



Big Papi Comes to
Worcester **16**



Above: The Hanover Campus- Courtesy of Worcester Business Journal

A recent study conducted by the Donahue Institute of Economic and Public Policy Research at UMass Amherst found that The Hanover Insurance Group, based in Worcester, contributes over \$1.25 billion annually in statewide economic impact.

The Donahue Institute partnered with The Hanover to analyze the company's impact between 2010 and 2020. The Hanover is not only one of the largest employers in Central Massachusetts but has played a pivotal role in the revitalization of the Hanover Theatre and CitySquare, and has contributed millions to local nonprofits and charities.

The Hanover was first founded in Worcester in 1852 and is a leader in property and casualty insurance. In 2021, the company wrote \$5 billion of premiums and reported \$419 million in revenue. The Hanover employs 4,400 people, with 1,675 based in Worcester at their 52-acre office park off Lincoln Street. The Hanover is the only publicly traded company headquartered in Worcester.

"We're proud to be an active member of the Worcester business community and thrilled to have the opportunity to work with so many dedicated and determined community partners, creating economic vitality for our region while helping to make it a better place in which to live and work," said John C. Roche, president and chief executive officer at The Hanover. "We're more excited than ever about the future of the Greater Worcester community and look forward to working with our employees and others to make a lasting and positive difference for many years to come."

The study by the UMass Donahue Institute found that the company has an annual economic output of \$1.25 billion statewide. Of this total, \$967 million goes to Central Massachusetts. Economic output is the company's total value of production, measured by combining annual business profit, salaries paid, taxes paid, and capital expenses, while taking into account the revenue made possible by The Hanover's services for end-users and clients.

Cumulatively across Massachusetts since 2010, this impact is estimated at \$13 billion.

This does not take into account The Hanover's key role in major economic development projects in Worcester's downtown, or the charitable giving that the company makes a cornerstone of its operations.

In 2000, a group of local business and community leaders banded together to buy a neglected theatre along Main Street. With The Hanover's leading role

The Hanover Insurance Group Contributes Over \$1.25B to State Economy, Study Finds

by DAVID SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

in securing financing, a \$32 million renovation ensued and was completed in 2008. The company was the largest single donor, giving \$5 million to the rehabilitation. Now, the 2,300-seat theatre has a new life as the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts, anchoring the downtown's Theatre District. It is one of the busiest theatres in the region and books Broadway-quality shows regularly.

A similar opportunity to revitalize the downtown arose when the hulking Worcester Center Galleria mall was torn down in 2010. The mall, built in the 1960s on top of 34 acres of downtown businesses and buildings, languished for years before being demolished in favor of a master-planned campus of modern commercial and residential buildings called CitySquare.

The Hanover, through its asset management arm Opus Investment Management, worked with the City of Worcester to parcel off the property, secure leases, and sell the property to developers. This resulted in the \$565 million of

public and private investment that made possible the Mercantile Center, the Unum office building, the AC Marriott, 110 Grill, Saint Vincent Hospital's Cancer and Wellness Center, and the 145 Front Street apartments. The Hanover continued to play a significant role in CitySquare up until recently with the sale of the campus's last available parcels to a developer in 2022.

"The Hanover-led projects at the theatre and CitySquare set the stage for what is possible for the

city and reinforced how complicated projects can be successful when public and private sectors work together," said Tim Murray, president and chief executive officer of the Chamber who was mayor of Worcester at the time of these initiatives.

This is all not to mention the charitable work by The Hanover, which has contributed over \$16.5 million to nonprofits and community initiatives since 2010.

Recipients of The Hanover's philanthropy include the YMCA, the YWCA, Worcester Public Schools, the EcoTarium, the Boys & Girls Club, the Central Mass Housing Alliance, and others. The Hanover also played a significant part in bringing the Worcester Red Sox to the city in their role as a founding sponsor of the team.

On top of all this, the company encourages employees to volunteer and contribute to the United Way of Central Massachusetts, which has resulted in \$2.5 million in giving to the nonprofit since 2010.

The Donahue Institute's study quantifies what many in Worcester already knew. The Hanover is a pillar of the local community and an exemplary corporate citizen and continues to prove it each year.

"We're proud to be
an active member of
the Worcester business
community..."



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With publication dates in February, May, August, and November, Chamber Exchange: The Newspaper is a quarterly publication written and produced by Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce staff and members. Content is geared to business professionals, members, elected officials, and engaged citizens.

Each quarter, 20,000 copies are mailed to 6,000 members and business professionals and roughly 13,000 City of Worcester registered voters. The remainder are distributed among area businesses.

If you're interested in being a point of distribution, or would like to know more about placing an advertisement in the Chamber Exchange, please contact Kristen Luna at kluna@worcesterchamber.org. To contact the editorial staff, please email Caitlin Lubelczyk at clubelczyk@worcesterchamber.org.

Unless otherwise noted, the editorial content herein is the opinion of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and does not reflect the opinion of any specific member, business, or partner of the Chamber.

DAVE GARVIN - MANAGER
OF WORKFORCE
PROGRAMS,
WORCESTER
REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



The Worcester Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Worcester Public Schools, recently hired Dave Garvin as the new Manager of Workforce Programs. Dave, originally from Toronto, Ontario Canada has spent the past number of years in sales, training, and business consulting for small and medium sized businesses in North America. Prior to that, he spent over 16 years with Bose Corporation as a Core Senior Manager of training, education, and development, overseeing competency, team, and leadership development programs for North America.

This new role of Manager of Workforce Programs

is focused on junior and senior students in technical programs whose path after graduating high school is starting their career. The goal is to work with them through WTHS programs offered and connect them with Worcester businesses in their field of study who have the need.

"The time is right to double down on every effort we can make as a community to ensure future success for our WPS graduates," said Karen Pelletier, Executive Vice President of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. "The Chamber, along with WTHS, is excited to launch this joint position dedicated to building business partnerships and workplace

opportunities for students in the technical pathways."

"The number one need of virtually all of our Chamber member businesses and organizations is access to a quality workforce," said Tim Murray, President and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce." Our vocational technical schools and Chapter 74 programs are critical to meeting this demand as well as giving young people the skills and confidence to start their own businesses. This position is about expanding our partnership with the Worcester Public Schools and facilitating new connections with the Central Massachusetts employer community."

The Chamber of Commerce Introduces New Manager of Workforce Programs

by **TIMOTHY P. MURRAY**, PRESIDENT & CEO, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Each day at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce we simultaneously focus on our Recruit, Retain, and Incubate agenda. Inherent in our efforts to recruit companies and investors to Central Mass, retain and grow jobs with existing companies, or incubate new businesses, is the need for a well trained and motivated workforce. Accordingly, we established a Director of Education and Workforce Initiatives nearly ten years ago to build partnerships

with our higher ed institutions, vocational technical schools, and area workforce training organizations. Recently, in our 2023 budget, the Chamber Board approved the establishment of a Manager of Workforce Programs with assistance from MassHire of Central Mass, that will work directly with Worcester Technical High School and other Chamber 74 vocational technical and Innovation Pathways Programs (IPP) to build a robust inventory of companies and organizations that will employ co-op students who are receiving training at school in specific employment areas. At Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) there are currently 23 vocational technical programs that students are studying that range from automotive and carpentry to finance and marketing, or biotechnology and robotics to veterinary and welding, etc. To learn more, go to the WTHS website at techhigh.us. Beyond Worcester Technical High School the Worcester Public Schools across the other high schools offers students access to over 20 different Chamber 74 and IPP programs.

A key and unique component of 74 vocational technical programs is the ability for students in their senior year and in some cases their junior year to work in their field of study on a full week basis every other week. In many instances these students are full-time paid employees getting hands-on experience and executing on what they have been taught in the classroom. These students gain real world training as well as durable skills of what the world of work will expect of them in the future.

Currently at WTHS approximately 208 seniors are out on co-op out of a total of 370 seniors. Our goal with the new Manager of Workforce Programs and working with the new leadership at WTHS and WPS is to make sure that every student has a co-op placement and then expand that to all WPS Chapter 74 and IPP students. Over the course of the remaining year, we will be reaching out to our member businesses to inform them of the specifics and benefits of employing WPS co-op students. It is a pathway to building a young, motivated, and diverse workforce that are knowledgeable about the field they are working in.

Additionally, we will be working with WPS personnel to make sure they are aware of the breadth of employment and workforce training programs that are available for all 25,000 Worcester Public School students that are work eligible. We are really excited about this new position and partnership and the doors it will open for our young people and employers.

To learn more feel free to email Dave Garvin at DGarvin@worcesterchamber.org or call him at (508)753-2924 ext. 230

Worcester Regional Chamber CALENDAR of EVENTS

**All events are subject to time and location change, for the most accurate list of events visit worcesterchamber.org.*

Seminar Series : The Evolving Workplace | Chamber Offices
Thursday June 1, 2023 | 9:00am-10:00am
Sponsor: SCORE Worcester

The Breakfast Club | Mechanics Hall
Thursday, June 15, 2023 | 7:00am
Presenting Sponsor: Country Bank

33rd Annual William J. Short Memorial Golf Classic | Charter Oak Country Club
Monday, June 26, 2023 | 7:30am
Presenting Sponsor: Point 32 Health

Craft Beer Fest and Game Night at the Worcester Bravehearts | Fitton Field
Thursday, July 13, 2023 5:30pm
Presenting Sponsors: Country Bank & RE/MAX Diverse

Power of Women (POW) Luncheon | Nuestra
Thursday, August 24, 2023 12:00pm
Presenting Sponsor: Country Bank

Young Professionals Night Out | The Mercantile
Tuesday, August 29, 2023 5:00pm-7:00pm
Sponsor: Sterling Construction

The Worcester Political Season Has Begun

by ALEX GUARDIOLA, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC POLICY



As we ease into spring in Worcester and begin to clean our yards after the winter, enjoy some games at Polar Park, play some outdoor basketball, maybe play some golf at our favorite local golf courses, or take a walk or hike on our favorite central Massachusetts trails; it is important to remember what is happening on our Federal, State, and local government levels.

Joe Biden and Donald Trump have both announced that they both will again be running for reelection in 2024. Our newly elected Governor, Maura Healey, and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll have been touring the Commonwealth and have already put out their first Gubernatorial proposed budget that has been sent to the House of Representatives and is currently being debated.

In the city of Worcester: it is an election year. While nomination papers are not due back to the City Clerk until May 31, this is already shaping up to be a highly contested City Council election that continues to emphasize the divisiveness of the current makeup of the Council and the City. There are currently 14 candidates running for 6 at-large seats. (It is important to remember that candidates for mayor must also run at-large.) Of those 14 candidates there are 6 incumbents including Mayor Joseph Petty running at this time. The District 1 and District 4 seats are, to date, going to be vacant as Sean Rose (D1) and Sarai Rivera (D4) have indicated that they will not be seeking reelection. There are now five new candidates for each of those districts. While there are a number of candidates who have already pulled nomination papers for at-large and district council seats, it certainly does not mean that others will not throw their hat in the ring making this one of the most interesting elections in recent years.

DIVISIVE VOTES ON THE COUNCIL

Appointment of City Manager Batista

In March of 2022, former City Manager Ed Augustus announced that he would be stepping down at the end of May appointing then Assistant City Manager Eric Batista the interim city manager position while the City Council was deciding on whether to move forward with Batista or to do a nationwide search. There was much debate as to whether to appoint a home-grown person in Batista who has been working in the city manager's office for 10 years under both former City Managers Mike O'Brien and Ed Augustus or to bring someone in from outside of city hall.

It was abundantly clear that there was a line drawn on the council floor as to who supported the hiring of the first latino city manager in Batista, starting with the mayor, and who wanted to do a nationwide search. I would be remiss if I did not mention that since 1984 when city residents voted to change the city charter to establish the city manager, mayor, and council form of Plan E government, there has only been one nationwide search with the appointment of former City Manager Hoover. For anyone who knows Worcester's history, that did not work out well for the city with the council voting to remove Hoover from the city manager's office.

In a heated debate bringing almost two hours of public testimony, the Mayor moved to suspend the nationwide search in favor of appointing Batista as the permanent city manager almost six months after he had been doing the job that some on the council wanted him to apply and interview for. In the end, the vote was narrowly approved 6-5. At-Large Councilors Donna Colorio, Kate Toomey and Moe Bergman, along with District 3 Councilor George Russell and District 2 Councilor Candy Mero-Carlson, joined Mayor Joe Petty suspending the nationwide search and appointing the first latino city manager in Worcester's history.

Inclusionary Zoning

Another highly debated and divisive vote on the city council was Inclusionary Zoning. Inclusionary Zoning in short, is a zoning ordinance that is used by municipalities to require new multifamily developments to incorporate a small percentage of affordable housing in each project, or to at least pay a fee to a city's affordable housing trust fund so that other developers can access local subsidies to build income-reserved units.

Here in Worcester, there is no question that we need more affordable housing in order to house our growing population and workforce. The city manager and his administration proposed an ordinance that would require new developments of 12 units or more to be 'income reserved' for 30 years and it also required that at least 15% of the units would have to be restricted to households at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), or 10% of the units would have to be restricted to households at or below 60% of the AMI, or a combination thereof.

Had the council come together six months ago and agreed that the ordinance proposed by the City administration was the best option for constructing new affordable housing while at the same time not cooling development, there would be hundreds of new affordable units already in the pipeline. Unfortunately, the city councilors who did not support the City Administration's recommendation stalled the vote, added new proposed amendments, and made city residents miss

out on opportunities to capture new affordable housing with the ordinance. In the end the City's administration had the needed eight votes to pass the proposed Inclusionary Zoning ordinance.

Ironically, not one person spoke at the inclusionary zoning hearings about the Franklin Street housing project that used a similar model as the City's Inclusionary Zoning proposal. That project was unanimously approved and praised at the end of March by this very same council.

As background, while the project was not subject to the inclusionary zoning rule, city administrators had negotiated 10% of the units be affordable for the duration of the tax increment exemption (TIE) that was awarded. As part of the TIE the Worcester-based developer included 36 income-restricted apartments for residents earning 60% or less of the AMI as part of their \$130 million project.

Be assured that Inclusionary Zoning will be part of this year's campaign trail rhetoric. Those who did not support the city's recommendation will use it as political leverage touting that this ordinance is not restrictive enough, when in reality we now have an ordinance that guarantees more affordable housing or more funds into the affordable housing trust.

OTHER THINGS TO WATCH FOR IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Governor Healy will begin the process of creating her administration's economic development plan. The Governor, who has placed some heavy focus on increasing the state's competitive edge, has tasked the Executive Office of Economic Development to create a sweeping policy. This new policy will have to undergo a legislative hearing and be made available online by the end of the year.

Due to the growing concerns with the MBTA, Governor Healy has replaced three MBTA Board Members including the chair with former MBTA General Manager and Massachusetts Port Authority CEO Thomas Glynn, former Senator Thomas McGee, and local banker Eric Goodwine of Rockland Trust. Hopefully these new appointees will continue the momentum we have had here in Worcester as the Union Station center platform project is slated to be completed this winter.

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SPICY WATER PASSION

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT



MILLBURY – Barry Bacon is passionate about eating and drinking. “I’m really what you’d call a, quote-unquote, foodie,” said the owner and operator of the Spicy Water Distillery. As he stood near several large blue barrels of amber liquid that lined the center wall of his business, Bacon dipped his finger for a taste.

“It’s got a sweet flavor,” he said as his face glowed with excitement. “I can tell from that ... I’m going to get something I want to drink. That’s why, in the end, our rum will do well. It’s got a nice, sweet flavor to it.”

The Spicy Water Distillery is a 4,400 square-foot, full production distillery, tasting room and event space located in the historic Armory Village of downtown Millbury. Bacon started his distillery business after the Pandemic hit in 2020. In just three years, he has grown from a person passionate about making his own rum at home to graduating as a StartUp Worcester cohort in 2021 and to an eventual successful working distillery business.

“My passion comes from wanting to create something,” he said. “It came down to what was I looking to create. The Pandemic taught me quite a few things. Business needs to be somewhat versatile. I wanted to design something that had multiple business avenues to it and one of those things was the creation of quality alcohol. We have traditional drinks like vodka and rum, but we also create different flavors that aren’t really on the market yet.

For instance, one of his signature drinks is called the New Englander, which is a mixture of Moxie soda, gin, and a couple dashes of Worcestershire sauce, which creates a flora; sarsaparilla/root beer taste. “Three things that should never have gone together but somehow they work,” he said. “To really appeal to different types of pallets, my passion is to create different experiences that people would enjoy.”

Spicy Water recently opened in January and Bacon said he was knocked out by the positive local reception he has received from his hometown of Millbury. “I was thinking if we can just get 100 people to come through, we can stay open for another month. That first weekend in January, we had about 400 people come through,” he said. “We sat there and said, ok, we’ve got something here!”

As a member of the StartUp Worcester cohort, Bacon, a former high school history teacher, said he is grateful for the business opportunities the program provided him. StartUp Worcester is a program that encourages and nurtures new businesses in the Worcester area. “It was such a great program because, when they selected us, we still did not have a business opened. It was still just a concept,” said Bacon. “We needed a lot of help, and they did that and gave us a lot of confidence in building this business. It gave us the credibility that we needed. It proved we were not just a business idea, but a business concept that was worth looking at.

“As a result, we were able to secure funding in a business that many folks might think was very, very risky,” he said. During his time with the program, Bacon combined his own money with loans from the bank, which allowed him

to purchase the needed distilling equipment for production and it helped secure for the business a location in the center of town.

“StartUp Worcester gave me an opportunity to meet a lot of people I don’t think I would have been able to meet with or talk to,” he said. “I was able to learn about their businesses and learn from their mistakes. I asked questions ... StartUp Worcester did a great job connecting me with the right people in both government and business to really help us to make that step forward. We went from having that idea on paper to becoming a full-fledged business in a year. To me, that was just a phenomenal opportunity ... I’m very thankful for that.”

Bacon does not work alone. He gets a lot of help from Matt Tella, a high school friend of more than 30 years, who serves as operations manager. Tella, who has a degree in chemistry and communications, shares Bacon’s same passion for creating popular drinks. “It’s been great,” he said. “It’s a chance to do something new and different.” Tella previously worked in sales and the food service industry.

Tella, who used to commute to Walpole every day for work, said Spicy Water has given him a opportunity to work in his hometown and to reconnect with local people. It also allows him to help an old friend. “It’s a chance to reconnect with a lot of people I haven’t seen in a long time,” he said. “A lot of family and friends have popped in here. To have that is amazing. It’s definitely well worth it. Getting to work with one of your closet friends and to help him realize his dream, to get this thing going and to be part of something that, if it’s any indication by how well it started, down the road, it’s going to be huge.”

Bacon said the response has been bigger than he had ever imagined. “To be honest with you, I imagined I’d be shipping stuff out the door all the time and people would occasionally come in there,” he said pointing to the main room. “It’s completely opposite. They love the atmosphere. They love what we’re doing here. They love the drink menu that Matt put together. They really enjoy the alcohol that I produce back here. We’ve had such great support from everyone ... I realized the dream I wanted *is* happening ... I had faith that this thing would work. I knew I had something special, but to see it take off as quickly as it has is thrilling. We’re happy and now, it’s about what can we do next. I just want to keep pushing the boundaries of what we can do and how we can do it and just see who else enjoys what we enjoy.

Bacon smiled and dipped his finger back into the amber liquid for another taste. “Matt, you did a great job with this one. It’s real sweet,” he said as he let out some giddy laughter. “I want to pour it on some food.”

To learn more about StartUp Worcester, visit worcesterchamber.org/startup-worcester





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JANUARY 25 - STORAGE 365 | 1 BRUSSELS STREET, WORCESTER

With the addition of their new Worcester location, Storage 365 now owns and operates seven facilities across the United States with plans to open five more facilities in Arizona and Texas in the next few months. Owner Glenn Pickrell, founder of Storage 365, did the honors of cutting the ribbon at the Brussels Street location!



FEBRUARY 8 - BRI'S SWEET TREATS | WORCESTER PUBLIC MARKET

Briana Azier, Better known as Bri of Bri's Sweet Treats, started her chocolate and treat business out of her home kitchen two years ago. What started as a fun hobby quickly turned into a part time job and in October of 2021, she left her full time professional corporate recruiting career and has been a full-time entrepreneur. After exhibiting at over 200 events in almost 2 years she is now settled in her permanent location at the Worcester Public Market. Bri makes all of her chocolates and treats by hand and can customize them for any occasion. She specializes in branded chocolates and treats for businesses with full color edible images/logos! Bri's accolades include 1st place ribbon for Best Indoor Vendor at the Spencer Fair 2022, Best of Central Mass 2022 Telegram and Gazette- Top 3 chocolatier/candy shop, and Best New Business 2023-Worcester Business Journal Best of Business awards.



FEBRUARY 15 - PARAGUS I.T. | ONE MERCANTILE CENTER

On Wednesday, February 15, Paragus I.T. held a Grand Opening party at their new office at One Mercantile Center. More than 50 people from the local business community and beyond gathered to sip champagne, enjoy delicious cupcakes frosted with the Paragus baby logo, and receive guided tours of the brand-new office space from Paragus CEO Delcie Bean. Mayor Joseph Petty joined Delcie Bean in presiding over the official ribbon cutting and Senators Mike Moore and Robyn Kennedy presented Paragus with an official citation. "This was a very fun way to introduce our amazing new office in One Mercantile Center," says Delcie Bean. "We are thankful to Mayor Petty, Senators Moore and Kennedy, and everyone who came out. We look forward to hosting more events as we continue to grow in Worcester."

For more than a decade, Paragus has been one of the fastest-growing I.T. firms in the region. They are an employee-owned company providing I.T. services to small to medium-sized businesses. They currently employ 15 people in their Worcester office and are actively recruiting as they develop a more significant presence in the city. Based in western Massachusetts, Paragus began their expansion into Worcester with the acquisition of Comportz Technologies in 2021. They made their official launch last September with the Paragus Firehouse Cookoff at Polar Park, a fundraiser event that raised \$13,000 for the Worcester Firefighters 6K. The second Paragus Firehouse Cookoff is scheduled for September 21 at Polar Park with plans to be even bigger and better.



MARCH 15 - SUB ZERO NITROGEN ICE CREAM | 44 FRONT STREET, WORCESTER

After a successful run at the Worcester Public Market, Sub Zero Nitrogen Ice Cream opened in the middle of August 2022. Owners Rita and Mark McCabe are looking forward to providing specialty treats to Worcester in the way of fresh, customized, made to order, liquid nitrogen ice cream, shakes, smoothies, Acai bowls, Bubble Tea and more! They also have locations in Manchester, NH and Cambridge, MA, and will soon announce a new franchisee in Ashland, MA.

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MARCH 23 - 107 TAP | 107 WATER STREET, WORCESTER



to open a pub style bar/restaurant that is comfortable for residents of the area as well as out of town visitors.

The 107 Tap is the newest bar and restaurant in the growing Canal District that will cater to sporting events, live music, lottery, dancing, private functions, late night kitchen, etc. Owner Jeff Mararian purchased the building at 107 Water St. which contained a vacant night club and decided to add a kitchen to the building in order

APRIL 6 - UNIQUE CAFÉ | 322 CAMBRIDGE STREET, WORCESTER



Nadine James is the founder of Unique Café, a Jamaican-American restaurant in Worcester. Nadine first started the business in 2019 after graduating from the Worcester Food Hub’s first Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs program done in partnership with the City of Worcester. Nadine is the youngest of 12 siblings who grew up in Jamaica. She moved to the United States several years ago and has called Worcester home ever since, raising her two daughters Kayanna and Khaaliyah here. Nadine started her business in a location on Millbury Street in 2021 and after a year she had to find somewhere new. During this time, Nadine focused on catering services to keep the business going.

In late 2022, she found an opportunity with Blanchard’s 101 Diner, a South Worcester neighborhood staple. The previous ownership was ready to move on from the restaurant industry and agreed to rent the diner to Nadine as the new location of Unique Café. Matt Blanchard continues to provide mentorship and support to Nadine.

In 2021, Nadine was recognized as being the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Minority-owned Business of the Year. In 2022, she was inducted to the Chamber’s board of directors.

Unique Café specializes in traditional Jamaican cuisine such as jerk chicken, oxtail, plantains, and rice and beans, while offering fusion food like the signature Jerk Chicken Sandwich and fresh-squeezed juices and smoothies.



APRIL 7 - WOOJUICE | 22 FRONT STREET, WORCESTER

Owners and longtime friends Isaiah Tatum and Noel Stemn are Worcester natives who met as students at the Nativity School. The pair opened WooJuice this Spring in the Midtown Mall on 22 Front Street surrounded by friends, family, colleagues, former teachers, and classmates. They say that while the store’s concept is new to Worcester, they conceived the idea after visiting Atlanta where organic juice and smoothie bars are plentiful. “The drinks were not only delicious, they made you feel like you were doing something right for your health and your body,” says Tatum. “It was a concept we thought Worcester needed.”



Woo Juice features freshly pressed juices with a high number of energizing antioxidants, vitamins, and nutrients; tasty smoothies rich in fiber; and immunity-boosting wellness shots with a powerful kick of flavor. If you head down to WooJuice you will be greeted with more than 15 concoctions ranging from \$5 to \$12. Drink names are both inspired by and honor locations around Worcester, such as the Green Hill Glow (spinach, celery, apple, cucumber, and ginger),

Kelley Splash (cucumber, pineapple, and ginger), Water St. Cure (carrot, beet, lemon, and apple), and Crompton Kool-Aid (mango, strawberry, passionfruit, almond milk or coconut water). Every drink is made in-store from fresh fruits and vegetables with no additives.

“We think people will love our commitment to using only fresh ingredients,” says Stemn. “So, we’re excited to launch our own store and bring healthy options that people will both enjoy and feel good about to our hometown.”

Tatum and Stemn’s efforts to launch their business were supported by the Greater Worcester chapter of Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll), a nonprofit organization that helps accelerate economic and social impact in communities nationwide through inclusive entrepreneurship by establishing free, high touch programs that allow aspiring entrepreneurs to launch businesses. Each year, EforAll sites launch 30 new businesses, providing over \$50,000 in awards as startup seed grants and engaging hundreds of business leaders as volunteers to help provide support and mentorship. “Woo Juice is a shining example of what budding entrepreneurship is all about and demonstrates how supporting aspiring entrepreneurs can impact not only the future business owners and their families, but an entire community,” said Miguelina Peralta, EforAll Greater Worcester’s Executive Director. “EforAll is so proud to help entrepreneurs like Isaiah and Noel, and many others, who have a vision and the commitment and perseverance to turn their ideas into a reality, and just need support and guidance.”

APRIL 13 - CHOP CHOP CONVENIENCE | 185 MADISON STREET, WORCESTER

Congratatons to Hassan Yatim, Robert Branca, and everyone at Chop Chop Convenience on Madison Street in Worcester for their grand opening this April. The brand-new plaza and gas station is located right off of Kelley Square and has snacks, drinks, lots of to go lunch options, and a Dunkin Donuts.



APRIL 19 - HEARTS & HANDS THERAPY SERVICES | 134 GOLD STAR BLVD., WORCESTER

Hearts and Hands Therapy Services initially started in Georgia, where the company has two clinics. Ashley was born and raised in Oxford and upon returning home, after living in Georgia for 5 years, Amy, the CEO and Jim Bass, COO decided to have Ashley bring the Hearts and Hands mission to the Worcester area. Hearts and Hands Therapy Services is a pediatric therapy company that serves children with special needs and their families. They provide a full spectrum of services including occupational, physical, speech, and behavioral therapies. Their collaborative environment ensures that every family feels empowered and allows each child to grow in exceptional ways.

! In Case You MISSED IT !!

JETBLUE ANNOUNCES NEW ROUTES AT WORCESTER REGIONAL AIRPORT



On April 10th, JetBlue announced two new Florida destinations taking off from Worcester.

“We are proud to introduce even more options to connect our Massachusetts customers to the places they want to fly with more nonstop Florida service from Worcester,” said Robin Hayes, chief executive officer, JetBlue. “Customers can now much more easily travel back and forth to Florida with JetBlue’s low fares and award-winning service, including with daily flights to Fort Myers during the Red Sox Spring Training.”

With these two additional routes, JetBlue will serve three Florida cities - Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and Fort Myers - from Worcester, meeting the increased demand from customers in the Central Massachusetts region. Conveniently located in the heart of Central Massachusetts, Worcester offers a modern, spacious terminal, easy curbside drop-off and pick-up, free WiFi, full-service food and beverage, and \$7 daily or \$42 weekly parking.

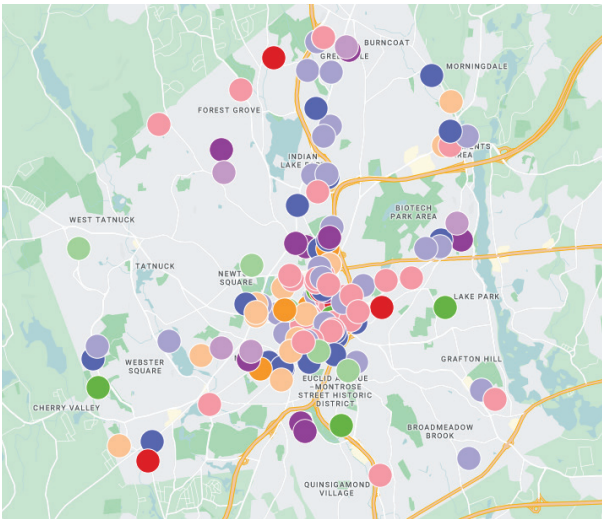


Above: City, state, and airport officials pose with Governor Maura Healy, JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes, and Massport CEO Lisa Wieland, after announcing new flights to Orlando and Fort Myers. Photo courtesy of Massport

Below: WooSox mascots Smiley and Woofster pose with a JetBlue Boston Red Sox plane.

Right: A screenshot of the new Worcester Economic Development map that can be found on the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce website.

WORCESTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MAP



The Chamber has released an interactive economic development map displaying over 180 projects, encompassing every major development in Worcester in the past 15 years. The map cumulatively represents more than \$5 billion in investment. The map, using a newer platform called Proxi, allows users to view a map overlaid with geographic points where developments are located. It can be filtered into completed or underway projects in multifamily housing, affordable housing, commercial/industrial, higher education, and public construction. The map will be continually updated as Worcester’s economic landscape continues to change for the better. Check it out today on our website at <https://www.worcesterchamber.org/economic-development/>.



Leicester Public Library Expansion | Completed in 2019
Photography by CHODOS, Inc.



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Jennifer Adams, Director of Marketing & BD
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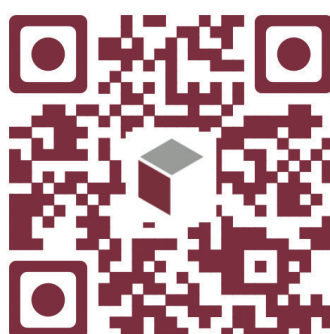
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Girls on The Run

by **CATHERINE J. DORIAN**,
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER, GIRLS ON THE RUN WORCESTER COUNTY

People everywhere worry about the young. Parents and teachers wonder what their child's future will look like amid economic uncertainties, advancements in technology, and the changing landscape of education. While social media can facilitate adolescents' creativity and self-development, many teens report that they experience bullying and harassment on Instagram and TikTok—platforms which in less than a decade have become obligatory passports into the social stratosphere. And there's that lingering question that may take several more years (and more than a few studies) to answer: to what extent did pandemic isolation impact children's cognitive, social, and emotional development? And how can we make up for, or at least minimize, the impacts of lockdown on children?

Since before the pandemic, schools, parents, and community leaders have recognized the importance of creating spaces where children grow not just academically, but personally. Social emotional learning (SEL)—practices like developing self- and social-awareness, building relationships, managing oneself, and making responsible decisions—is an essential component of a child's development. If we want to improve the social-emotional health of our youth, we need sustainable, grassroots efforts that create a lasting impact.

Such is the effort of Girls on the Run Worcester County, a nonprofit 501(c)(3). A council of Girls on the Run International, GOTR Worcester is an after-school program that combines discussion-based learning and group development with physical activity to help girls navigate life experiences. Girls meet in teams of 10 to 15 with two or three coaches. While the girls stretch, they talk about the highs and lows of their days; while they jog a lap or add distance to their practice, they learn about goal setting and how to encourage others. At the end of the season, the girls run a final 5k with other GOTR teams from their council. They celebrate with their families and coaches, whether they finished first or fifty-first. By the end of the season, GOTR participants have not only acquired tools and practices for self-reflection and self-awareness; they've engaged in an experience that influences their mindset and development in their most formative years.

In 2014, when Uxbridge mom and community leader Karen Spencer first heard about the GOTR curriculum, she knew that she wanted the program for her daughter. Karen got approval from GOTR headquarters to bring the program to Worcester. With the help of a few friends, including Katie Esposito, Karen was able to bring the program to 69 girls at three sites: Uxbridge, Gardner, and Northbridge.

GOTR Worcester grew. Karen became the full-time executive director, and GOTR hired Katie as a program coordinator. By 2020, 259 girls were registered for the spring program.

When schools closed just one week into the spring 2020 season, GOTR had to pause its program and refund their participants. But the skills that GOTR aims to teach—that is, how to develop confidence, self-awareness, and empathy for others—were essential. Karen and Katie were determined to keep GOTR Worcester alive.

Karen took a pay cut so that GOTR could keep their home office in Whitinsville. They raised funds with a virtual 5k and golf tournament, and in Fall 2020, GOTR was able to offer its program to nine teams and 92 girls, while modifying the curriculum to meet the CDC's guidelines. In the same season, GOTR's executive board held a fundraising campaign, where donations were matched by anonymous, private donors and triple matched by GOTR's national partner, adidas. By Spring 2021, GOTR was able to return to many of the schools that they were serving pre-lockdown. That season, 217 girls participated in GOTR's program.

Like the rest of Worcester County, GOTR endured another variant and another wave of restrictions. Then, GOTR Worcester received a \$29,000 pilot grant from the Women's Foundation of Boston—a gift that allowed us to offer scholarships to eight Worcester Public Schools teams. By Spring 2022, 369 girls returned to run with the program that helped them find connection and confidence. Thanks to the Women's Foundation of Boston, GOTR was able to fully recover its pre-pandemic participation.

The spring 2022 season proved to be pivotal for GOTR. Katie suggested that we host our end-of-season 5k at Polar Park. Thanks to a sponsorship from FLEXcon and our robust network of volunteers, we did. By September of the same year, we were able to hire a new program coordinator, Sarah Viadero, and by December, we welcomed Katie Bullied as our new Marketing Coordinator. Thanks to adidas, which again triple-matched our funds, our executive board's end-of-year fundraiser gleaned another \$36,000.

The Women's Foundation of Boston continues to show their support for our council. They've since granted GOTR Worcester another \$80,000 for the 2022 - 2023 fiscal year, forging a relationship that has elevated GOTR Worcester's commitment to diversifying our participants, coaches, and board members.

"They believe in the human capital component of this," says Karen. "They're somebody that believes in our work, and they know that resources are not as plentiful here in Worcester as they are in Boston."

In addition to the funds we received from the Women's Foundation, we've also accepted gifts from the United Way of North and South Central Massachusetts—funds which help us provide scholarships to girls who may not otherwise be able to participate.

With the generosity of our partner's and Worcester's spirit of inclusion, GOTR has achieved its latest milestone: for this fiscal year, GOTR will serve 71 teams,



Above: Participants pose after the December 2022 Girls on the Run 5K at Assumption University.



Above: Runners pose after the Girls on the Run 5k at Polar Park.



Above: Runners in the final stretch of the Girls on the Run 5K in December 2022.

240 coaches, and a total of 1,008 girls.

GOTR councils across the nation have struggled to regain the participants that they lost during the pandemic. Karen, Katie, and the rest of the GOTR Worcester team continue to see their numbers increase.

"We hustled," Karen says—and anyone who visits the office in Whitinsville will sense the palpable energy that fuels the GOTR team. But Karen and Katie attribute much of their success to the community of Worcester.

"We've solidified these relationships," says Katie, who is now GOTR Worcester's Program Director. "Whether it's with parents, whether it's with coaches, or whether it's with funders. Our council has a unique relationship with Worcester."

Worcester—a city of grit, vibrance, and diversity—is in many ways the ideal place for a program like GOTR to thrive. Our council continues to receive funding that allows us to offer more scholarships to girls who otherwise may not be able to participate in the program. Thanks to a recent grant from Rite Aid, we're now able to translate our documents and marketing materials into multiple languages so that we can serve girls who represent many communities in Worcester. We're building a network of new board members, coaches, and volunteers, so that the girls we're serving see themselves represented in the adults who serve them.

It's an opportune time for Worcester, and it's an opportune time for GOTR Worcester.

GOTR Worcester is happy to again host our Spring 5k on Saturday, June 10, at Polar Park—a central location where we can honor our city and where girls can feel seen in their community. Between our participants, coaches, families, volunteers, and community runners, we're expecting over 2,000 people to attend.

Interested in running, volunteering, sponsoring, or coming to cheer us on? You can find out more at gotr-worc.org/5k. You can also visit <https://www.gotr-worc.org/donate> to contribute to our growing council that helps girls thrive.

NATIONAL BASEBALL POETRY FESTIVAL A BIG HIT FOR WORCESTER

by **CAITLIN LUBELCZYK**, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

On the weekend of April 28th, Worcester witnessed another first: The birth of the National Baseball Poetry Festival. The brainchild of Biondolillo Associates, Inc. founder, Steven Biondolillo, the National Baseball Poetry Festival gathered a group of community leaders and organizers, and in just nine short months, put together a weekend-long festival that welcomed baseball poets from across the United States.

The weekend began with a Welcome reception hosted by the organizing committee in the DCU Club at Polar Park. The speaking portion began with the reading of a piece from Ernest Thayer’s ‘Casey at the Bat’ by Worcester Poet Laureate, Oliver de la Paz. Thayer penned the popular piece of American literature from his home on Temple Street in Worcester. As de la Paz read, Casey impersonator, Devon Kurtz moved and mimed as if he were up at bat and motioning to a crowd in the stands. He was a hit amongst guests. The crowd was then welcomed to Polar Park by Dr. Charles Steinberg, and Smiley (the popular WooSox mascot) and was treated to a poem written by Steinberg about Smiley.

An important piece of the festival was a poetry contest that was promoted to local elementary school students, college students, and adults. Spearheaded by Worcester School Committee members Molly McCullough and Jermaine Johnson, and Festival Committee member and WPS teacher Sarah Connell Sanders, the student poetry contest received over 80 submissions. The adult contest received 95 submissions. The contests were judged by the WPI Writing Club, Bruja, Victor Infante, and Baseball Bard founder Mark Sickman.

The winners were all acknowledged at the Welcome reception, and Superintendent Rachel Monárrez read the names of all twenty students and their poem titles. The next day, on the Berm at Polar Park, thirteen of the twenty students recited their poems surrounded by friends and family, and then gathered on the field for a photo opp with Smiley and Roberto the Los Wepas Rocket. At 4pm that same day, Tim Loew, the Executive Director of Mass DiGi, and National Baseball Poetry Festival Executive Committee Member, threw out the first pitch for the WooSox/ Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders game. Finally, that evening, Saturday, April 29th, baseball poets gathered at four separate locations in the Canal District and Green Island Neighborhood to participate the festival’s Open Mic Night. The District Wood Fired Kitchen, Lock 50, Electric Haze, and Steel & Wire, all hosted the baseball bards and visiting poets, some who came as far as California, for an intimate night of baseball, poetry, baseball poetry, and camaraderie.

The festival couldn’t have been possible without the generous sponsors who signed on for this inaugural event, Avidia Bank, Baystate Savings Bank, Eppinger Family, United Way of Central MA, George & Cybil Fuller Foundation, WPI, College of the Holy Cross, UMass Chan Medical School, The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Discover Central MA, Biondolillo Associates, Inc., The Worcester Red Sox, and Baseballbards.com.



Above: National Baseball Poetry Festival founder Steven Biondolillo poses with City Councilor Sean Rose, LABO President Elizabeth Cruz, CEO & President Tim Murray, WooSox President Dr. Charles Steinberg, poet Karen Sharpe, and Worcester Public Library Executive Director Jason Homer during the March Press Conference.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bill Ballou	Jermaine Johnson	Tim Murray*
Nigel Belgrave	Nick Kotsopoulos	Ryan Nesbit
Steven Biondolillo*	Tim Lahey	Judge Luis Perez
Joe Bradlee	Catherine Leary*	Amy Peterson
Eric Busenburg	Tim Loew*	Dave Peterson
Richard Burke	Caitlin Lubelczyk*	Phil Price
Tony Cashman*	Charisse Martinez	Jake Sanders*
Christine Cassidy	Molly McCollough	Sarah Sanders
Elizabeth Cruz	Monique Messier	Karen Sharpe
Joe Fusco Jr.	Thomas Murray	Jen Toland
Tim Garvin		

**denotes executive committee member*



Above: Students pose on the field with Smiley and Roberto.
Below: Casey at the Bat impersonator Devon Kurtz poses with WooSox President Dr. Charles Steinberg.

In Case You !! ! MISSED IT

Worcester Night Life Fall catalogue is online now.

Night Life programs provide lifelong learners opportunities to develop professional, personal, and financial skills for employment or just for the fun of it. Night Life hosts in-person classes evenings at Worcester Technical High School. Classes include workforce development programs such as welding, electrical, plumbing & allied health programs. We also offer hobby classes like knitting, cooking, and photography. Spark your passion or realize your potential at Night Life!





Food Hub Celebrates Graduation of Diverse Entrepreneurs Program

by **DAVID SULLIVAN**, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

WORCESTER - The Worcester Regional Food Hub celebrated the graduation of yet another Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs class on April 6. A class of 24 entrepreneurs - primarily people of color, immigrants, and women business owners - took eight weeks of classes with the Food Hub, learning the basics of how to start a food business.

Congressman Jim McGovern, Mayor Joe Petty, State Senators Michael Moore and Anne Gobi, and Representatives Dan Donahue and David LeBoeuf all were in attendance to congratulate the graduates.

The participating entrepreneurs took their business from concept to reality, taking weekly classes on accounting, business planning, HR basics, restaurant management, wholesale distribution, menu planning, and other essentials. As part of the program, they received their City of Worcester business permit, a food retailer license, ServSafe and Allergen Awareness food safety certifications, and a micro-grant of \$1,000 each.

Local small business incubator Entrepreneurship for All helped construct the curriculum and offered an opportunity for the participants to join their program after graduation. Participants also receive help from volunteer mentors from SCORE and receive a free Chamber membership for a year.

The types of food represented in the graduating class included vegan Puerto Rican, Japanese, Pakistani/Indian halal, Venezuelan, Nigerian, Dominican, and a variety of pressed juice and smoothies, bakeries, and snack bars.

"Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity, you have empowered us to reach for our dreams," said Shannon Smith, co-owner of Simply Delight Baked Goods, a bakery focused on creative offerings of pound cakes, cookies, corn breads, and more.

The program was funded entirely by a Small Business Technical Assistance grant from Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC). MGCC has funded the Food Hub's Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs Program two years in a row, and as an agency provides grant funding to support small businesses across the state.

Previous Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs graduates have opened restaurants such as Belen Bakery on Main Street, Mint Kitchen & Bar on Maywood Street, and Unique Café on Cambridge Street, all owned by immigrant women and their families.

"We plan to continue this program in the future," said Food Hub Director Shon Rainford. "We have had so many success stories of business owners, particularly for people of color and immigrant entrepreneurs, and hope to continue giving people the means to build wealth for themselves and their families and contribute to a diverse local economy."

If you are interested in the planned 2024 Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs class, please contact the Food Hub at kitchen@worcesterfoodhub.org to be added to the mailing list for more information.



Above, Left: Pinch of Africa's Cynthia Amponsah with a display of her African cuisine.

Above, Right: Mayor Joseph Petty with Mark Borenstein, and his father, food entrepreneur Jeffrey Borenstein of Challahbat.

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WOOSOX OPENING DAY 2023

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT



Big Papi Comes to Worcester

WORCESTER – Fresh off their state championship, twelve North High basketball players stretched across the Polar Park baseball diamond from first base to third. It was the WooSox home opener on March 31 and each kid held a baseball ready to throw out the ceremonial first pitch to start off the 2023 baseball season. However, Sox public address announcer Ben DeCastro had a surprise for the young champs.

“And now please welcome three-time world series champion, **David Ortiz!**” To the amazement of the kids and the nearly 8,000 people in the ballpark, Big Papi, the Red Sox legend, emerged from the home team dugout wearing a Worcester Red Sox home white jersey. The crowd cheered with excitement. It was Ortiz’s first-ever visit to Polar Park and the Major League Baseball Hall of Famer knew how to make a dramatic entrance.

After about four minutes of hugging fans, taking selfies, signing autographs, and greeting other Red Sox legends like **Dennis “Oil Can” Boyd** and **Tommy Harper** on the field, the energized crowd saw Ortiz turn his attention to the pitching mound as he grabbed a mic.

“Hello everybody,” he said. He paused for another round of applause. “Thank you for the beautiful welcome. It’s an honor to be with you all. I’m sure you know I’m from the Dominican Republic, but I feel like I was born in New England.” He paused for another cheer. “Thank you for the support throughout the years. Let’s support the WooSox. (It’s) opening day, a beautiful day to play baseball. Go WooSox and God bless you all.” He then joined the state champs to throw out the first pitch.

The WooSox carried the momentum from the opening ceremony into the game by blasting the Syracuse Mets, 11-2. The Sox hit three home runs in the game, while Boston pitcher **Garrett Whitlock**, who was on the Worcester roster for a rehab stint, started the game and pitched four innings, giving up one run and striking out six on 75 pitches (50 strikes). Right-hander **Jake Faria** relieved Whitlock to pitch a scoreless fifth to earn the eventual victory.

The WooSox offense was powered by three homeruns, including a 491-foot two-run shot to right field in the bottom of the third by shortstop **David Hamilton**; a 409-foot two-run blast by leftfielder **Greg Allen** to cap off a four-run bottom of the fourth; and newly acquired designated hitter **Daniel Palka** hit a solo homer to center in the sixth.

BUILDING ON PAST SUCCESS

The WooSox created a lot of excitement during their first two seasons in Worcester. Opening day was extra special for the club. It represented the first time the WooSox started a season at Polar Park. They are now a perfect 3-0 in home openers. They also defeated the Mets in the first-ever game at Polar Park on May 11, 2021, and they beat the Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs on April 12, 2022, last season.

As of April 24, the Sox struggled out of the gate with a record of 8-12. In 2022, the WooSox finished with a winning record, 75-73. That was good for sixth place in the International League East and 10-games behind division (and eventual



Above: Red Sox legend David Ortiz visits Polar Park to help the WooSox kickoff the 2023 baseball season. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba

Below: Ortiz has fun before the first pitch the the state champion North High School basketball team.



Triple-A) champs, Durham.

Despite the slow start, the club is optimistic with the coaching staff back with the club for a second season. Fans can also look forward to new talented prospects on the roster this summer. The club is also implementing more fan-friendly events and activities and upgraded the ballpark amenities.

What's New Around Polar Park

The WooSox announced several new fan-inspired improvements this season. “We want Opening Day to be like Christmas Morning,” said Larry Lucchino, Chairman and Principal Owner of the WooSox. “We seek to unwrap these new gifts and show our fans that we continue to listen to their ideas and add innovations to this beautiful ballpark ... In 2021, we debuted the Berm in mid-season. In 2022, we activated Summit Street, and now in 2023, we are adding the Fan Deck. The ballpark continues to grow and evolve.”

The improvements are as follows:

- There is a new, large Fan Deck on Plymouth Street that provides “family-friendly” entertainment with three cornhole games, a stage for live music, and new menu items.
- Four canopies were added to provide shelter from rain, shade from sun, and warmth on cool evenings.
- The area, just beyond the Simply Orthodontics Berm, includes 36 tables and 175 seats in left-center field. The area will be accessible to anyone in the ballpark and is intended as an amenity for those with \$9 WooSox Loop tickets or \$8 Yaz tickets.
- To add comfort to some cool springtime games, the club added heaters throughout the concourse.

- New England clam chowder and authentic lobster rolls will now be available throughout the ballpark, and tacos will make their debut on “Taco & Tequila Tuesdays,” presented by Tequila Herradura, when fans can enjoy three tacos and a margarita for \$12.
- In addition, Polar Park will now add ticket booths at Gates B and C. Fans will now be able to pick up Will Call tickets or purchase tickets at all four gates (A, B, C, and D).
- Adding comfort to standing room, new drink rails at Craft Corner and on Summit Street will allow fans to set down their food and beverages while enjoying the game. Both areas are open to all fans and are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Five “Blue Woo Shuttles,” up from two, will provide free transportation from the many city lots and parking areas throughout downtown. The additions will help ensure regular and frequent pickups.
- For kids, a new swing set will add fun and activity to the 8th Hill behind the videoboard.
- To help ensure that fans do not miss a pitch, 42-inch televisions will be added to the main restrooms.
- Heeding multiple requests from fans, Polar Park’s in-seat service menu will expand to include chicken tenders and French fries.

Players to Watch in 2023

NEW AND RETURNING PROSPECTS

Righthanded pitcher **Bryan Mata** enters the 2023 season as the No. 5 prospect in the Red Sox minor-league system, according to Baseball America. Mata made his WooSox debut in 2022. He missed the entire 2021 season to recover from Tommy John surgery. Last season, he threw 83 innings across various levels, finishing up in Worcester and remaining in a starting role. The strikeouts and velocity returned following surgery. He was able to hit 100 mph on the gun but did show control trouble with 46 walks in 83 innings. Unfortunately, in his first 12 innings of the season, he has walked 12 batters, but it's still early and Mata has a lot of potential. He is a player to keep an eye on this summer.



Along with Mata, there are several other prospects to watch, including:

1. Lefty starter **Brandon Walters**, who was 3-3 with a 3.59 ERA, 0.90 WHIP in 11 starts between Portland (9) and Worcester (2). Opponents only batted .205 off him with 84 strikeouts to only seven walks in 72.1 innings.
2. Infielder **David Hamilton**, who spent 2022 with Double-A Portland, hit .251 (116-for-463) with 16 doubles, 9 triples, and 12 homeruns in 119 games. He led Double-A in steals (70) and tied for the lead in triples.
3. Infielder **Enmanuel Valdez**, who split last season between the Boston and Houston systems, hit .296 (148-for-500) with a .918 OPS, 92 runs, 35 doubles, 2 triples, 28 homeruns and 107 RBIs. He played in 44 games for Worcester and was named to the 2022 MLB Pipeline Prospect Team of the Year (1st Team) at 2nd base. He has a powerful bat but does need to improve his play in the field.
4. **Ryan Fitzgerald**, a versatile fielder who can play both the infield and outfield positions, while also showing some pop at the plate. He led Worcester in games (127) and RBI (72) and ranked second in runs (tied, 55), hits (99), doubles (26), and triples (4). He also hit 16 homeruns, while also being awarded Worcester's Community Spirit Award.
5. Finally, all eyes should be on **Marcelo Mayer**, who enters 2023 ranked as the Red Sox' best prospect by both Baseball America and MLB.com and as a top 10 overall prospect by each publication (No. 10, 9). He ranked by MLB.com as the No. 2 shortstop prospect in baseball and ranked by Baseball America as the Sox' top defensive infielder with possibly the best infield arm in baseball. Last season, he split time between Single-A Salem and High-A Greenville. He ranks high among Sox minor leaguers in OBP (7th, .399), SLG (6th, .489), OPS (3rd, .888), doubles (T-3rd, 30), walks (3rd, 68), extra-base hits (T-8th, 45), and runs (T-9th, 61). He recorded 28 multi-hit games while making 79 starts at shortstop between the two levels.

A Star Emerges for the Mass Pirates Despite Recent Struggles

The loss of starting quarterback **Alejandro Bennifield** has hurt the Massachusetts Pirates early this season. Bennifield was placed on short-term injury reserve with an undisclosed injury after week one. The Pirates started strong with two victories over the Green Bay Blizzard (55-41) and the Bay Area Panthers (59-52), however, the loss of Bennifield helped lead to defeats to the Frisco Fighters (56-39) and the Quad City Steamwheelers (49-44).

Despite the team's struggles, running back **Jimmie Robinson** has proven to be a standout for the Pirates this season. The budding star has rushed for 184 yards on 38 carries, an average of 4.8 yards a rush, and eight touchdowns. He has also become a threat in the kicking game with 308 yards on only 14 kickoff returns and two touchdowns.

The Pirates were fourth in the IFL Eastern Conference after four weeks.



Tracy Back as Skipper

Chad Tracy has returned for his second season as WooSox manager in 2023. Tracy, 37, was named as the second manager in Worcester Red Sox history on December 13, 2021. His job was not easy as the club made 213 player transactions last season and set a new all-time Red Sox Triple-A record for players appearing in a single season. The WooSox used 75 different players in 2022 (31 position players and 44 pitchers). Ironically, the 2021 WooSox set the previous mark of 72 different players (31 position players and 41 pitchers). That beat the 1995 Pawtucket Red Sox during a strike year when replacement players were used for the first few months of that season, and the 2006 PawSox who each employed 70 different players.

Under the guidance of Tracy, 28 different WooSox players were promoted to Boston during last season, most notably Brayan Bello, Triston Casas, Kutter Crawford, Jarren Duran, Rob Refsnyder, John Schreiber, Josh Winckowski, and Connor Wong. All these players made the Boston roster this season.

Prior to making his WooSox debut in 2022, Tracy spent the previous seven seasons (2015-21) in the Los Angeles Angels organization, including three as a minor league manager with Low-A Burlington (2015) and High-A Inland Empire (2016-17). He also he served as the Angels' Minor League Field Coordinator from 2018-21.



Paul Abbott is back for his third season in Worcester and his sixth season as a pitching coach in the Red Sox system. The former pitcher spent 11 seasons in Major League Baseball from 1990-2004. In 2022, WooSox pitchers were 9th in the league with their 4.40 ERA and finished over .500 for the second straight year. Sox pitchers allowed the fewest homeruns in all Triple-A baseball (117). Lehigh Valley allowed the second fewest (138).

In addition, Worcester used a Red Sox Triple-A record 44 different pitchers in 2022 and they set a new modern day Red Sox Triple-A franchise record for strikeouts in a season. WooSox pitchers were 2nd in the league with 1,411 strikeouts to better the previous record held by the Pawtucket Red Sox in 2018 (1,221 SO).

Boston Red Sox Hall of Famer **Rich Gedman**, who grew up on Lafayette Street in Worcester, also returns for his ninth season as Red Sox Triple-A hitting coach, the longest tenure of any Triple-A hitting coach in franchise history. Last season, Worcester batters were 15th in the league with a .246 average and seventh with 181 homeruns.

Gedman has been a hitting coach in the Red Sox minor league system since 2011 when he worked for the Lowell Spinners (short-season A). In 2012 he served in that same role for the Salem Red Sox (high-A), and in 2013 and 2014 he was Portland's hitting coach. His coaching career began as bench coach for the North Shore Spirit of the Can-Am Independent League before he became manager of the Worcester Tornadoes in that same league from 2005-2010.

Gedman played for Boston for 11 seasons from 1980-1990. In 906 career games with the Red Sox, he hit .259 with 83 HR & 356 RBI. His best years came in 1985 (.295/18/80) and 1986 (.258/16/65), although he did hit a career-best 24 homeruns in 1984. He was selected twice as an American League All Star (1985-86).



Ensuring Economic Development Equals Community Development

by KAREN PELLETIER, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

For years before the COVID-19 health crisis, most business members of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce shared the same top concern—their workforce.

In response, the Chamber has made workforce development a key function of our services. For the past nine years, we have helped to build recruitment relationships between employers and area colleges and universities; worked 1-1 with employers to start or grow their internship programs; partnered with Worcester Public Schools on career and technical trainings like the Innovation Pathways Program and Worcester Night Life and have worked closely with other community trainers, employers and community agencies as a liaison to the business community.

One program seeing an amazing return on investment and offering life-changing career training for participants and much needed talent for employers is the Worcester Jobs Fund. The Chamber has served on the Jobs Fund oversight committee since its creation by the City Manager Edward M. Augustus in 2016. Currently chaired by the Chamber and Worcester Public Schools, the committee is comprised of representatives from MassHire Central Region Workforce Board, Worcester Community Labor Coalition, MassHire Central Career Centers, and Worcester Public Schools.

The Jobs Fund’s goal is to ensure that development projects and job expansion efforts in Worcester bring a direct benefit to Worcester residents in the form of jobs, free job training, and related services by preparing and connecting Worcester residents with living-wage employment.

Over the past eight years the Jobs Fund has been funded by the City and additional sources including SNAP Employment and Training; Outreach Partner,

Department of Transportation, Commonwealth Corporation Learn to Earn Grant, Workforce Competitive Trust Fund, among others.

For our trainings, we recruit local residents for anticipated job opportunities; especially talented individuals with previous obstacles to employment, including veterans, single parents, people of color, people with a past felony conviction, women, people with disabilities, and low-income residents.

The Worcester Jobs Fund training programs are free for selected participants. Through community outreach, the residents interested in these pathways are connected with local service providers for assistance with continued education, skill development, housing, food assistance, or health assistance before beginning the program. Applicants who are not accepted into the program are connected with local services or alternative employment opportunities as applicable.

We are currently recruiting for the following trainings:

The Worcester Building Pathways Pre-Apprenticeship Program allows exploration of trades of such as electrical, painting, roofing, carpentry, and more, to help prepare participants who are underrepresented in the building trades and prepare them for placement into a union apprenticeship program. Shane, who was previously working as a computer operator for a Mutual Funds Company, after completing Building Pathways is now earning \$18/hour as a first-year apprentice in the Painter’s Union.

The Jobs Fund has a CDL Class B 4-week training starting in July which can earn graduates starting wages of \$19/hour. Our graduates work at DPW, Polar Beverages, WRTA, Coca-Cola, and more.

Angel is a graduate of the Worcester Jobs Fund’s

School Bus Driver Training Program. Prior to starting his training he was a delivery driver for a pizza restaurant making minimum wage. He chose the School Bus Driver Training because he loves kids and was seeking a higher wage to provide for his family.

Angel was eager to start training and learn as much as he could in preparation for the road test. He was the first in his cohort to complete all the behind the wheel training and confidently passed his road test. He was commended by his instructor for his enthusiasm and passion. When asked about his experience he said, “This training changed my life. I can now support my kids, and I am saving to buy a house”.

Once he earned his CDL License, he was offered a position as a school bus driver for the Worcester Public Schools Bus Department. On average he works anywhere from 25-35 hours a week. His supervisor reports that he is a fantastic member of the team and they are very happy to have him. He is currently making \$30/hr.

This program supports the economic activities of the Chamber and our community by creating opportunity—especially for underserved communities, keeping jobs local, and supporting our businesses by providing access to a skilled workforce. The Chamber is proud of this program and our many collaborations. We believe that it can serve as a workforce development model for other communities and as a framework for collaborative solutions to complex problems.

If you would like more information about any of these training programs, reach out to Anh Dao at 508-373-7641 or DaoA@masshirecentral.com.





Thursday, June 15
7:00am-9:00am
Mechanics Hall

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

James Goldsberry
Keynote Speaker
Former Vice President of Engineering for Solid State Disk Drive development at Western Digital, and former VP at SanDisk

Presenting Sponsor:



with Cheif Greeter:
Greg Byrne



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SAVE THE DATE
**CRAFT BEER
FEST**

and Game Night

Thursday, July 13
5:30pm-9:30pm

Fitton Field
One College St
Worcester, MA 01610

Catch a game, try craft
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breweries, hear great
music, sample some
awesome food, and
take home a souvenir
glass.
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Hockey Returns to the DCU Center on Saturday, October 21st!



CMS Chamber Offers Golf, A Summer Clambake, and Night at the Woosox

by CHAMBER OF CENTRAL MA SOUTH

Join the Chamber of Central Mass for the annual **GOLF CLASSIC** on June 15th, a day of fun and friendly competition on the links at our local 18-hole championship golf course, Heritage Country Club in Charlton. Presented in a scramble format, the event features a continental breakfast, contests and spectacular raffle prizes, a cookout lunch and refreshments on the course, and a reception and dinner after play. Your participation supports the Chamber's Charities and Scholarship Fund. Sponsorship opportunities are available. The Chamber is grateful for the support of our **GOLF CLASSIC** sponsor, Cornerstone Bank, and our **GOLF CLASSIC LUNCH** sponsor, Karl Storz.

One week later, we feast! The **CMS Chamber Summer Outing** is a traditional New England Clambake at The Publick House Historic Inn in Sturbridge. The event takes place under the Garden Tent on the beautiful grounds of The Publick House on the evening of June 22nd, the first official day of summer! Beginning at 5:00pm with a cocktail hour with live music, the event includes a clambake buffet with juicy steaks, mouthwatering lobsters, and more tantalizing tastes of summer! Thank you to our sponsor, Country Bank!

On Friday, July 28th, join **CMS Chamber at Polar Park to watch the WooSox** take on the Rochester Red Wings! For \$50, you get access to JetBlue Hangar, our private party space, as well as an all-you-can-eat buffet for 2 hours! Join the party early for the National Anthem sung by CMS Chamber member Rita Schiano and stick around after the game for fireworks! Thank you to our sponsors, Michael L. Wales Painting and Paw Plaza!

Visit the Events calendar at cmschamber.org to find more details and info on registering for all of these events.



In Case You !!!
MISSED IT

Upcoming Affiliate Chamber Events

Webster -Dudley-Oxford Chamber of Commerce Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament Heritage Country Club Monday, June 5, 2023 8:30am	Clinton Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours Spruce Street Tavern Tuesday, June 20, 2023 5:00pm-7:30pm
Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce Information Sessions (Two) Tuesday, June 6, 2023 8:30am and 4:30pm	Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Roundtable Tuesday, June 27, 2023 8:30am-10:30am
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours Rushford & Sons Brewhouse Tuesday, June 6, 2023 5:30pm-7:30pm	Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Valley Business Network's "Networking at Night" Town House Tavern Thursday, July 20, 2023 5:30pm-7:30pm
Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting Tuesday, June 6, 2023 Cyprian Keyes Golf Club 6:00pm-8:30pm	Chamber of Central MA South Night with the Woo Sox Polar Park Friday, July 28, 2023 6:45pm
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce HR Roundtable Meeting Zoom Virtual Meeting Tuesday, June 13, 2023 9:00am-10:15am	Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Valley Business Network's "Networking at Night" Townhouse Tavern Thursday, August 17, 2023 5:30pm-7:30pm
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Valley Business Network's "Networking at Night" Town House Tavern Thursday, June 15, 2023 5:30pm-7:30pm	Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce Holden Days Holden's Main Street Saturday, August 26, 2023 9:00am-3:00pm
Chamber of Central MA South CMS Chamber Golf Classic Heritage Country Club in Charlton Thursday, June 15, 2023 8:00am-4:00pm	Auburn Chamber of Commerce Annual School-Business Golf Tournament Blackstone Valley Golf Club Monday, September 11, 2023 12:00pm-6:00pm

Save The Date
CLINTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
2nd Annual meeting
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2023
12:00PM-1:00PM
STERLING NATIONAL COUNTRY CLUB

Presenting Sponsor:

An experience you can bank on.

LABO Celebrates 6th Annual LABO Business Expo

The Latin American Business Organization (LABO) hosted their 6th annual LABO Business Expo at the DCU Center which featured a variety of different Latin businesses, Latin authors, women-owned, minority-owned businesses, and other organizations and companies.



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EARLY DETECTION IS KEY IN DIAGNOSING AND TREATING SKIN CANCER



by DR. NOVIKOV WELLNESS AND SKINCARE

You see your dentist for regular cleanings and your primary care doctor for an annual physical. May is Skin Cancer Awareness month and a great time to schedule your annual skin check. Skin cancer is typically the most treatable in its early stages and early detection is key.

It is easy to delay preventative appointments when there are no immediate concerns. A skin check appointment should not be one of those. In fact, it is important to see your skin care specialist to determine a baseline for what is normal for your skin. It will also give you a better understanding of your risk for developing skin cancer.

The American Academy of Dermatology notes

- 1 in 5 people will develop skin cancer
- Anyone can get skin cancer regardless of their skin color
- Men age 50+ are more at risk to develop melanoma

There are many things that add to your risk factors to develop skin cancer, such as

- Use of tanning beds
- Amount of sun exposure
- Family history of skin cancer

PERFORM SELF-SKIN CHECKS

It is very important to perform regular self-skin checks. Be aware of suspicious spots and skin changes with areas of itching and bleeding.

There are some areas of your body which are difficult to see on your own, like on your head or back and behind your ears. This is why a professional skin exam is important.



THE DERMATOSCOPE FOR SKIN CANCER TREATMENT

A Dermatoscope is a specialized handheld instrument, which consists of a magnifying lens and a polarized light. It is a non-invasive and painless way to examine your skin in detail. Suspicious growths or lesions that may not be visible to the naked eye can be identified. The dermatoscope helps to see the color, shape and structures beneath the skin's surface clearly.

- It can help to improve the accurate diagnosis and early detection of skin cancer.
- It may reduce the number of benign lesions excised.
- It helps to reduce the need for unnecessary biopsies.
- There are no risks in using the device; it can be used on all skin types and ages.

If the provider suspects skin cancer, the area of concern will be removed and sent to a lab to be looked at under a microscope. This procedure is a skin biopsy.

If the biopsy removes the entire tumor, it's often enough to cure basal and squamous cell skin cancers without further treatment.

Surgery ensures complete removal of the lesion, minimal chance of it returning, and allows for tissue analysis to ensure there is no abnormal or unhealthy tissue left behind. A local anesthetic is used for the patient's comfort.

PREVENTATIVE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

The easiest step is to protect your skin as much as possible. When outdoors use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least a SPF30 and don't forget to reapply. Risk factors, prevention steps, and concerns should be discussed at your appointment with a licensed practitioner.

Dr. Mikhail Novikov, MD is Board Certified by the American Board of Wound Management as a Certified Wound Specialist Physician (CWSP) for Novikov Wellness and Skin Care at 318 Main Street in Northborough. 508-936-1657. www.northborodoctor.com



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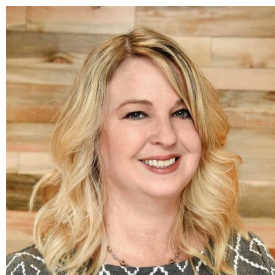


Get started today!

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kstimson@greaterworcester.org
Greaterworcester.org | 508.755.0980

The Warm Welcome of a Central MA Summer

by **MONIQUE MESSIER**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DISCOVER CENTRAL MA



From dining al fresco and neighborhood festivals to quiet campgrounds and fireside nights, nothing beats the warm welcome of a Central Massachusetts summer. Now’s the time to pack up and head out to these local favorites.

APEX ENTERTAINMENT

Apex Entertainment sits at the core of regional amusement, featuring 100,000 square feet of serotonin.

Think: luxury bowling, arcade games, a multi-level go-kart track, bumper cars, laser tag, glow-in-the-dark mini golf and sports simulators.

CORNERSTONE RANCH

Discover the local landscape from the highest point in Central Massachusetts. Princeton’s Cornerstone Ranch provides experiences like group and private lessons, yoga classes, riding in the ring and leisurely horse-drawn wagons.

THE ECOTARIUM ►

As an immersive museum concept, the EcoTarium marries indoor and outdoor learning to inspire a passion for scientific and nature-based education. With a digital planetarium, live animal habitats, several trails and a packed outdoor exhibit with areas for digging, building, climbing, and crawling, it’s a rare local gem for engaging even the pickiest of crowds.

THE FARM AT SUMMITWYNDS

Holden’s private hilltop acres are sure to stun visitors with panoramic views, rows of lavender plants, fields of horses, and sunflowers as far as the eye can see.

GREEN HILL GOLF COURSE

As one of the region’s “best kept golf secrets,” Green Hill embodies the beauty of its surroundings, plus uniquely challenging play for the pros.

HARDWICK VINEYARD & WINERY

Staple sips at Hardwick’s neighborhood vineyard include Baystate Blueberry, Massetts Cranberry and Strawberry Fields, with special events like Yoga in the Vines and locally sourced flavor pairings to complement.

INDIAN RANCH & SAMUEL SLATER’S ►

The summer concert series at Indian Ranch boasts a roster with the likes of Johnny Cash, Tammy Wynette, Willie Nelson, Blake Shelton and Brad Paisley—while the campground is open May through mid-October for seasonal enjoyment. On site, Samuel Slater’s Restaurant is serving up craft American food with French and Italian influences.

LOCAL LAKES

Lake Quinsigamond and Webster Lake are two of the most notable waterways to run through Central Massachusetts, the former known as an internationally recognized regatta course with accompanying picnic area, swimming beach, and tennis courts, and the latter as a tranquil natural asset for swimming, boating and kayaking.



NEW ENGLAND BOTANIC GARDEN AT TOWER HILL ▲

Make your way to Boylston for floral magic you won’t soon forget. With beautifully lined trails, New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill boasts a display of the finest carefully planned gardens and plant collections—with room for kiddos to run and explore the nature that lies within.

OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE ▼

A quick visit to Sturbridge will bring you back... to rural New England as it stood 200 years ago. Old Sturbridge Village, one of the nation’s largest outdoor history museums, is a total immersion into early American history through historic buildings and landscapes.



SALISBURY PARK

Take a stroll through Salisbury Park to witness the beauty of Bancroft Tower, a magnificent stone and granite structure erected in 1900 after George Bancroft.

◄ SOUTHWICK’S ZOO

As a Mendon staple, Southwick’s Zoo sits in the heart of the Blackstone River Valley, spanning 200 acres and housing animals in their naturalistic habitats. Lions, tigers, giraffes, chimpanzees, rhinos, and two-toed sloths are just a few of the creatures you can spend the day with at New England’s largest zoological experience, plus an on-site restaurant that remains open for diners year-round.

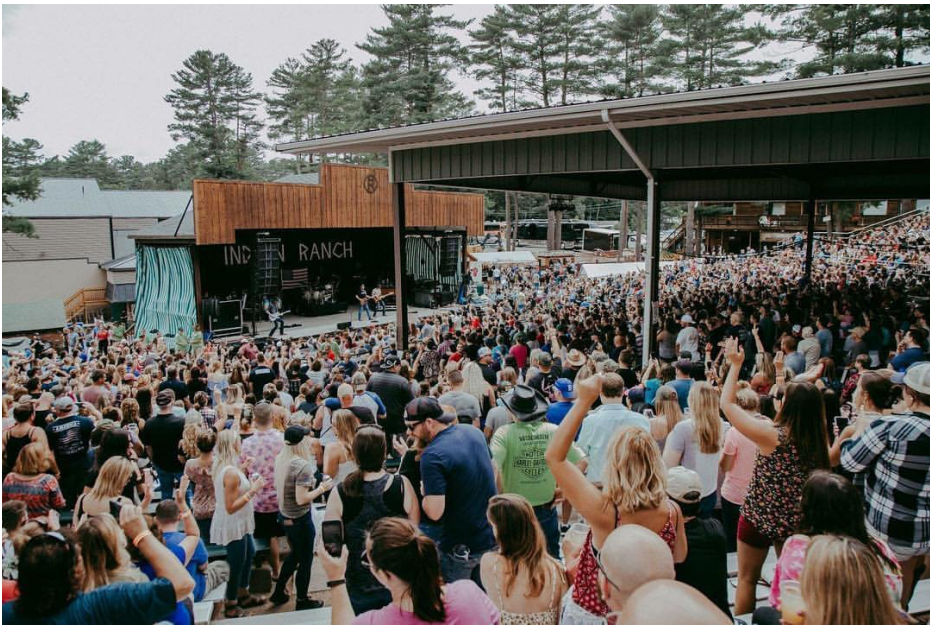
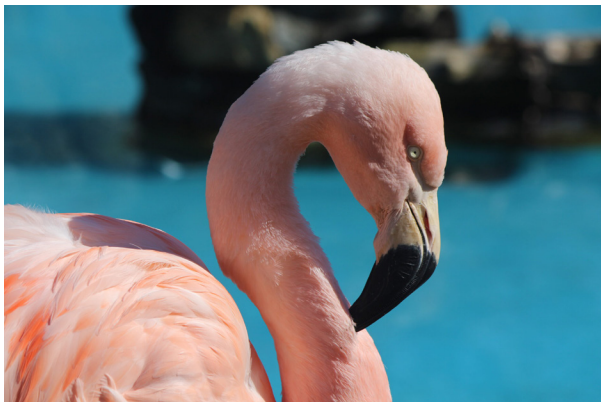
WORCESTER BEER GARDEN ▼



Worcester Beer Garden is Downtown Worcester’s biggest outdoor terrace, with beers on tap made right in the Heart of the Commonwealth, plus a carefully curated cocktail list. On Thursdays and Fridays, live music lights up the bustling patio alongside cornhole and neighborhood camaraderie.

Another sunny season is upon us in Central Massachusetts, where the days are long and the evenings are cool. Be sure to bask in all there is to see, feel, taste and experience.

Discover Central MA, the official Regional Tourism Council of Worcester and Central MA. Interested in becoming a member of Discover Central MA? Email Tim Power, Membership Success Coordinator at tpower@discovercentralma.org.



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