, Dominic proudly stated "This company was originally influenced by our Dad and Uncle, who we watched growing up working tough blue collar jobs. Our Uncle owns his own HVAC business and seeing how well he supported his employees, himself and family made me realize I wanted to do that for others as well one day."

When looking toward the future for his business, he feels it is "limitless." "We are excited to grow our HVAC team over the next year, as well as grow our service area to cover more of Massachusetts," he said. "Our vision one day is to be a, 'one stop shop'

company that provides all home services."

Domination relies on social media as one of its primary ways to promote the business. "We have had much success in promoting our business online through social media," noted Arsenault. "We love to post funny videos on our Tik-tok and Instagram, as well as information videos to help with common issues on Facebook."

The company website probably sums up their business style the best, noting "We saw that people were searching for dependable plumbing and heating service that wouldn't let them down... From day one, our mission has been clear – do the job right the first time. So next time your pipes act up or your heater's on the fritz, remember – we've got your back!" Contact info: info@dominationplumbing.com; 978.602.7547 ♦

Continued from page 15

different interests because we want to build a bigger sense of community. And

we love it when customers bring their pets in—they're part of our community, too! Plus, even if you don't have a green thumb, we believe

anyone can grow anything with the correct information and we're here to help.”

At the heart of the store? “Our staff,” said Altobelli.

“From ages 17 to 70, they've thrown themselves into this with a humbling amount of heart. We wouldn't be anywhere without them.”

SAGE HOME COLLECTIONS

Home. Health. Hibiscus.
SAGE HOME
COLLECTIONS,
sagehomecollections.com
 on Instagram
 @sagehomecollections
SALT AND SAGE
ON MAIN,
saltandsageonmain.com,
 on Instagram
 @saltandsageonmain
DEBONIS AND DAVIN
FLORISTS,
debonisflowers.com

When Kayla Nault learned about an available vacant building with a greenhouse in Leominster, she found an opportunity to bring her passions to the community.

Now six years later, Nault is leading three businesses offering home décor, fresh flowers, plants, crystals, and holistic health in our community.

She first opened Sage Home Collections in Leominster, which provides plants, crystals, and other goods, and then expanded to open Salt and Sage on Main in Townsend, which offers a salt room, stationary, and easy-care plants, among other items. Most recently, Nault acquired Debonis and Davin Florists, a long-standing business in Fitchburg, where she offers fresh flower arrangements and plants, as

Where to plant your feet:

*Sage Home Collections, 137 Mill Street, Leominster;
 Salt and Sage on Main, 422 Main Street, Townsend;
 Debonis and Davin Florist, 900 Main Street, Fitchburg*

Get salty! Salt and Sage on Main is home to one of the region's salt rooms, a natural and holistic approach to wellness that harnesses the healing properties of salt to promote respiratory health, alleviate stress, and enhance overall well-being. Summer special \$20 Thursdays for 45-minute session, book online! And be sure check out Salt and Sage on Main's one-year anniversary celebration in August!

well as a large gift shop.

“I've always loved plants and crystals, so my business is a natural progression of my hobbies,” said Nault. “And with Debonis and Davin, we are able to offer beautiful flower arrangements, as well as grab-and-go bouquets at our Leominster location.”

The flower shop also affords Nault a creative outlet to play with a variety of locally grown, beautiful flowers to make unique arrangements. “We have a small piece of land where we are growing our own flowers right here in North Central,” added Nault. ♦

We Host the BEST Family-Friendly Group Outings!

Why choose us for your next group/ corporate outing for the whole family?

- Two giant arenas filled with interactive inflatables & other “Funstuf” that your employees’ children will love
- Our “Xtreme Out-Back” featuring a 55' Zip Line, Rockwall, 3 Warped Walls, and other “Xtreme” fun
- Climate-controlled building for year-round events
- A sit-down picnic area with room for 120+
- The “Funcade” - with all your favorite arcade finds, including games with tickets for prizes



www.funstufplayaway.com

791 Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

TOURISM

Visit North Central Massachusetts

Update

Visit North Central Massachusetts Tourism Update

Here is a recap of efforts over the Spring from the Chamber's destination marketing arm, Visit North Central Massachusetts (VNCM).

Website

We continue to see strong growth in our website traffic to our tourism website — Visitnorthcentral.com. Users for FY24 are up 54.99% compared to the same timeframe the previous year and pageviews are up 54.66%. We are averaging about 18,237 pageviews each month for FY24. Furthermore, efforts are underway to align the content of Visit North Central's seasonal landing pages with our SEO strategy to ensure consistency with its SEM campaign.

Tourism Advertising

We have continued with our efforts to effectively promote the region through a combination of print and



Members of the Visit North Central Massachusetts and North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce teams attended the 2024 Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism sponsored by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism's (MOTT) recently. The event, brought back from hiatus for the first time in ten years by the Healey-Driscoll Administration, gathered members of the administration along with stakeholders from across the state to discuss the latest topics impacting travel and tourism in Massachusetts, and it also focused on ways we can continue to grow this vital sector.

digital advertising tactics tailored to our targeted markets. Our winter & spring campaigns have been featured on AAA Northeast, Boston Magazine, Boston Spirit, Hearst WCVB, LocaliQ, and MassLive. We actively engaged with travelers at the Dream Destination Travel Show held in Springfield this

April, and we're gearing up to participate once more in October. These efforts underscore our commitment to showcasing the region as a desirable travel destination.

Branding

As we transition into spring and summer, we are collaborating with

photographers to improve the Chamber's photo library to capture the essence of North Central Massachusetts, focusing on its vibrant restaurant scene, exciting events, and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities.

Social Media

Our Visit North Central Massachusetts Facebook

& Instagram accounts have a combined following of 39,217. Our ongoing priority is to expand our social media reach and nurture meaningful engagement with our audience.

Shoulder Season Campaign

In collaboration with two other Regional Tourism Councils, we have been continuing to implement an off-season marketing campaign funded from a federal grant. We have advertising campaigns with Hearst Digital Story Studio, Yankee Magazine and several regional publications.

Public Relations

As part of the shoulder season



Duke Ogeto, marketing coordinator at the Chamber, showcases local attractions and businesses at the recent Dream Destinations Travel Show.

campaign, we hired CM Communications, a Boston-based PR Agency that specializes in destination marketing, to assist us with generating more interest in the three regions among the travel media and other travel influencers. Visit North Central

Massachusetts hosted Press Familiarization Trips in February and March as part of a tour of Central Massachusetts. The tour of our region included visits to Great Wolf New England, Wachusett Mountain Ski Area, Wachusett Brewery, Letz Rage, the Icon Museum

and Fitchburg Art Museum. The Fam Trips, attended by travel writers, regional bloggers and social media influencers specializing in 'Family Travel' and "Arts & Culture" also included stops in the Discover Central MA and MetroWest areas.

MA Office Of Travel & Tourism

Several members of the Chamber staff attended the MA Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism in early April in Boston. This was the first statewide tourism conference since before COVID and provided excellent networking opportunities with other tourism leaders and state officials, as well as

Continued on page 21

Examples of several digital advertisements that were featured during the season to promote the region to visitors and groups.

D.M.H. Electric Inc.

Powered by **Qmerit**

EV CHARGING INSTALLATIONS

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES

| Generator Installations and Service | Battery
Installations | Fire and Security Alarm
Installations | Interior and Exterior Lighting |
Renovations and Remodels | Rewiring | Panel
Repairs, Replacements, and Upgrades |
| Electrification Services | and More!



Call Now
(978) 422-0400



dmhelectric.com



Service@dmhelectric.com



We're here for
local business.



You've got big plans for your business. So don't get lost in the shuffle at a "big bank"!

From free business checking and eBusiness solutions, to cash management and fraud prevention, we've got you covered with the powerful tools your business demands—from a bank that's in your corner AND just around the corner.

Learn more at **bankHometown.com** or call
888.307.5887

Unlock your potential

bankHometown

Member FDIC | Member DIF    

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 throughout the year. From

the smallest to largest business, we provide multiple sponsorships 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 Valerie Bruno, Programs & Events Manager at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or email vbruno@northcentralmass.com. ♦

Continued from page 19

valuable seminars on a variety of topics, including public relations, AI and sports marketing. The Chamber also met this spring with the new Director of the Mass 250th Celebration to review ways to coordinate the event with the celebration surrounding Johnny Appleseed's 250th Birthday.

Visitor Center

Our Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center in Lancaster is entering its busy season. We have continued to make improvements to the

center, including investing in a new electronic door counter to give us more accurate estimates of traffic at the center, and adding an additional National Park style informational sign on the grounds. A new furnace is scheduled to be installed this Spring. Our vision is to not only be the best visitor center in the state, but to also transform the center into a destination in its own right that provides an engaging experience and encourages visitors to learn more about the region's communities and local attractions. Retail sales at the gift shop are up modestly about 5%. We had 28,176 visitors at

the center from January to April 30. Our visitor count has been going up each month, and we expect the numbers to climb much higher now that we are entering our busy season.

Email Newsletter

We recently launched

a monthly Visit North Central Massachusetts (VNCM) subscription based email newsletter to help promote the region to visitors. The our VNCM email list already has 2,897 subscribers and has an average open rate of 49% and click through rate of 9%. ♦



Sitka IS NOW **21+**

Connect | Collaborate | Create

GRAPHIC DESIGN | WEB DESIGN | SOCIAL MEDIA
EMAIL MARKETING | ART SALES | ART GALLERIES

sitkacreations.com | [@sitkacreations](https://www.instagram.com/sitkacreations) | 978.425.6290 | info@sitkacreations.com



Cyber Security

NorthCentral
TECHNOLOGIES

Local Professional IT Support
With a personal approach

Proudly serving the communities of North Central Massachusetts

978-798-6805

[Learn More](#)

NorthCentralTech.com

Out & About



[linkedin.com/company/north-central-massachusetts-chamber-of-commerce/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/north-central-massachusetts-chamber-of-commerce/)



[facebook.com/ncmchamber](https://www.facebook.com/ncmchamber)



twitter.com/ncmchamber



[@ncm_chamber](https://www.instagram.com/ncm_chamber)

See what the Chamber and our members have been up to the last several months.



The Chamber held its quarterly Women's Leadership Connection luncheon at Great Wolf Lodge in Fitchburg with guest speaker Sam Squallia, Mayor of Fitchburg, leaving attendees inspired by her insights and leadership. A special thanks to **Fidelity Bank** for sponsoring the program.



Thank You to Nick Capasso, Director of the **Fitchburg Art Museum**, for inviting Chamber Staff and Chamber Ambassadors for a personal tour and lunch at the museum. Nick shared exciting details about the museum, including its plans to celebrate its 100th Anniversary in 2025, its permanent exhibit featuring information on Egyptian Culture, and its support for FPS students in 4th and 7th grade trips.

In March, we held our **Inaugural Entrepreneurial Awards Reception & Resource Showcase!** This event was a fantastic evening dedicated to honoring and celebrating the remarkable achievements of our entrepreneurs and small business owners who have partnered with our Development Corporation to start or expand their businesses. It catered to individuals in small business, including start-ups, existing small businesses, resource providers, lenders, professional service providers, and anyone considering starting a business.



The Chamber held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for **Visionworks** located at 90 Water Tower Plaza in Leominster on their recent opening. Visionworks is a leading provider of eye care services in the U.S., Visionworks stands at the intersection of healthcare and retail. With a network of Optometrists, technicians, and retail associates, Visionworks brings healthcare expertise to fulfill vision prescription needs, including glasses, sunglasses, and contact lenses.





The March edition of Good Morning North Central breakfast featured Kate Fox from the Mass Office of Travel and Tourism (Visit Massachusetts), Lori Moretti from CM Communications, and Charles Stefanini from Charles Stefanini Consulting Group. It was an enriching morning filled with business connections, insights from tourism leaders, and highlights of our regional marketing efforts. A special thank you goes to the March premier sponsor **Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School**, and to supporting sponsors **Great Wolf Lodge New England** and **MassLive** for their support of the program.



The Community Leadership Institute ventured out to the State House to meet with the region's delegation. We'd like to thank Senator John J. Cronin, Senator Jamie Eldridge, State Representative Natalie Higgins, State Representative Meg Kilcoyne and State Representative Mike Kushmerek for recognition in both the Senate and House Chambers along with the engaging dialogue on the legislative process. Thank you to Secretary of State Bill Galvin, Secretary of Veterans' Services Jon Santiago, and State Representative Kip Diggs, Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, for their policy discussions and staff of State Representative Kim Ferguson who also joined us for the day.



The Chamber was pleased to recently award a \$1,000 Small Business Grant to **Regional Resource Group** and **LG Moda Hair Salon**. Many thanks to **National Grid** for providing the funds to support this grant program. Small businesses are essential to the foundation of North Central Massachusetts' communities and economy. We are proud to partner with National Grid on this opportunity to support local businesses.



We recently had the pleasure of visiting **Comeketo Brazilian Steakhouse** to commemorate their 15th Anniversary. Here's to extending our sincere congratulations and best wishes for their continued success in the future!





The Chamber attended a Check Presentation event held by the Rotary Club of Fitchburg. The Rotary Club generously donated \$500 to support the **Food Pantry initiative of Christ Is The Center Church**. This contribution highlights the community's commitment to addressing food insecurity.



The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation sponsored an event hosted in Fitchburg during 01420 Week in collaboration with the nonprofit organization Centro Celeste on April 20th. **Centro Celeste** is dedicated to advancing the vibrant Uruguayan community in North Central Massachusetts. We're thrilled to support their important work.



In April the Chamber hosted a special celebration at Oak Hill Country Club to commemorate our 40th Anniversary. Many members and community leaders were able to join us in celebrating this milestone. Together, we are making North Central Massachusetts the best region in the state to live, work, and do business. Let's continue strengthening communities and advancing our economy!

A special thank you to Platinum sponsor **empowered PR**; Gold Sponsor **Main Street Bank**; Silver Sponsor, **Great Wolf Lodge**; and Bronze Sponsors **bankHometown**, **Leominster Credit Union** and **Micro Machine & Electronics, Inc.** Thank you to **Central MA Productions**, **Habakkuk Media Services** and **Oak Hill Country Club** for their support.



Nick Pirro, a member of the Chamber and a candidate for State Senate, visited us to discuss the persistent challenges confronting North Central Massachusetts. We appreciate his engagement and commitment to addressing the region's issues.



We'd like to thank **Senator Cronin** for inviting the Chamber out to the **MassHire North Central Career Center** for an important discussion around talent and workforce issues with Senate Ways and Means Chair **Michael Rodriques**, members of the regional delegation, and members of the school community.



The North Central Massachusetts Talent Compact recently convened to address pressing workforce challenges in the region. Highlights included a presentation by **Lea Ann Scales** on employer-supported childcare, and updates on the Chamber's Equitable Credentialing Partnership with Mount Wachusett Community College and the Spanish American Center. This coalition, comprised of businesses, educators, legislators, and community stakeholders, is committed to finding innovative solutions to these complex issues. Gratitude was expressed to all participants for their contributions to the discussion. For more information or to join efforts, please reach out to Katie White, Manager of Talent and Workforce Initiatives at the Chamber.



The recent **Chamber's Leadership Council (CLC)** meeting was a success! Doug Howgate, President of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, provided a thorough update on the state's fiscal and economic status. Chamber President Roy Nascimento also shared updates on Chamber initiatives. Thanks to all the business leaders on the Council for their invaluable contributions in shaping our policies and initiatives.



The Chamber joined with educators, state and local leaders for the ground breaking ceremony at **Nashoba Valley Technical High School** to celebrate a new 7,000 square foot building expansion for their robotics, engineering and web development technical programs. This is an exciting project that will support manufacturing and other local industries throughout North Central Massachusetts.



The 12th Annual Economic Forecast Breakfast was a great success. Attendees from around the region gained insights into the economic future of North Central Massachusetts. Thank you to our speakers **Rachael Aiken**, Vice President of Senior Investment Officer at Cape Cod Five, **Curtis Dubay**, Economic Policy Division at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and **Joseph Silva**, Chief Leading Officer at Fidelity Bank. A big thank you to our program sponsor, **Fidelity Bank**! The Economic Forecast Breakfast was presented in partnership with Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, North Quabbin Chamber and Visitors Bureau & Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

..... **LOOKING TO NETWORK LOCALLY?**
CONSIDER JOINING | [NORTHCENTRALMASS.COM](https://www.northcentralmass.com)



Congratulations to Chamber Member **Cutie Patuties** on their 25th Anniversary! Specializing in gently-used items for newborns to preteens, Cutie Patuties also offers trendy selections for young adults at Q. Don't miss out on the CP & Company for women's fashion and accessories.



The Chamber recently met with new member Paul Tocci, Principal of the **Tocci Group**, to discuss their planned development project in downtown Fitchburg. Pictured here welcoming the Tocci Group to the Chamber are Chamber Ambassador Michelle Haggstrom of Keller Williams Realty North Central; Tracy Gagnon, manager of membership recruitment and engagement; Paul Tocci of the Tocci Group; Roy Nascimento, chamber president & CEO; and Mayor Sam Squalia of the City of Fitchburg.

BUSINESS CHECKING

Reach out to Marcy for more information.



Marcy Lynn Silva, VP
Relationship Development Officer
774-760-1282
m.silva@avidiabank.com



Scan code to connect to my personal landing page or visit www.avidiabank.com/marcy-silva.



Avidia Bank
Honest to goodness.

Member FDIC | Member DIF

Avidia can't help you on wet—wet—hikes, but we can help you navigate your professional banking needs. Open an Avidia Bank business checking account today and get some of your business banking on solid ground.

Chamber Events

Connect. Network. Learn.

Looking to expand your business network? Want to stay informed about what's happening in the region? Looking to stay up to date on business practices? The Chamber organizes a variety of programs and events throughout the year for our members, ranging from traditional networking events and educational seminars to issue forums and more exclusive and high-profile signature events.

Check out our Calendar of Events by scanning the QR code or visiting our website at NorthCentralMass.com.

Please contact the Chamber with any questions at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or via email at chamber@northcentralmass.com.



RIVERCOURT RESIDENCES



Independent Living • Assisted Living
Memory Care • Respite Stay

Call 978-448-4122
to Schedule a Tour & Lunch

8 West Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts 01450
www.rivercourtresidences.com



WOODCOME
INSURANCE AGENCY



We believe that expanding your dream business goes smoother when you have the right partners. At Rollstone, our people, services, and roots in the community are a recipe for success.

Helping you reach your goals is what we do here.

RBT Rollstone Bank & Trust.
Where you matter most.™

rollstonebank.com • 800.640.1166

Member FDIC • Member DIF



North Central
MASSACHUSETTS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

860 South Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420

PERIODICALS
US POSTAGE
PAID
FITCHBURG, MA
01420



Advertise with MART

Let MART pick your business up!



Call: 978-665-2246

Email: advertise@mrta.us

Visit: www.mrta.us