

Spring 2025 Edition

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North Central Massachusetts Chamber Report

Building Businesses. Building Communities.



Transforming North Central Massachusetts: *The Rise of a Tourism Destination*



Chamber
Updates
page 10

Government
Affairs News
page 12

North Central
MASSACHUSETTS
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Feature
Article
page 14

Tourism
Update
page 18

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Chamber Report

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The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

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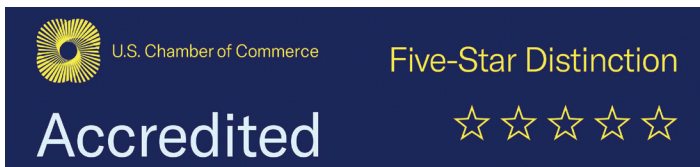
About this Issue: Tourism stands at a transformative crossroads in North Central Massachusetts, evolving from modest beginnings to becoming a powerful economic engine for our region. In this edition's feature article, we explore tourism's remarkable journey from the days of Whalom Park to today's diverse attractions drawing visitors from across New England and beyond.

You'll discover how the visitor economy has quadrupled over the past decade to nearly \$500 million annually, supporting over 4,300 jobs and generating substantial tax revenue that benefits our communities. More importantly, you'll learn how tourism's ripple effect strengthens businesses across all sectors.

Inside these pages, you'll also find updates on our advocacy efforts and highlights from recent Chamber programs that continue to support your business success.

As your Chamber, we remain committed to our decades-long vision of tourism as a catalyst for regional prosperity. We invite you to join us in this collaborative effort to showcase North Central Massachusetts as a premier destination.

Thank you for reading. We hope this edition inspires you to explore new connections within our thriving tourism ecosystem!



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FEATURED Member Profile

Mountainside Bakery & Café: A Historic Venue Offering Exceptional Experiences in North Central Massachusetts

In the heart of North Central Massachusetts, nestled in the picturesque landscape of Wachusett Mountain State Park, stands Mountainside Bakery & Café, a one-of-a-kind venue that has become a cherished destination for locals and visitors alike. Since its opening in January 2015, this charming, historic manor home has evolved into a hub for unique events, providing a perfect blend of exceptional food, beautiful surroundings, and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Whether hosting a corporate retreat, a wedding, or an intimate gathering, Mountainside offers an

experience that is unparalleled in the region.

According to owner/operator Katherine Huck, Mountainside Bakery & Café was born from a passion for hospitality and a desire to offer something truly special to the North Central Massachusetts community. The venue offers full catering and bar services for private events and corporate meetings, with a focus on providing a personalized experience for each guest. Located in a beautifully restored historic manor home, the space exudes charm and character, offering an elegant yet relaxed setting for a

variety of gatherings.

As a family-oriented business, the team at Mountainside is committed to delivering high-quality service and food that exceeds expectations. From scratch-baked goods to carefully crafted cocktails and expertly brewed coffee, every detail is thoughtfully curated. The emphasis on quality ingredients and impeccable preparation ensures that guests leave with not only fond memories but a genuine appreciation for the care that goes into each dish and drink.

What makes Mountainside stand out is the venue's ability to

tailor each event to the unique needs of the host and their guests. Whether it's a corporate meeting that requires a professional, yet inviting environment, or a wedding celebration that demands beauty and elegance, Mountainside works closely with clients to design custom events that reflect their vision. The versatility of the venue, coupled with a team that is dedicated to providing a seamless and memorable experience, makes it an ideal location for any occasion.

While the food, drinks, and services are undoubtedly exceptional, the location of

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Mountainside Bakery and Café.

Mountainside is what truly sets it apart. Surrounded by the breathtaking natural beauty of Wachusett Mountain State Park, the venue offers an atmosphere of peace and tranquility, making it the perfect backdrop for events of all kinds. According to Ms. Huck, guests can take in the stunning views of the mountain, enjoy the serenity of the surrounding woods, and experience the restorative power of nature – all while savoring delicious food and drinks in an unforgettable setting.

In addition to its natural beauty, Mountainside's historic location adds a unique layer of character to the venue. The restored manor home is rich with history, allowing guests to connect with the past while enjoying the comforts and conveniences of the present. The blend of history, nature, and hospitality creates an ambiance that is truly magical, allowing people to step away from the hustle and bustle of daily life and connect with one another in a meaningful way.

One of the cornerstones of Mountainside's success is its deep commitment to supporting the local community. Katherine notes, "the word 'community' is not just a part of the venue's logo – it is at the very heart of the business. Mountainside plays an active role in supporting local organizations and businesses through donations,

meeting space, and providing food for various community events. Whether it's hosting a local charity event or offering space for a business meeting, Mountainside remains dedicated to strengthening the ties that bind the people of North Central Massachusetts."

In a region known for its sense of camaraderie and a strong community spirit, Mountainside serves as a gathering place for locals to come together, share ideas, and celebrate milestones. This sense of connection is at the core of the venue's philosophy, and it's something that resonates with both employees and guests. Mountainside truly embodies the spirit of collaboration and togetherness, which is why it's such a treasured part of the community.

The culture at Mountainside is another key element of its success. The team at Mountainside is made up of energetic, friendly, and supportive individuals who deeply care about what they offer to their guests. The company's focus on creating a family-like atmosphere ensures that every employee is valued, respected, and encouraged to grow professionally. The venue looks for individuals who have integrity and a desire to learn, recognizing that a strong, dedicated team is essential to providing exceptional service and creating unforgettable experiences for guests.



Mountainside Bakery and Café honored with the prestigious Preservation Massachusetts Award for its dedication to historic preservation and community enrichment.

This positive workplace culture also extends to the guests. Employees at Mountainside go out of their way to ensure that each visitor feels welcome and cared for, making it easy to see why so many people return time and time again. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a regular, you can always count on friendly service, a warm atmosphere, and food that exceeds expectations.

As Mountainside looks to the future, the team is excited about the continued growth and success of the business. There's a renewed desire among people to connect in person, and Mountainside's unique venue provides the perfect setting for such gatherings. The team is inspired by the work they do and the opportunity to offer people a place where they can celebrate life's special moments in a timeless, magical setting.

As more people seek out experiences that are meaningful and personal, Mountainside is poised to meet this demand with its exceptional service, stunning location, and commitment to community. Whether hosting a small, intimate event or a large celebration, Mountainside continues to offer a one-of-a-kind experience that will leave guests

with memories that last a lifetime.

Mountainside uses primarily social media platforms to promote. "On Youtube we have a full series of our renovation videos, a healthy following on Facebook, a growing following in Instagram and a regular contingent who receive our newsletter," said Huck. "We stopped using print advertising years ago, but know new online forms of advertising are essential for us."

Mountainside Bakery & Café is more than just a place to dine or host an event – it's a destination where food, history, nature, and community come together to create an unforgettable experience. With a focus on exceptional service, quality ingredients, and a commitment to supporting the local community, Mountainside has become a beloved part of North Central Massachusetts. As the business continues to grow and evolve, one thing remains certain: Mountainside will always be a place where people can gather, connect, and create memories that will last for years to come.

For more information,
email katherine@mountainsidebakerycafe.com ↗

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NOVEMBER – JANUARY

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with trusted resources, a strong business network, and a support system to keep your business and the region moving forward

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CHAMBER updates: Your Chamber in Action

As your dynamic partner in North Central Massachusetts, we continue to drive initiatives that strengthen our business community and foster regional growth. Our impact spans from direct business support to innovative community development, and we are pleased to share these updates with you that are not covered elsewhere in the newsletter. For Tourism news, see page 18. Government Affairs updates are on page 12.



The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC), the economic development arm of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, recently approved \$150,000 in financing for MacMannis Florist & Greenhouses, located at 2108 Main Street in Athol, toward the purchase of the former Brooks-MacMannis Florist and Greenhouse.

STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Our current three-year strategic plan concludes in 2025. This May, the Boards of the Chamber and its affiliate organizations will meet to begin developing our next strategic plan. We'll review our progress and discuss crucial topics for supporting our members while maintaining our region as a vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

We value your input! Share your thoughts on how the Chamber and our affiliate organizations can better support your organizations and our communities over the next three years. While we'll be distributing a formal survey, we welcome your ideas anytime at mascimento@northcentralmass.com.

SMALL BUSINESS LENDING:

Our commitment to small business remains strong. Since the start of FY2025 (October 1, 2024), the Chamber's economic development arm, the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC), has approved and closed 5 micro-loans totaling \$244,500. These loans, ranging from \$1,000 to \$121,500, helped leverage an additional \$119,554 in capital from our banking partners and borrowers and created or retained 22 jobs. Currently, our loan portfolio comprises 88 loans with a total principal balance of \$3,179,764.

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE:

To date, our team has provided 476 hours of hands-on technical assistance to local small businesses in FY2025. We've also connected businesses with partner resources and outside professionals offering specialized services in marketing, public relations, website/media design, bookkeeping, and legal support.

WORKNORTHCENTRAL.COM:

Our online jobs board continues to thrive. From November 1, 2024 to February 18, 2025, we've had 622 job opportunities posted and more than 9,250 page views.

Remember that Chamber members can post job listings at no cost. Submit directly through the platform or email your listings to Sabbra Reyes at sreyes@northcentralmass.com.

SOLAR INITIATIVE:

Since August 2014, our Pleasant Street solar field has generated 14,840,946 kWh in Net Metering Credits for participating manufacturers. These credits, valued at \$3,725,800, have resulted in collective savings of \$3,166,930. The Chamber itself has realized \$298,064 in energy savings over the years. As we celebrate ten years of operation, these figures highlight the lasting economic and environmental benefits of our solar initiative.

SHOP LOCAL GIFT CARD

PROGRAM: Our Gift Local eGift Card program currently features 44 participating member merchants. From November 2024 through January 2025, we sold 99 gift cards valued at \$3,755, with 36 cards worth \$1,320.29 redeemed at participating small businesses.

Visit www.GiftLocal.net to purchase gift cards or to learn more about the program.

To join as a participating merchant, contact Patrick O'Hara: pohara@northcentralmass.com or 978.353.7600 ext. 239.

MEMBER DECALS: In February, we mailed the new 2025 Member Decals to the main contact at each member organization. We encourage you to proudly display your decal at your business entrance or office. Need additional decals for multiple locations? Contact Maureen Babcock at mbabcock@northcentralmass.com or 978.353.7600 ext. 222, or stop by the Chamber office to pick them up. Thank you for being a valued Chamber member!

MANUFACTURING COUNCIL:

Our January Manufacturing Council meeting at SMC Ltd. in Devens drew over forty manufacturers. Attendees gained insights from Lily Fitzgerald, Director of Massachusetts' Center for Advanced Manufacturing, on 2025 industry trends and resources. SMC's Dave Bergman followed with an in-depth look at their cutting-edge operations, capped off by an exclusive facility tour showcasing their advanced manufacturing capabilities. Check our website for upcoming meetings of the Manufacturing Council.

CHAMBER LEADERSHIP

COUNCIL: Our December meeting of the Leadership Council - an advisory body of members who provide strategic guidance on regional issues - featured three key presentations. Canada's Consul General Bernadette Jordan highlighted the vital and longstanding trade relationship between Massachusetts and Canada, discussing shared economic interests and collaboration opportunities amid evolving international trade policies. Massachusetts Secretary of Economic

Development Yvonne Hao provided insights on the newly signed Mass Leads Act and its implications for regional economic growth. Chamber President Roy Nascimento rounded out the session with an update on the Chamber's progress toward our strategic and economic development plans and goals. This meeting offered members valuable perspective on international, state, and local economic initiatives.



Our December Chamber Leadership Council meeting featuring Massachusetts Secretary of Economic Development Yvonne Hao, who shared key highlights of the Mass Leads Act and addressed business concerns. Canada's Consul General Bernadette Jordan discussed the vital trade relationship between Massachusetts and Canada. Our President Roy Nascimento also provided updates on Chamber initiatives. Thank you to our dedicated CLC members for their continued guidance in strengthening North Central Massachusetts.

CHAMBER WEBSITE: We have continued enhancing the Chamber's website – northcentralmass.com - to serve as a comprehensive resource for our members and communities. Recent improvements include updated content, enhanced SEO strategies and new community profiles on our economic development section to further showcase the strengths and opportunities within our region. For FY2025 through January, the Chamber's website saw 50,429 visitors and 120,204 pageviews. That is a 9% decrease in visitors and 4% increase in pageviews over the same period the previous year.

CHAMBER SOCIAL MEDIA:

The Chamber's social media presence continues to expand, with particularly strong growth on LinkedIn where our following increased 23.4% to reach 2,347 followers. Instagram showed

steady growth of 10.4%, reaching 1,233 followers, while Facebook saw modest growth of 4.3% to reach 7,168 followers. X (formerly Twitter) experienced a slight decline of 1.2%, with current following at 1,103, primarily due to reduced activity on that platform. Tourism-related social channels are tracked separately and reported on page 18.

CHAMBER EMAIL NEWSLETTER:

The Chamber's redesigned monthly e-newsletter launched for 2025 features a mobile-friendly single-column layout with new sections including "Out & About" for community photos, "Member Spotlight" for success stories, and "In the Mix" for news and opportunities. Our email database currently reaches 3,923 business contacts, achieving a 41% average open rate across all communications and 50% for the monthly newsletter.

ACCOUNTING: North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation, Johnny Appleseed Trail Association (Visit North Central), North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation, The North Central Massachusetts Land Bank, and Chambers Insurance fiscal year-end 2024 closed smoothly. Their applicable Annual Audits and Tax Returns were processed and filed on time and without incident.

MEMBER TO MEMBER

OFFERINGS: Boost your visibility and support fellow Chamber members through our Member to Member Offerings program! This complimentary benefit allows you to showcase exclusive discounts or special services on our website, reaching member businesses and their employees throughout the region. Participating not only increases your exposure but also strengthens our regional business community through collaborative support. Ready to post your offer? Contact Maureen Babcock at 978.353.7600 ext. 222 or mbabcock@northcentralmass.com. Start leveraging this valuable member benefit today!

PODCAST: In January, we surpassed 6,500 downloads on our Inside North Central Massachusetts Podcast, a 17% increase over the previous year. 2024 marked our most successful year for downloads since launching the podcast in 2021. We are continuing to book guests about a month out. We'd like to thank Franklin Professional Associates for sponsoring the podcast again this year. Want to share your story? Contact Travis Condon at tcondon@northcentralmass.com or 978.353.7600 ext. 224 to book your guest spot.

STAFF RECOGNITION: Travis Condon, our Public Affairs Manager, was recently named to the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives' 40 Under 40 emerging chamber leaders list, bringing national recognition to both Travis and our chamber.

ANNUAL MEETING

SPONSORSHIPS: Mark your calendar for our Annual Meeting on June 12, 2025 — one of the Chamber's largest and most prestigious events of the year. We're currently seeking sponsors at multiple levels. Showcase your organization to hundreds of regional business and community leaders while supporting this premier gathering. For sponsorship details and benefits, contact Valerie Bruno, Programs and Events Manager, at 978.353.7600 ext. 235 or vbruno@northcentralmass.com.

MEET & GREETs: The Chamber has resumed hosting our popular "Meet & Greet" series throughout the region. Our Meet & Greet are smaller, focused gatherings typically hosted by a member in one of our communities. They provide a great opportunity to engage with local businesses and get an update from the Chamber. Check our calendar of events for the next Meet & Greet or contact Patrick O'Hara on the Chamber team if you are interested in attending or hosting a future Meet & Greet at your business. ♦

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Since our last edition of the newsletter, the Chamber has closely monitored significant policy developments at federal, state, and local levels while maintaining strategic engagement on issues crucial to our business community and region's economic growth.



State Representatives Kim Ferguson, Natalie Higgins, Susannah Whipps, and Meg Kilcoyne join Women's Leadership Connection emcee Lea Ann Scales at January's forum. The event provided attendees with valuable insights on recent Beacon Hill legislation and important developments affecting our local communities.

FEDERAL AFFAIRS

Trade Policy:

President Donald Trump began his term as the 47th President in mid-January with several significant trade policy announcements. These included proposed new tariffs against Canada, China, and Mexico scheduled for February 1, though the Canadian and Mexican tariffs were subsequently placed on hold for one month. The President also announced plans for a 25% import tax on steel and aluminum, along with potential reciprocal tariffs on countries that implement retaliatory measures.

In response to these developments, the Chamber has actively engaged with our members to understand how these tariffs could impact their operations. The situation remains fluid, and while

no new tariffs have been implemented at the time of this writing, we continue to monitor developments closely through our partnerships with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and our congressional delegation.

Tax Policy Updates:

A critical focus of our federal monitoring efforts is the upcoming expiration of key provisions within the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Of particular concern is the issue of immediate R&D expensing. Our members have emphasized this as one of the most problematic changes that Congress needs to address. Additionally, we are concerned about the sunset of the 20% Qualified Business Income (QBI) deduction, which currently allows pass-through businesses (LLCs, S-corps, sole proprietorships) to deduct up to 20% of their business

income, providing significant support to many small businesses. To address these concerns, the Chamber has joined a nationwide coalition led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce advocating for the permanence of these tax reforms. This coordinated effort aims to provide businesses with long-term certainty, encourage continued investment, and support sustained economic growth.

STATE & LOCAL AFFAIRS

State Budget Developments:

Following her State of the Commonwealth address, Governor Maura Healey filed her proposed third annual state budget for fiscal year 2026. The Governor's proposed budget includes over \$62 billion in total spending between the budget and a \$1.95 billion supplemental spending plan

funded by the Fair Share Amendment (a 4% surtax on annual income over \$1 million dedicated to transportation and education investments). This represents a 7.4% percent increase over the FY25 budget.

While the proposed budget doesn't broadly raise taxes, it does include a variety of policy sections with a focus on tax and revenue generators, health care initiatives, and broader policy topics. Among other things, the policy provisions propose applying existing taxes or fees to synthetic nicotine products, candy, complimentary hotel room nights, and prescription drugs, while decreasing how much residents are able to write off as charitable deductions on their tax returns, recommending the state cap the deduction at \$10,000 for a couple and \$5,000 for an individual. The Governor also plans to refile the Municipal Empowerment



The Chamber attended a landmark meeting - the inaugural Devens Housing Production Working Group session. Created through the state's economic development bill, this working group brings together State, Housing and Economic Development officials, MassDevelopment, the Devens Enterprise Commission, our region's legislative delegation, and Select Board members from the towns of Ayer, Harvard, and Shirley to tackle our region's pressing housing needs.

Act that would allow individual municipalities to raise local taxes on meals, lodging and vehicle registrations. The budget proposal now advances to the Massachusetts House and Senate, where each chamber will separately review, modify and vote on their versions before negotiating a unified budget to send back to the Governor.

Education and Local Aid:

The Governor's proposed budget would fund another year of K-12 school aid increases under the Student Opportunity Act using funds from the surtax. It also looks to continue funding free community college and expanding the Health Connector's eligibility for the ConnectorCare pilot program. The budget, if approved, would increase unrestricted aid to cities and towns by 2.2% while using Fair Share revenues to

fund MBTA investments and Chapter 90 funding to \$300 million per year for the next five years.

Housing Initiatives:

In February, the Chamber attended the inaugural Devens Housing Production Working Group public session. This working group brings together representatives from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED), Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), MassDevelopment, the Devens Enterprise Commission, the Devens Committee, our region's legislative delegation, and Select Board members from the towns of Ayer, Harvard and Shirley to tackle our region's pressing housing needs with a focus on Devens Innovation and Technology

Center area including Vicksburg Square.

This working group comes on the heels of the administration's announcement of the state's first ever comprehensive housing plan which indicates that the state needs to increase its year-round housing supply by at least 222,000 units from 2025 to 2035 to stay competitive and lower costs.

Energy Cost Relief Efforts:

In addition to housing costs, state lawmakers and the Governor are looking at the need for relief when it comes to energy costs. A group of 80 lawmakers sent a letter to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) urging regulators to review recently-approved rate increases. That letter was followed up by a letter from the Governor demanding DPU and utility companies provide urgent relief.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Chamber will continue to actively monitor critical policy developments and engage with policymakers when necessary to protect our members' interests. In March, we will hold our annual legislative briefing with our delegation, where we will advocate for our 2025 legislative priorities. Our comprehensive advocacy agenda focuses on strengthening small business support, enhancing tourism development, and advancing education and workforce initiatives that are vital to our region's economic growth.

For questions or concerns regarding the Chamber's public policy efforts, 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. ◇

TRANSFORMING NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS:

The Rise of a Tourism Destination



Skiing at Mount Wachusett in Princeton.

More than 30 years ago, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce published its first regional economic development plan, first identifying tourism as a promising avenue to diversify the economy with a strong potential for economic and job growth.

To promote North Central Massachusetts as an area where visitors can take advantage of the region's character and hospitality while fostering economic development and raising awareness through collaborative efforts, the Johnny Appleseed Trail Association, or what is commonly known to our members as Visit North Central Massachusetts, was

established as the region's official destination marketing organization.

In those days, our region had simple pleasures—visitors could ride the Flyer Comet at Whalom Park, skate at Roll-On America, watch a movie under the stars at Tri-Town Drive-In, dine at the Victorian House and The Brass Pineapple, and end the day with an ice cream cone at Sheldon Farms. While these beloved businesses are now cherished memories, they planted the seeds for what has blossomed into a thriving tourism industry. In the three decades since, North Central Massachusetts has transformed its visitor experience from these scattered local attractions into a dynamic destination

drawing people from across New England and beyond. Today, tourism stands as one of our region's fastest-growing economic sectors, generating sustainable jobs and revenue streams that strengthen the many communities in our region.

"Looking back, it was remarkably forward-thinking to recognize tourism's potential when our visitor economy was in its early stages," said Barbara Mahoney, CEO, **All One Credit Union**, and chair, board of directors, **North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce**. "That early vision has paid off! What started as a promising opportunity has grown into one of our region's priority industries, not only driving direct

economic growth but strengthening our retail, hospitality, real estate, and other key sectors as well."

"North Central checks a lot of boxes for tourism right now," said Kate Fox, executive director, **Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT)**. "The region offers a great diversity of products with wonderful museums, outdoor recreation and sports opportunities. You also have the Devens film industry and events, so there is a lot of opportunity for growth."

The Chamber's commitment to growing tourism extends far beyond that early vision more than three decades ago. Through its tourism arm, Visit North Central Massachusetts, the Chamber leads a

comprehensive effort to promote the region and support its members in the visitor economy. From managing the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center that welcomes more than 120,000 travelers annually, to publishing and distributing the region's official visitor guide across New England, to orchestrating targeted marketing campaigns and representing the region at travel industry trade shows, the Chamber works continuously to establish North Central Massachusetts as a premier destination.

"What sets North Central apart is how the Chamber orchestrates all the pieces of our tourism ecosystem," said Julie Povall, general manager of the **Doubletree by Hilton**

in Leominster. "From their visitor center operations to their integrated marketing campaigns, the Chamber is constantly creating new opportunities for businesses to connect with visitors. This comprehensive approach doesn't just benefit hotels and attractions—it creates a ripple effect that strengthens retail, restaurants, and virtually every business sector in our region."

Povall and Fox are not the only ones who see North Central Massachusetts as a growing hub for visitors.

In late 2024, MOTT published "The Economic Impact of Visitors in Massachusetts for CY2023" report, which captured state and regional data related to direct and secondary

spending, earnings, and employment attributed to visitor spending. Direct spending refers to all spending on goods and services by visitors, while secondary spending is the result of re-spending from visitor-related revenues.

The report indicated statewide numbers for tourism on spending was \$23.6 billion, which generated \$2.3 billion in state and local taxes, with direct visitor expenditures in North Central Massachusetts coming in at \$496.9 million, of which \$41 million was provided in state and local taxes.

"To put these numbers in perspective, our region's direct visitor spending has grown more than fourfold

from \$118 million in 2014 to nearly \$500 million in 2023—a remarkable transformation that reflects the increasing strength of our tourism economy," said Roy Nascimento, president and CEO, North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. "And these figures capture only direct spending, not the significant multiplier effect that reverberates throughout our local economy."

Fox said the connection between the tourism industry and other industries presents a ripple effect. "When you think about it, 154,000 people across Massachusetts are employed by the tourism industry and of those,

Continued on page 16

TOURISM IMPACT: BY THE NUMBERS

Source: Dean Runyan Associates – The Economic Impact of Visitors in Massachusetts 2023

VISITOR VOLUME (2023)

- Massachusetts welcomed: 50.2 million domestic visitors and 2.1 million international visitors
- Average daily spending: \$127 (day visitors), \$123 (overnight in private homes), \$328 (overnight in hotels/motels/rentals)

DIRECT VISITOR SPENDING

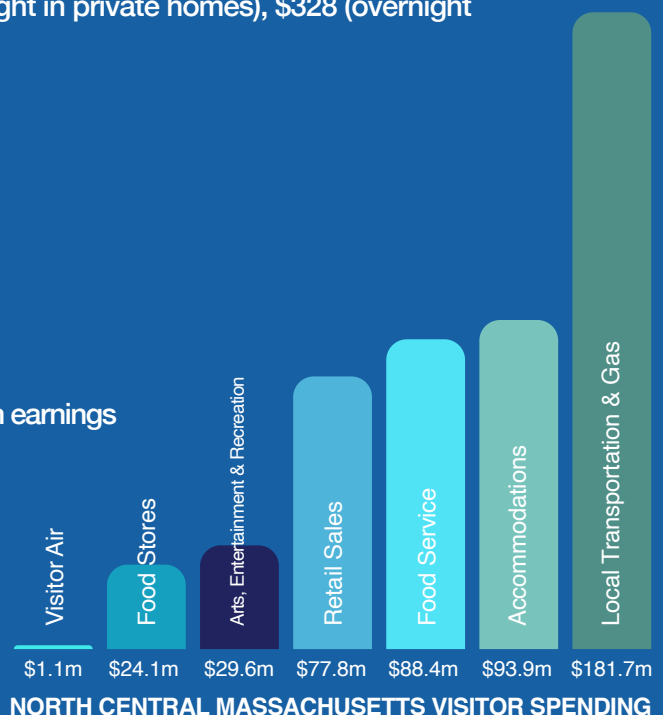
- Statewide: \$23.5 billion
- North Central Massachusetts: \$496.9 million

TOURISM EMPLOYMENT

- Statewide: 154,330 jobs | \$6.2 billion in earnings
- North Central Massachusetts: 4,300+ jobs | \$117.3 million in earnings

TAX REVENUE

- Statewide: \$2.3 billion in state and local taxes
- North Central Massachusetts: \$41.2 million total to \$8.2 million in local taxes supporting municipalities



Continued from page 15

Wachusett Mountain in Princeton (left), and Forge & Vine in Groton (right).

4,300 are in North Central. Those people are going to the region's department stores, restaurants and home improvement stores, so the ripple effect supports and benefits the entire community."

While tourism employment was at its peak in North Central Massachusetts in 2019 with 4,550 jobs, the job market was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in 2020, the number of tourism jobs dwindled to 3,090, but has continued to steadily climb since, with more than 4,300 jobs reported in 2023.

"Tourism is so important for our region," said John Amaral, partner, **Omni Properties LLC**, the company that owns **Forge and Vine** and the **Groton Inn**. "We are on the easterly side of the [North Central] region, but we host events and are an active destination for Leominster, Fitchburg, Lowell and everywhere in between."

While tourism is a competitive industry, Amaral said the strength of the region is its unique collaborative environment where businesses are welcomed and encouraged to speak with elected officials, participate in advocacy and know they can have a meaningful impact. "The Chamber, for one, has done a great job establishing good relationships with elected officials, and by supporting the Chamber and their efforts, we can bring more dollars here," added Amaral. "Tourism is a multiplier effect, and we all benefit when tourism dollars come into our region's front door."

And it hasn't been easy to bring those dollars into the tourism industry over the past few years. In addition to the decline in jobs, the COVID-19 pandemic brought economic disruption to almost all sectors of the U.S. economy, but none as devastating as the impact it had on tourism. The

report indicates total travel spending declined by 47% in 2020.

One of the largest attractions in North Central didn't take such a huge hit during the pandemic. **Wachusett Mountain**, located in Princeton, which averages around a million annual visitors, offered something people desired during a time when social distancing and outdoor dining were the buzzwords of the day: outdoor recreation in a safe environment.

"There were very few activities people could actually participate in during the pandemic, but we were able to offer recreational activities that were safe because [the activities] were in the open air and people could keep a good distance from each other," said Chris Stimpson, public relations manager, Wachusett Mountain. "We were very happy to be open and offer that to our skiers, hikers and others, and because of that,

we were very busy. Since then, we have remained steady and are even a little ahead of our [visitor] numbers when compared to last year."

Although Amaral was forced to close his businesses during the pandemic, which resulted in 110 people being laid off, the business has come back strong and now employs over 130 people. "We've had our challenges," he added. "Our Groton Inn burned down in 2011 as the longest continuing inn in the country, but what we found during that time was a lot of opportunity."

Amaral built a new inn and a restaurant, and worked with local businesses to grow, thrive and prosper, resulting in dozens of new relationships. "We buy produce, flowers and work with gift shops all within a 20-mile radius," he said. "While tourism plays into a good chunk of our business, by supporting these other local businesses they are able

to grow and employ more people, so everyone wins.”

Those partnerships and relationships are key for the team at Wachusett Mountain, too. Stimpson said one of the biggest partnerships the mountain has is with the MBTA, which offers train service from Boston to the Wachusett station, with a shuttle transporting skiers and snowboarders to and from the mountain. “What’s wonderful is that someone can get from Boston to the mountain entirely on public transportation,” he added.

In addition to a partnership with the **Red Apple Farm** in Phillipston, which offers its famous cider donuts and cider at the main and Bullock Lodges, Wachusett Mountain also works with businesses to bring visitors to North Central. “Our local hotels offer overnight packages, and we partner with non-profit youth enrichment programs to give kids an opportunity to ski,” Stimpson added. “We also host an adaptive program for those with disabilities to get them on the hill.”

In fact, Wachusett Mountain hosted a ski race on March 1, to raise money for the Massachusetts General Brigham Hospital Frontal Temporal Dementia Unit in honor of David Crowley, co-owner and operator of Wachusett Mountain, who passed away in November 2024. “David was a ski guy and was often seen on the slopes on a sit-ski with aid from the Wachusett Adaptive Program as long as he could,” added Stimpson.

And those opportunities abound for everyone in North Central, including the region’s business owners who

can bring clients, customers and employees out of the office and into an experience that puts the region center stage.

“There are so many things, events and experiences to be found here, but for our fellow business owners, we want them to bring out their clients and employees,” said Amaral. “When you bring a client out to dinner, call the manager before you arrive because they can help create something special that your clients will remember.”

Stimpson agrees. “Our local businesses can bring in teams of all sizes for a unique event in one of our

private suites with s’mores by the fire in the winter, and then in the summer, utilize the entire outdoor area,” he said. “But the winter is especially fun with group lessons, lift tickets and to just have fun on the mountain.”

And when visitors enter the region, they will be welcomed with open arms.

“The **Johnny Appleseed Visitor’s Center** on Route 2 is a wonderful way to welcome visitors to the region,” said Fox. “It offers a well thought out strategy and helps to drive the market with travelers coming in.”

And this is where Mahoney and the Chamber’s board of directors can play a key role to ensure tourism is top of mind for its members.

“Our One North Central Plan proved that our region continues to be a top destination for recreation and outdoor activities and entertainment, all supported by strong tourism coalitions,” Mahoney said. “As a financial industry leader, I know the importance tourism has on our local economy and it continues to be just as important to our region today as it did more than 30 years ago.” ◇

WAYS YOUR BUSINESS CAN BENEFIT FROM TOURISM

- **PARTNER WITH REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS:** Team up with local destinations or area hotels to create special offers or packages for visitors. Consider hosting corporate events, team building activities, or client entertainment at these venues.
- **MAXIMIZE VISIBILITY AT THE JOHNNY APPLESEED VISITORS CENTER:** Secure sponsorship, brochure placement, or feature your products in the gift shop where over 120,000 travelers stop annually.
- **AMPLIFY YOUR MARKETING REACH:** Get your business featured in the Chamber’s visitor guide, on visitnorthcentral.com, and through regional marketing campaigns to reach potential customers throughout New England.
- **SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS:** Submit your events for promotion on visitnorthcentral.com’s calendar and social media channels for visitors planning their trips.
- **PROVIDE IMAGES:** Supply high-quality images of your business or attraction for use in our regional advertising and marketing campaigns to showcase your business.
- **SHARE UPDATES:** Keep us informed about new offerings, expansions, or special programs that might interest visitors and groups.
- **CONNECT WITH GROUPS:** Work with our team and our partners to reach tour operators, business travelers, and event planners bringing groups to North Central.
- **JOIN COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS:** Participate in marketing campaigns, host travel media during familiarization tours, and help showcase our region as a premier destination!

Contact the Chamber and Visit North Central Massachusetts team at 978.353.7600 or chamber@northcentralmass.com to learn more.

TOURISM

Update

Visit North Central Massachusetts

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

Leveraging MA 250th Anniversary for Regional Growth

We are embracing the region's revolutionary spirit with a new marketing initiative tied to the Massachusetts 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. Our campaign highlights the innovative spirit of North Central Massachusetts across five vital sectors – Tourism, Culture, Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Business.

We've secured a grant from MA 250th to fund our "North Central Mass is Revolutionary" campaign, enabling us to maximize exposure through strategic media partnerships with the Boston Business Journal, Worcester Business Journal, Worcester Magazine, Mass Live, and Local IQ. Our advertising campaign provides our members and communities with broad visibility across print, digital, and social media channels. The campaign

also features specialized content and curated itineraries on our tourism website – visitnorthcentral.com – that showcase our region and members. Additionally, we're investing in a digital kiosk at the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center to highlight the region's history and connect visitors with member businesses and attractions. These coordinated marketing efforts are designed to create sustained economic impact by leveraging this historic anniversary to spotlight North Central Massachusetts as a dynamic destination for business and tourism.

Expanding Youth and Amateur Sports Tourism Through Digital Innovation

Visit North Central has strategically partnered with Playeasy, a leading digital platform that connects youth and amateur sports event organizers with regional venues, to strengthen our position in this growing market. This technology-driven approach streamlines venue discovery and booking while creating significant economic opportunities



We were delighted to welcome Julie Arrison-Bishop, Director of Marketing at Visit Massachusetts to North Central Massachusetts! Julie, pictured here with Tim Halligan, Assistant Manager at our Johnny Appleseed Visitors Center and Roy Nascimento, President & CEO of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce and Visit North Central Massachusetts. She toured Wachusett Mountain during her visit. We look forward to working together to showcase all that North Central Massachusetts has to offer visitors throughout the year!

North Central Massachusetts is "Revolutionary"

in Tourism, Agriculture, Culture, Industry and Business!

[Click here to see why!](#)





VISIT NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS
JOHNNY APPLESEED COUNTRY



MA 250
MASSACHUSETTS250.ORG

Revolutionary appeal: One of the digital advertisements from our 'North Central Mass is Revolutionary' campaign, part of our region's celebration of the Massachusetts 250th Anniversary. This strategic marketing initiative showcases our area's innovative spirit across tourism, culture, agriculture, manufacturing, and business sectors while driving economic growth.

for our member businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

The platform's automated lead generation system delivers event opportunities directly to our member venues. Early performance metrics are promising – Playeasy has already identified potential opportunities representing \$32 million in economic impact and 189,000 hotel room nights for our region. Our destination's strong digital presence ranks #32 among 334 destinations, generating 561 profile views, with 101 from event pages and 311 from facility pages in the past 90 days.

While we continue to monitor conversion rates and economic impact during this initial implementation phase, the platform demonstrates strong potential for driving youth and amateur sports tourism revenue to North Central Massachusetts.

Promoting North Central Massachusetts as a Premier Winter Destination

Our winter advertising campaigns successfully promoted North Central Massachusetts as a premier New England destination to drive visitor spending across our business community. The campaigns showcased the region's authentic experiences, rich cultural offerings,

and strategic location advantage. Working with leading media partners including AAA, Boston Spirit, Cumulus, Hearst Story Studio, Local IQ, and MassLive, we implemented a comprehensive media strategy primarily focused on digital platforms, complemented by strategic print placements. The campaign targeted high-value markets including Boston and New England communities within a 250-mile radius, positioning our region as an accessible destination for winter travelers. This targeted approach helped drive visitor traffic to member businesses during traditionally slower winter months.

Driving Visitation Through Strategic Partnerships and Media Outreach

Our tourism partnerships continued to generate impact through multiple initiatives. Our collaborative "Shoulder Season" advertising campaign with Discover Central MA and MetroWest Boston Visitors Bureau, funded through federal grant support, has successfully promoted off-season visitation to drive year-round business opportunities. This strategic partnership concludes this spring after helping to increase visitor traffic during traditionally slower periods.

To enhance media coverage and destination awareness, we engaged CM Communications, a Boston-based PR agency specializing in destination marketing. Their expertise is helping to generate increased media interest and exposure for North Central Massachusetts businesses and attractions.

Strengthening Digital Presence

We maintained a strong digital presence, delivering compelling website content, including seasonal blog features and an up-to-date events calendar. Our primary goal remained to strategically deploy both print and digital advertising to capture attention in key drive markets, while continuing to drive traffic to the Visit North Central website (www.visitnorthcentral.com) and engage users across our social media platforms. For FY2025 through January 31, 2025, we had 79,660 users, representing a 46% increase over the same time period the previous year. We also had 135,000 pageviews, up 35%; 86,000 sessions, up 37%; and 1,974,892 impressions. These substantial increases indicate growing interest in our region and more potential customers discovering our member businesses online.

Social Media Performance

From July 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025, Visit North Central Massachusetts' Facebook page reached a total 736,660 users, a 36% increase, and had 1,283,965 views. Our Facebook page followers increased 30% to 42,924, and saw 12,741 content interactions. On Instagram, the page achieved a reach of 28,205, a decrease of 39%, and 105,832 views, and had 3,528 followers, a 25% increase. We also saw 2,892 content interactions during the same period. This social engagement translates to increased brand awareness for the region and stronger digital visibility for our business community.

Lodging Market Analysis: Traditional vs. Short-Term Rental Performance

The January 2025 lodging data reveals market shifts affecting our regional hospitality sector. Traditional hotel performance shows continued challenges, while the short-term rental market demonstrates strong growth.

North Central Massachusetts hotels experienced more pronounced declines than the statewide average. Regional hotel demand decreased 8.8% year-over-year, representing 2,634 rooms booked in January 2025. This

Continued on page 21



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Continued from page 19

exceeded the statewide demand decrease of 4.0% (56,364 fewer room nights). Revenue impact was similarly disproportionate, with regional hotel revenue declining 11.9% (\$593,447) compared to the state's 4.0% decrease (\$8.3 million). Our regional occupancy rate fell 6.8 percentage points to 65%, while average daily rate (ADR) decreased 10.2% to \$160.05. For context, statewide hotel occupancy dropped 3.3 percentage points to 49.2%, with ADR remaining stable at \$151.05.

In contrast, the short-term rental market shows remarkable strength. North Central Massachusetts short-term rentals experienced 47% growth in booked nights (2,350 total, an increase of 752 rooms) and 40.8% revenue growth (\$230,970) compared to January 2024. This significantly outpaced the

strong statewide short-term rental performance, which saw 6.8% growth in bookings (243,100 nights, an increase of 15,573) and 9.9% revenue growth (\$31.6 million).

These trends suggest continued market evolution that may present both challenges and opportunities for our regional hospitality businesses.

Email Newsletter Engagement

Our quarterly visitor opt-in electronic newsletter now reaches over 3,470 subscribers, maintaining an impressive 47% open rate and 7% click-through rate above industry standards. This direct communication channel continues to be an effective tool for promoting member businesses and regional events.

Spring/Summer Guide in Production

We are currently printing the Spring/Summer edition of the Guide to North Central Massachusetts, a glossy, full-color magazine designed to inform and inspire. This guide will showcase the region as a prime destination for living, working, and visiting. Once printed, 40,000 copies will be distributed across 350 high-traffic locations throughout New England. In addition to the print version, a digital version will be available on our website and shared via email, social media, and with the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) to extend its reach even further.

What's Next: Spring Initiatives

Looking ahead to spring, our focus will remain on building awareness and

driving visitors to North Central Massachusetts. Key upcoming initiatives include rolling out our new digital kiosks at the visitor center and launching our spring advertising campaign. We will continue to emphasize the region's outdoor offerings and the timeless charm of New England, creating itineraries that inspire seasonal adventures for travelers seeking fresh experiences. Digital marketing will remain our primary tool, with strategies that include paid search, social media ads, geofencing along the Route 2 corridor, digital display, sponsored content, print ads, YouTube targeting, and organic engagement. We're excited to expand our reach, inspire travel, and encourage more visitors to explore North Central Massachusetts. ◇



SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL MEETING AND BUSINESS EXPO

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2025 AT GREAT WOLF LODGE

Join other business and community leaders and attend the Chamber's 41st Annual Meeting which celebrates business people working together for the future of North Central Massachusetts. The Chamber's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 12, 2025 at Great Wolf Lodge. The program will include a luncheon, recognition awards and the commencement for the 2025 class of the Community Leadership Institute.

The table top expo will run before and after our regular program giving exhibitors the chance to reach hundreds of business and community leaders from throughout North Central Massachusetts. The expo is a great opportunity to promote your business and make new connections. The number of exhibitor spaces are limited, so we encourage you to reserve your space today.

The Business Expo portion of the Annual Meeting will start at 10:45 a.m., the Annual Meeting and Luncheon will run from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the expo will open back up and close at 2:00 p.m. A limited number of sponsor opportunities are also available.

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.



Congratulations to Chamber member **DeBonis & Davin Florist** on their ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating their one year anniversary under new ownership! DeBonis & Davin Florist specializes in crafting stunning arrangements for every occasion, from birthdays to anniversaries and everything in between. Check them out at 900 Main Street in Fitchburg!



The Inside North Central Massachusetts podcast releases new episodes weekly. Each week, Travis Condon interviews a different member. In this episode, we sit down with Chris Stimpson, Public Relations Manager at **Wachusett Mountain**. You can listen to the series on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Podbean.



The Chamber was proud to join member **Fitchburg Housing Authority** recently at the groundbreaking of the transformative Wallace Tower Modernization Project! This \$23M initiative represents one of the largest housing authority projects in Massachusetts this year, bringing enhanced affordable housing and on-site healthcare services to our seniors, veterans, and disabled residents. The modernized Wallace Tower will feature 130 updated housing units, a new medical clinic, expanded community spaces, enhanced security systems, and fitness facilities.



The **Young Professionals of North Central Massachusetts** had a great time at our Speed Networking Mixer event! Attendees enjoyed fast-paced interactions that made it easy to meet new people, exchange ideas, and build valuable connections.



The November edition of Good Morning North Central breakfast featured Dr. Donna Hodge, the new President of **Fitchburg State University**, and Carolyn Read, Executive Director of **Habitat for Humanity North Central Massachusetts**. A special thank you goes to the November premier sponsor **IC Credit Union**. Thank you also to Lauren Howe of **empowered PR** for serving as emcee and Andrea Seward of **Habakkuk Media Services** for photographing the event.



We had an incredible evening at the **6 Chamber B.A.S.H.**, celebrating **Great Wolf Lodge New England's** milestone 10th anniversary! Over 400 businesses came together for a night of networking, amazing food and drinks. Thank you to Great Wolf Lodge for being an amazing host.



Congratulations to Chamber Members **Fitchburg Public Market, Candy Lady Confections, Royal Grill, La Colombiana Hamburger, Evie Cakes, Arepencito, Mera's Cakes Inc, Taco Queen & El Friquitin de Jenny** located at 35 Main Street in Fitchburg, on their grand opening! This vibrant new hub supports aspiring entrepreneurs, offering a diverse range of cuisines, fresh produce, and unique local products. With a focus on empowering startup businesses, the market provides a space for both residents and visitors to explore and enjoy. Here's to many years of success and growth!



Thank you to all our amazing members and community leaders who joined us in December for the **Winter Reception** at the beautiful **Colonial Hotel**. The evening was filled with great conversations, delicious food, and wonderful company. Thank you to our sponsor **AIS (Affordable Interior Systems)**.



The Community Leadership Institute held their November session at The United Way of North Central MA. The group learned from Kory Eng of the United Way, CLI Alumni Patty Wayrynen of the Cancer Support Fund of Central MA, and LeaAnn Scales and Kat Deal of the North Central MA Employer-Supported Childcare Initiative. The day of learning was animated and inspirational. The group will meet again tomorrow to turn its attention to education in North Central MA.



Thank you to everyone who donated to the **Chamber's The Salvation Army Fitchburg Angel Tree** program during the holiday season! Your generosity made a real difference in the lives of local children and families with special needs.



Thank you to our dedicated **Ambassadors Committee** for their hard work and ongoing support of the Chamber and our communities. The committee gathered for their annual holiday get-together at **Mountainside Bakery & Café**, where they enjoyed a delicious breakfast and continued their tradition of the Yankee Swap. We are deeply appreciative of their commitment and efforts throughout the year.

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We joined Sam Squallia, Mayor of Fitchburg, city councilors, and community leaders for a ribbon-cutting at 298 Main Street! Chamber member **Tocci Group** transformed the historic Foster-Healey building into a stunning mixed-use development in downtown Fitchburg. Attendees toured the beautifully renovated spaces, including street-level retail and modern apartments. This thoughtful redevelopment showcases Fitchburg's ongoing downtown revival. Congratulations to the Tocci Group for bringing new life to this landmark building!



The **Community Leadership Institute** held their December session at Fitchburg State University to delve into the topics of Ethics, and Education and Workforce Development in North Central MA. Thank you to our engaging panelists, Nicole Conroy, Program Director of **My Turn Inc.**, Thomas Browne, Superintendent of **Monty Tech**, and Dr. Donna Hodge, President of **Fitchburg State University** for sharing the work your organizations are doing, the challenges the region faces and how local organizations help advance education in the region. And to Dr. Michael Greenwood for your inspiring discussion on ethics.



We held our **annual staff holiday party** at Great Wolf Lodge. Our team enjoyed a wonderful afternoon of holiday traditions, including photos with Santa and spirited rounds of Left, Right, Center. The event was a perfect opportunity to gather as a team and reflect on another year of meaningful work, made possible by our dedicated members and partners.



The Chamber kicked off the year with the January edition of Good Morning North Central at Great Wolf Lodge. We were honored to welcome featured speakers Andre Reed, Class of 2014 Pro Football Hall of Fame, Commissioner ENTFLA, and **Fitchburg Heroes**, as well as Doug Howgate, President of the **Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation**. Special thanks to our January Premier Sponsor **Rollstone Bank & Trust**, as well as Tara Lappas of **Ascension Appraisal** for emceeing and Andrea Seward for capturing the event.



Strengthening community leadership through strategic communications was the focus of January's Community Leadership Institute session. Hosted by **Fitchburg Access Television (FATV)**, the program delivered expert insights on media relations and crisis management to emerging North Central Massachusetts leaders. Special thanks to our distinguished presenters: Dr. Michael Greenwood and Matt Bruun of **Fitchburg State University**; Nate Glenn of FATV; Lauren Howe of **empHowered PR**; and Glenn Fossa of **EDS** for sharing their insights and real-world experiences. Mastering effective communication strategies equips these leaders to better navigate challenges, build trust, and drive positive change across North Central Massachusetts.

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The Chamber held its quarterly **Women's Leadership Connection luncheon** at Great Wolf Lodge in Fitchburg, bringing together an incredible group of inspiring and influential women from across the North Central Massachusetts region. Thank you to our guest speakers, State Representatives Kimberly Ferguson, Natalie Higgins, and Susannah Whipps, for sharing the latest updates from Beacon Hill and what is going on in our local communities. Their insightful conversation reminded us all of the importance of raising our voices, bringing forward our concerns, and working collaboratively for meaningful change.



Our January **Business After Hours** was a special one as we honored the incredible career of **Diane Burnette**, who retired after nearly 30 years of dedicated service to the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center and the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce! Throughout her career, Diane has been a passionate advocate for our community, welcoming visitors with warmth and dedication, and driving the success of local businesses. Her passion and commitment have left a lasting impact. Diane, we can't thank you enough for all you've done for North Central Massachusetts. Wishing you all the best as you begin this exciting new chapter in your life!



We hosted the **North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce Orientation and Mixer**. A big thank you to everyone who joined us! Chamber staff, along with our ambassadors, had the pleasure of welcoming our newest members, who introduced themselves and their businesses. The event was a great opportunity for networking and for learning more about the Chamber and the resources we offer.



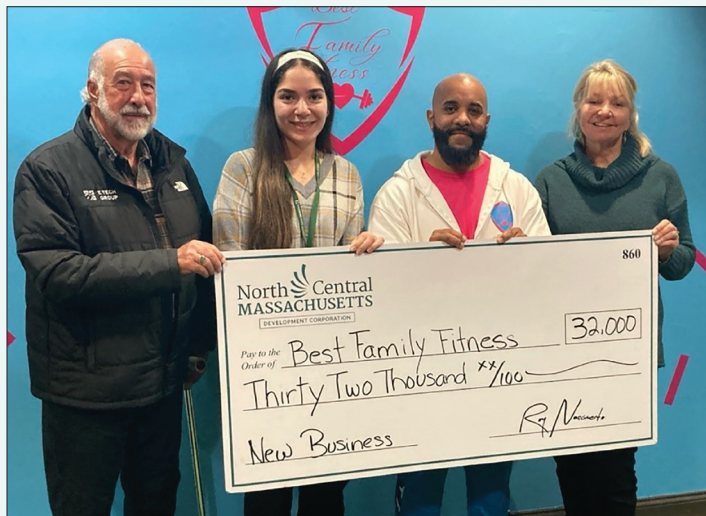
Manufacturing excellence thrives in North Central MA! At our recent **Manufacturing Council meeting**, hosted by **SMC Ltd.** in Devens, members gained valuable insights from two industry leaders. Lily Fitzgerald, Director of **Massachusetts' Center for Advanced Manufacturing**, shared emerging trends and innovative resources available to manufacturers in 2025. SMC's Dave Bergman followed with an in-depth look at their cutting-edge operations, capped off by an exclusive facility tour showcasing their advanced manufacturing capabilities.



Congratulations to Chamber member **Boot Barn** on their grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony located at 146 Whalon Street in Fitchburg. Experience personalized service provided by a knowledgeable team ready to assist you during your shopping journey. Whether you are in search of western apparel, work gear, or western fashion, you will discover well-curated sections throughout the store.



The Chamber joined **Applewild School** to celebrate their new dormitory, strengthening North Central Massachusetts' position as an educational destination. The 17,000-square-foot facility will house 40 international and domestic students plus faculty, driving economic growth and cultural exchange in Fitchburg and the region. A powerful collaboration between **Enterprise Bank**, **MassDevelopment**, and **Bennett Building Corp.**



The North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC), the economic development arm of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, recently approved \$32,000 to support the startup of **Best Family Fitness**, a new fitness center located at 360 High Street in Clinton.



Thank you to **Creative Connections Gift Shop & Gallery** for hosting the Chamber Meet & Greet in the town of Ashburnham! It was a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the business and its connection to the community and region. The Chamber has been continuing to host our "Meet & Greet" series throughout the region. These smaller, focused gatherings are typically hosted by a member in one of our communities. They provide a great opportunity to convene local businesses and get an update from the Chamber, local businesses and municipal leaders.

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