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Galaxy Life Sciences to Build Facility in The Reactory

JOINS WUXI BIOLOGICS IN FILLING THE BIOMANUFACTURING PARK & STIMULATING THE WORCESTER ECONOMY

Dominique Goyette-Connerty, Correspondent

It's full speed ahead for Worcester's newest biomanufacturing campus, The Reactory, after the new life sciences team at Webster-based Galaxy Development signed a land deal to build a state-of-the-art clinical and commercial manufacturing facility on six acres earlier this month.

Galaxy's purchase is the second transaction at the 46-acre, master-planned park in the last few months, following China-based WuXi Biologics' purchase to build their first U.S. production facility by 2022. With at least two of the eight pad-ready parcels at The Reactory now claimed, it won't be long before new biomanufacturing companies are welcomed to the city, joining the area's already-prominent life sciences ecosystem.

ABOUT THE REACTORY

The Reactory, which sits on a portion of land from the former Worcester State Hospital, is a direct product of the Baker-Polito administration's "Open for Business" initiative. Launched in 2016, the idea of the



Rendering of the future WuXi Biologics Manufacturing Building at The Reactory slated for a 2022 opening.

program was to find better uses for underutilized, state-owned assets across the Commonwealth.

After the Worcester and Westborough State Hospitals were merged to create a new, modern facility known as the Worcester Recovery Center in 2012, there was a surplus of land left on Belmont Street that was going unused. Worcester now had to decide what to do with it.

Former Massachusetts Biomedical Initiative (MBI) CEO Kevin O'Sulli-

van issued a white paper finding that, when it came to the life sciences field, the city was doing well in research and development (R&D) and incubation, but where the Worcester market was lacking was in biomanufacturing – almost nothing was being manufactured here which contributes to the pharmaceutical industry.

With this new call to focus for the region, the Baker-Polito administration formed a Biomanufacturing Task Force, led by Lieutenant Governor

Karyn Polito, to explore establishing a biomanufacturing hub in Worcester.

As the land is next to MBI and the UMass Memorial Medical Research Center, "We thought: 'Why not look at this surplus land to be the future home of a biomanufacturing park?' Then we could have it all right here. The whole cluster," said Craig Blais, president and CEO of the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC). In addition to this thriving

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Local Developers Clamor to Rejuvenate the James Street Corridor

By Sarah Connell Sanders, Correspondent

If you thought Worcester's economic development was limited to Polar Park, think again. While high profile projects in the Canal District have brought plenty of fanfare, a variety of other important ventures are quietly progressing across the city at this very moment. Take, for example, the James Street corridor.

Since the late 1990's, the City of Worcester and the Worcester Business Development Corporation have secured a number of grants from the Environmental Protection Agency and MassDevelopment to test and clean up brownfields. As mayor of Worcester from 2002-2007, Tim Murray was a huge proponent of brownfields redevelopment funding, the value of which cannot be understated for post-industrial cities like Worcester. Brownfields funding is often the initial financing source for

key milestones such as pre-development and site preparation. As loans are repaid, the brownfields redevelopment program continues to be recapitalized and propel additional projects in Worcester.

The practice of brownfields redevelopment has allowed builders to activate valuable sites once considered unsuitable for mixed-use projects. Along the James Street corridor, a \$1.25 million cleanup loan for Botany Bay Construction Co. made it possible to navigate asbestos abatement and remediation of the former five-acre site of Creative Paper & Packaging. The property, located at 261 Clover Street, had been without a tenant since 2011.

"The vacant, crumbling, concrete building is being demolished and will be replaced by 90 market-rate apartments," said Botany Bay Assis-

tant Manager, Cathy Lewis. "The new apartment complex will be called '175 James Street' and will be available for rent in the spring of 2021." Botany Bay Properties manages four apartment communities in Central Massachusetts, including Center Hill, Hemlock Harbour, Millbrook, and Botany Bay.

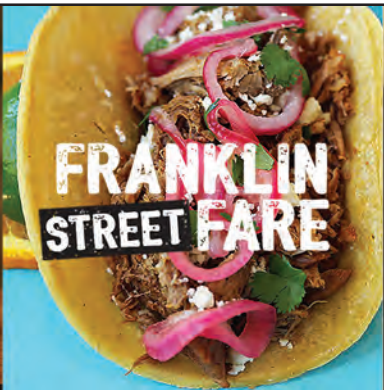
Just up the road from Botany Bay's new apartment complex, Galaxy Development has announced a 2.4-acre lot—the former site of Gatto's Greenhouses & Flower Shop—is destined for mixed-use retail by next year. "We were interested in that area for real estate because we liked the traffic count," said Galaxy founder Mike O'Brien, whose site spans from 29 to 49 James Street. "It's rare for one party to own so many houses on one piece of land in Worcester—we knew

it would be large enough for a good-sized project."

Lucky Pick Self Storage, which consists of more than 500 storage units, will open to the public in the spring of 2021. "COVID-19 put us on hold," explained O'Brien, "We'll pour the foundation by October and erect the facility in November." O'Brien also plans to open a 6,000 square foot retail and office space adjacent to the facility on James Street.

City Councilor Matthew Wally is pleased to see a great deal of new development taking place in District 5. "We understand that small businesses drive economic development in the city and we recognize James Street as a vital commercial corridor welcoming people into Worcester," said Wally. "As a City Councilor, I support private investment efforts

SEE DEVELOPERS, PAGE 9



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Important Decisions Regarding Commuter Rail on the Track

By Timothy P. Murray, Worcester
Regional Chamber of Commerce
President & CEO

Over the past 20 years, due to a coordinated effort and persistent advocacy at the local, state and federal levels, Worcester has made significant progress in expanding and improving MBTA commuter rail service for the benefit of Central Mass and Metro West residents.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE EXPANSION

The redeployment of MBTA assets, the purchase of additional locomotives and coach cars, and the historic acquisition of CSX railroad tracks and property including the Beacon Park Yard in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood of Boston, have all contributed to this expansion. In fact, it has resulted in a 46% increase in commuter rail ridership on the Worcester-Framingham line between 2012 and 2018. This increase reduces vehicle traffic on state roads and highways as well as automotive greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the ability to further build on this momentum and expand economic opportunity and mobility for Central Mass and Metro West residents hinges on some critical decisions that are now being debated on how state transportation officials will design and construct the Allston Multimodal Project as well as the proposed West Station.

FUTURE ACTIONS COULD INCREASE USAGE AND CREATE OPPORTUNITY

The Allston Multimodal Project involves the I-90 turnpike viaduct, which is more than 50 years old and which has serious structural deficiencies. The wear and tear of decades of intense vehicle traffic, design flaws which include the “S” curve near the Boston University bridge as well as storm water runoff into the Charles River all need to be addressed. This is complicated because the viaduct is an elevated highway over rail lines which are in close proximity to the river.

West Station is a proposed MBTA transit hub that would provide commuters from Central Mass, Metro West, the Allston neighborhood, and eventually Western Massachusetts, with direct train access to Kendall Square in Cambridge and then to North Station. West Station would also offer crosstown bus connections and would be the linchpin to the redevelopment of nearly 150 acres of land involving Beacon Park Yard and the abutting properties. This would be a massive economic development opportunity similar to Boston’s Seaport District or Somerville’s Assembly Row.

As it relates to the Allston Multimodal Project, the Chamber was supportive of the hybrid option originally put



forth by Secretary Pollock in January 2019. However, we believe this plan or an at-grade option, could balance the short and long-term transportation needs of Central Mass, Metro West, and Western Mass MBTA commuter’s and turnpike travelers, along with the neighborhood and appropriate pedestrian linkages and environmental safeguards.

Pertaining to the proposed West Station design and construction, the Chamber has advocated for the inclusion of four tracks to facilitate increased service on the Worcester Framingham line and access to the Grand Junction line into Kendall Square in Cambridge through to North Station.

The Grand Junction line was also purchased by the State from CSX in 2012 by the Patrick-Murray Administration. Additionally, West Station must provide crosstown bus connections for current and future residents and commuters and workers of the Allston-Brighton neighborhood that will expand with the redevelopment of Beacon Park Yard and the adjacent properties.

The expansion of the MBTA commuter rail has fueled economic development in Worcester and all along the rail corridor including most recently downtown Framingham. Lieutenant Governor Polito has championed efforts at the state level to have a new center platform at Union Station constructed, which will improve train travel times and potentially add a few more daily trips, which will contribute to this momentum.

WE MUST GET IT RIGHT

However, if we are to realize the vision of 30 to 40 daily trips which will provide half hour service in and out of Union Station in Worcester and South Station in Boston, as well as points in-between, we must make sure that Allston Multimodal Project and West Station are built correctly.

The Chamber will continue to work with our federal, state and local leaders and like-minded organizations to realize this vision.

CLARIFICATION: The May 2020 article, “Trolley Yard on former site of WRTA maintenance facility now a bustling center of commerce,” discusses Worcester’s second Bean Counter Bakery location on Grove Street. *In addition to the Highland Street location, Bean Counter’s Shrewsbury cafe also remains open.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PLEASE NOTE
All events are
VIRTUAL unless
otherwise noted.

August

- 18 (ENGLISH) Webinar: Small Business STRONG
- 19 (SPANISH) Webinar: Small Business STRONG
- 19 POW Meetup - Bring Health & Balance to Your Life
- 20 Business After Hours
- 25 Young Professionals Night Out

September

- 3 The Breakfast Club
- 8 Webinar - Top 10 Practices for Online Learning
- 9 Seminar Series: Protect Your Business from Hackers
- 9 Financial Services Roundtable
- 10 Diverse Professional Roundtable
- 15 Seminar Series: Hiring Best Practices
- 16 Healthcare Roundtable
- 19 POW Meetup - Natural Ways to Boost Immunity
- 17 MEGA Business After Hours w/ Corridor 9 Chamber
- 22 Power of Women - Panel Discussion
- 22 Startup Worcester Winners Reception
- 23 Seminar Series: Cómo Crear y Liderar un Negocio Exitoso
- 29 HR Roundtable: Employers & Autism Spectrum Disorder

October

- 1 BAH Awards
- 7 Manufacturing Roundtable: Going Mobile in Manufacturing
- 9 Woostapreneurs Forum
- 14 Seminar Series: Employment Law
- 20 Power of Women - Culinary Wine Tasting
- 19-22 Game Changers - Business Conference and Expo
- 21 Seminar Series: TBA
- 22 Business After Hours
- 28 Webinar: Paid Medical Leave Act

November

- 3 Seminar Series: Developing a Strong LinkedIn Brand
- 5 HR Roundtable: Expanding Your Recruitment Pool
- 10 Power of Women - Dr. Maddie Castiel, Owner - Cafe Reyes
- 12 Diverse Professional Roundtable
- 12 BAH Tri-Chamber Veterans Networking Event
- 16 Worcester Women’s Leadership Conference
- 17 Seminar Series: Leadership
- 18 Financial Services Roundtable
- 19 Business After Hours
- 19 Healthcare Roundtable

December

- 4 145th Annual Meeting
- 10 The Breakfast Club
- 15 Seminar Series: How Influencers Capture Attention
- 17 Business After Hours

REACTORY, FROM PAGE 1

biotech and life sciences community, as the second largest city in New England, Worcester’s location and accessibility – near a number of major highways, railroads, and airports, and just about an hour to the Cambridge-Boston area – was yet another attractive selling point for the park.

With that, the Economic Development Coordinating Council (EDCC) – consisting of the WBDC, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, the City of Worcester, and MBI – submitted a joint proposal for the project and was selected and approved by the state as the first project for the “Open for Business” initiative. The WBDC was to take title of the property and handle the real estate development aspect; the city would take care of the needed infrastructure for the park-like the roads and sewer; the Chamber and MBI were responsible for recruitment efforts, attracting new companies to occupy The Reactory.

Bearing expenses for all the pre-development costs, the WBDC acquired the land from the state, developed a master plan, changed the zoning, went through the entire permitting process and designed a new public road for The Reactory. They also received a \$15 million grant to legally demolish old state hospital buildings on the property.

WUXI BIOLOGICS BREAKS GROUND, ANCHORS PARK

Construction of The Reactory underway, the WBDC got word of a Chinese-headquartered company to recruit. While former parent company WuXi Apttec already had business

operations and R&D facilities in the U.S., independent company WuXi Biologics was looking to build their first U.S. biomanufacturing facility in the Northeast. In competition with other potential sites in the country, the WBDC submitted a proposal, and WuXi Bio signed on in 2018 to be the first tenant at The Reactory, bringing their global drug substance manufacturing facility to Worcester.

Just this past June, the contract manufacturer broke ground on the two-story, 107,000 sq. ft. facility which is expected to be operational in 2022.

Though they now also have locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, WuXi Biologics’ Director of Manufacturing Shawn Fitzpatrick says part of the reason why they chose Worcester was for its central location and access to an educated workforce. “It was important for WuXi Biologics to identify a location rich in talent and regionally-located in an area that’s strong in biotech,” Mr. Fitzpatrick said, citing Massachusetts’ strength in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and the East Coast’s abundance of potential clients.

Mr. Fitzpatrick also said the company saw the open space at The Reactory as “an opportunity to engage with the world-class institutions in the area.” With approximately 35,000 students attending the nine colleges and universities inside city borders alone, he says they “can be used as a feeder pool for talent,” which is exactly what WuXi Bio plans to do.

WuXi Bio’s Worcester facility will bring between 150 and 200 new jobs to the area across a diverse spectrum of sectors. A variety of skill sets will be needed to fill everything

from entry-level to very-experienced positions, including roles in quality control, warehouse support, process development, engineering, and administration.

WuXi Bio is already working with these local higher education institutions on how students can be job-ready upon graduation; meanwhile, they’re also collaborating with Worcester Night Life Continuing Education, which has established a new biomanufacturing program for adults to start this fall in anticipation of the available jobs in the industry.

Based at Worcester Technical High School, Worcester Night Life Director Liz Tiley says the program will “utilize state-of-the-art equipment to implement both classroom teaching and hands-on practical training,” as they continue to focus on helping “close the occupational workforce skills gap in the Central MA region,” and “fulfill the critical emerging needs of our current world.”

Ms. Tiley says Night Life is “really excited to offer this short-term, affordable training program,” and “establish the foundation for an entry-level workforce pipeline into this industry.”

And for those who aren’t already local students or Worcester residents, the city is aiming to retain the employees recruited by WuXi Bio. Since the city awarded them a 20-year Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plan, the company agreed to provide a housing incentive: if the employees they hire buy a home in Worcester, WuXi Bio will pay up to \$5,000 toward their down payment.

Calling The Reactory a “strategic plan to build upon the successful life sciences cluster in Worcester,” the

City’s Chief Economic Development Officer, Peter Dunn, says the partnership with WuXi Bio on this tax exemption is part of the city’s efforts to keep as much of the resulting economic activity and development from this park in the area.

GALAXY GETS IN

Joining anchor tenant WuXi Bio, Galaxy Life Sciences announced the second land purchase at The Reactory, with plans to build an estimated \$50 million, 95,000 sq. ft. flexible facility. The potentially multi-tenanted building will be designed to house biotechnology and/or pharmaceutical companies, built to suit their needs.

While the quarter-of-a-century old New England developer has historically specialized in office, retail, mixed-use, and residential developments, this land acquisition is Galaxy’s first break into the life sciences development business – making their mark in the state’s already healthy industry with the creation of the Galaxy Life Sciences arm.

In a press release announcing the land deal, Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito says, “The Commonwealth continues to be the global leader in life sciences, powering growth and life-changing innovation. The continued development of The Reactory serves to strengthen that position.”

The WBDC continues to work with the City of Worcester on all necessary infrastructure updates and construction surrounding The Reactory, and, upon completion, Galaxy says they’re considering future development opportunities on other lots in the biomanufacturing park.


SEE REACTORY, PAGE 13



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Why I Wear My Mask

By Alex Guardiola, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy



I wear it because I care about you and I care about me.

We are in the midst of a pandemic that we haven't seen the likes of in more than 100 years. On top of this crisis, we are also dealing with the impact of centuries of racism. In some ways, it feels as if we are going back in time.

Divided or Together: A Choice

There is a divisive atmosphere emanating from Washington, D.C. which does little to help address the health and economic crisis we find ourselves in.

Since COVID-19 hit and forced companies to close their doors, the Chamber has pivoted and used all of our resources to help businesses recover. I have learned more about the U.S. Small Business Administration than I ever thought I would. I have digested reams of paper, put in hundreds of hours of screen-time, so that it has become second nature to me. All so that our businesses and our community have the most up-to-date information curated by the Chamber.

I am deeply saddened for those businesses who will not make it to the other side of this pandemic but also gratified by the number of companies that we have helped. Information that we provided about grants and loans, PPE supplies, reopening information, and many other services that we have provided have made a difference.

The Central Mass. community banking industry worked many extra hours, day and night, to assist businesses with Paycheck Protection loans and are now in the midst of helping them obtain loan forgiveness. They have done this regardless of party lines, politics, or the upcoming election.

We must all continue to work together, something that Central Mass. already has a reputation for doing and for which we can be proud. At this crucial time, let us remember to continue on this path because, now more than ever, we need to tackle this together.

Set an Example for Our Youth

Our children, who need the most attention as they grow and mature, are suffering. There are no sports, no play dates, and watching their parents on Zoom has become a way of life for them.

How can I help? I wear my mask. I try to safely support as many local establishments as I can. We cautiously visit restaurant dining rooms, socially distancing while wearing a mask, and greeting friends with a nod and an elbow bump.

Opening doors is crucial to our economy but we must minimize the risk! We are fortunate to live in a region with some of the best healthcare in the nation. Eventually, there will be a vaccine. But in the meantime, let's all set an example for our children, and along the way protect their grandparents, parents, and even them. The coronavirus does not discriminate by age.

The Science Says it All

Turning on the television to see people ignoring doctors and scientists, some thinking it can't happen to them, is nothing less than cringe-worthy. There are even those who believe the virus to be a hoax. To them I pose this: Whether you believe it or not, please wear your mask if not for yourself, for all of us...especially our children.

We are all in this together and it is up to all of us to rebuild our communities and our economies. Take a long walk, pick up a book, order take out and watch a movie with loved ones. It's time that we work together to beat this killer virus.

A New Look at an Old Problem

Every fall we discuss tax classification and the city's rate-setting vote. Fortunately for tenants, the governor has extended the moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, but what does that mean for owners of these commercial buildings?

For some businesses, COVID-19 has proven that some employees can work for home, effectively rendering their office space non-essential. If there was ever a time for real dialog about commercial tax rates - it is now.

These businesses are suffering, yet they are still asked daily for donations, sponsorships, and other forms of assistance - and they are still stepping up.

They need our help and we can provide it. By opting for fair and equitable tax rates, where we all share the cost of running a city, we can put down our swords and shields and help Worcester continue to grow.

It is my sincerest hope that this time next year, we will be talking about the great WooSox game we just saw at Polar Park while munching on a hot dog with those who love this community as much as I do.

To get there, we must overcome the heartache of racism and the fear caused by the pandemic. The best way to do this is together. The City of Worcester has it in her and so do you.

I will continue to wear my mask for you and for our future.



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Njoroge on Home Healthcare, the Pandemic, and Racial Justice

By Sharyn T. Williams, VP of Marketing, Communications, Programs, and Events, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

In this interview with the founder and CEO of Century Homecare, Milka Njoroge, she talks about healthcare during the pandemic and racial equity. As an immigrant from Kenya, a developing country with limited opportunity, the adjustment to a fast-paced culture with such abundance was an adjustment that took time and offered many contradictions.

Where did you grow up and how did you end up in Worcester?

I grew up in Kenya and moved to the states in 2001 to be with my now husband, also from Kenya who had taken a job in Boston. I went to MCPHS University, Worcester Campus, earning a PharmD degree and took a job at UMass where I worked for 8 years.

How does the fact that you are an immigrant influence your perspective on healthcare?

Growing up, I would never have imagined the healthcare resources available in the US. Despite the many resources, there are many populations that do not have the same access to health services. My focus is to address barriers to health care access by partnering with families and healthcare providers to build a patient-focused community around each patient. Increased access to care improves quality of life and is overall cost effective for the healthcare system.

You hold a PharmD and had a successful career in pharmacology with a specialty in cardiac care. What made you decide to start Century Homecare?

While I worked in the in-patient setting, we would see the same patients coming to the hospital over and over again. Most of the patients had chronic conditions that were not well managed and at times presented with severe complications. Many of the patients were from underserved populations - mainly low-income population, minorities, immigrants, marginalized communities, etc. At the time, we did some research that showed that most agencies focused on patients who needed short term post-acute care. We therefore saw an opportunity to assist patients manage their chronic illnesses by providing holistic, culturally competent care. What is different about the services that Century Homecare provides? In other words, how do you differentiate your services in the crowded industry of caring for patients at home? We have a significant focus on a holistic approach to supporting our

patients. A high percentage of the patients we service have other social economic factors that impact their health- like access to food, transportation for their medical appointments, have mental health illnesses that affect their decision making, etc. Our clinicians not only focus on the medical needs, but also assess and coordinate with other community resources to address all these other needs.

Your home health services company has their home office in Worcester. Why did you select the city and how did you select your other two locations in Springfield and Brockton?

I had gone to school, lived and worked in Worcester. We saw the opportunity in Worcester to provide home health care to an underserved population. In addition, Worcester has the 2nd highest concentration of hospitals and health care facilities in the state, has lower cost of living making it economical to operate a business. The City was also very helpful in assisting us get a facility. We selected the other 2 locations based on the demographics of patient we wanted to serve.

How many professionals work for the organization and how would you describe your staff's background, credentials, areas of expertise and specialties?

We have about 250 staff at our 3 locations. Our team is diverse and includes nurses, therapists (Speech, Occupational, Physical), social workers and home health aides. We believe in investing in our staff when able and have in the past provided opportunities for our staff to advance their education. Through a partnership with Quinsigamond Community College, we provided scholarships

for home health aides to become LPNs resulting in more opportunities and higher income. I believe education is key to many advancement opportunities and will continue to look for ways to invest in our staff.

The past several months has seen a health care crisis and the culmination of centuries of racism and oppression in the black community. How has this affected you personally? What actions, if any, has Century Homecare taken as a result?

Our frontline staff faced the pandemic with courage, focusing on patient care even when that put their safety at risk. I recently saw an article in Forbes that said that home health agencies have probably not gotten the credit they deserve, and I agree. Even with the lockdown, we have found

ways to ensure that patients receive the care they need. Between caring for their own families, worrying about their own safety, limited PPE availability, and many other obstacles, our staff has performed with utmost professionalism and with care. Overall, we have had very few of our staff or patients develop COVID-19. A lot of credit goes to our staff's focus on daily symptom assessment and patient education. Taking the time to educate ourselves and our patients about safe practices amid the pandemic and following those best practices, in addition to providing our staff with PPEs has been critical.

We did not lose staff during the pandemic and am happy about that. Century provided emergency paid sick leave for staff members affected by COVID-19. This helped support our staff so that they did not have to choose between their health and providing for their families.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the industry and what has Century Homecare done to mitigate the impact?

The pandemic has highlighted the critical role that home care plays in healthcare. At Century, we are rethinking how we work, focusing on

efforts to better serve our patients and support our staff. In the short-term, our focus will be on safety by ensuring that we have PPEs as fall approaches; being innovative and streamlining how we deliver care and continuing to focus on staff wellness, engagement & appreciation.

As a woman of color, how has racism affected you, and in particular, racial justice and the recent black lives matter movement?

I never had trouble sleeping until the pandemic and the racial injustice demonstrated by the horrible events of May 25th. As a mother of a daughter and two sons, that video may have impacted me more than I had been aware. As a family, we've had some difficult conversations with the kids about race and growing up in America. My 11-year old son whose best friend is white could not understand why someone would be treated differently because of their skin color. Through his eyes, I can see the innocence of a child but as a mother, I worry about his safety. The ongoing racial justice movement, however, gives me hope that people are ready for change.

As a CEO, it was important that our staff know our stand. We started having genuine conversations with our staff in June. You don't know what you don't know...so our approach is to listen and ask questions. As an organization we reviewed how we are structured and how we do business. We discussed our responsibility in promoting social justice. As individuals, it is having practices, attitudes and actions that promote equal opportunity and treatment for all people. As an organization, it is ensuring that no biases are built into our policies and procedures. It is also advancing practices, attitudes and actions that promote equal opportunities and treatment for all people. In addition, it is partnering and supporting other organizations whose missions align with promoting racial justice.

I understand that Century Homecare gives back to the community. What organizations do you support and in what ways?

We support organizations whose mission align with ours- we believe in promoting education and access to healthcare. Some of the organizations we support include African Community Education (ACE), Summer programs for kids in Worcester, Worcester Senior Centers, etc.



bankHometown Grant Challenge

By Sharyn T. Williams, VP of Marketing, Communications, Programs, and Events, Worcester Regional Chamber

On June 11, bankHometown President and CEO Robert J. Morton announced a \$25,000 challenge grant to the Chamber to help sustain its programs and services in support of local businesses, including those negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The bank pledged to match dollar-for-dollar all donations made to the Chamber by members of the business community through Labor Day, up to \$25,000. With local businesses particularly hit hard by the sustained economic shutdown, Morton noted that the Chamber had continued to support the local business community throughout the pandemic while experiencing its own loss of funding from the cancellation of events and revenue-generating programs along with fewer new members joining and attrition due to business hardships and closures. "The Worcester Regional Chamber's outreach and

support of local business owners has become even more critical in these times of hardship and economic downturn," Morton said. "bankHometown is pleased to make this funding commitment to help ensure the Chamber's services can continue to support our local business community in these difficult times." "We are grateful to bankHometown for recognizing the work the Chamber has done to support local businesses, especially during this pandemic," Murray said. "We appreciate this generous donation to help us continue to provide those services to the business community." Organizations contributing to the Chamber can double the impact of their donations through this matching grant. Contributions may be sent to the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, 311 Main St., Suite 200, Worcester, MA 01608 or WorcesterChamber.org/DONATE.



bankHometown President and CEO Robert J. Morton and Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Timothy P. Murray.

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Ambiance, Craft Cocktails, Local Beer, Wine in the Heart of Webster

By John Milas, Executive Director, Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce

Have you been to Webster, Mass. lately? If not, you need to go. This mostly overlooked, historic town on the Connecticut line is home to the newest place to be in Central Mass. – Stave & Still. Located at 131 Main Street in Webster, at the intersections of Main and School Streets near the Dudley line, the new watering hole features more than 150 types of craft spirits including an extensive collection of rare bourbon, whiskey, and rye. Not your average drinking hole, Stave & Still is an upscale, yet approachable speakeasy-style lounge focused on craft spirits and beer, hand-crafted cocktails, a boutique wine selection and “farm to table” light fare. Cocktails are made with homemade bitters, shrubs, fresh ingredients and garnishes that resemble modern works of art. General manager, Craig Valby, brings nearly 30 years of experience in the beverage industry to create a dynamic wine list comprised of the core varietals from boutique wineries that are known for their elevated quality and conservative production. He has also sourced craft beer from

local and regional breweries to create a well-rounded and comprehensive drink list for all who partake. Fresh, locally sourced ingredients, in-house brewed bittering agents; tinctures and old-world techniques are the key to a truly balanced and quality cocktail. Be prepared to learn more than you could imagine about craft spirits and boutique wines from their knowledgeable staff and comprehensive “Imbibable Bible.” Stave & Still is centered around putting a modern twist on classic favorites to create a sophisticatedly welcoming space. The “Big Ass Meatball” is nothing to scoff at, and the charcuterie board offers a variety of local cheeses, organic meats, and honey from local apiaries. Be sure to save room for dessert, especially the liquid kind such as their Boozy Chocolate Milk Shake. Their dessert selections include a Death by Chocolate cake, the Cookie Monster, and It’s Like Bread Pudding, But Not. Stave & Still brings an historical Webster building back to its original character while adding a modern and inviting feel to the space.

Exposed brick from the 1800s, a reclaimed wood-faced bar, visible copper pipes, and an assortment of eclectic art and conversation pieces creates a unique place to kick back and relax. Clustered soft seating, a copper-topped bar, and comfortable banquettes lends itself to quiet conversation or jovial interaction with new or old friends. The adjacent outdoor patio conjures up a vision of a Napa Valley backyard, complete with soft lighting and comfortable seating. Stave & Still sources fresh, seasonal, local ingredients that is incorporated into each menu item and their hand-crafted cocktails. Florida-based event producer turned small-town Massachusetts restaurateur, Jessica Valby is the owner of Stave & Still and hopes to bring further revitalization and growth to the Main Street Webster area. “There is so much opportunity to turn Main Street into a true dining and shopping destination. Anything we can do to further that growth, we will do.” As an event producer, Jessica is intent on creating a memorable experience in her restaurant, similar to

what guests see at an upscale event. “People don’t remember the color of the linens or the chairs, or the type of flatware used; they remember how they felt. That’s exactly what Stave & Still is looking to create – a positively memorable experience.” The grand opening took place on Tues., August 4. Reservations are strongly recommended due to capacity limitations imposed by COVID-19 precautions. Reservations can be made by phone or email at: EatandDrink@TheStaveandStill.com or 508.943.1933.



LOCATION AND HOURS

Stave & Still, located at 131 Main St. in Webster can be found online at www.TheStaveandStill.com. Their hours of operation are: Tues. – Thurs. from 11 am – 9 pm, Fri., and Sat. from 11 am – 10 pm, Sun. from 11 am – 4 pm with brunch served on Sat. and Sun. from 11 am – 4 pm.

Paycheck Protection Loan Program Update

By Alan Osmolowski, CPA, blumshapiro

On July 3, 2020, the President signed an extension of the small business loan Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) into law. The law extends the deadline to apply for a PPP Loan from June 30, 2020, to August 8, 2020. There is still approximately \$130 billion in PPP loan funds available and many lenders are still accepting applications. The extension follows another change to the PPP when, after a rare display of bipartisanship, on June 5 President Trump signed into law the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act. This made some favorable modifications to the PPP loan program, which will allow businesses more flexibility in using the loan funds and qualifying for forgiveness. Highlights of the bill’s modifications include:

REPAYMENT TERMS FOR AMOUNTS NOT FORGIVEN

This includes a minimum maturity of five years for the PPP loan, and allows recipients to defer payments until the date on which the amount of the forgiveness is determined and remitted to the lender. Recipients who do not apply for forgiveness shall have 10 months after the last day of the covered period before the first payment is required. Initially, the Small Business Administration (SBA) provided for a two-year maturity term for the portion of the PPP loan that was not forgiven. This provision extends that period to five years. (Existing two-year term loans can be modified.)

EXTENSION OF COVERED PERIOD

This extends the covered period from 8 weeks to 24 weeks, during which a loan recipient may use the

funds for certain expenses while remaining eligible for forgiveness. The statute also extends the covered period for purposes of attaining a loan until December 31, 2020.

USE OF LOAN PROCEEDS

This provides that to receive loan forgiveness, an eligible recipient shall use at least 60% of the covered loan amount for payroll costs and may use 40% for the non-payroll portion (i.e., covered mortgage interest, covered rent, and covered utilities) of a forgivable covered loan.

LOAN FORGIVENESS REDUCTION RELIEF

This extends the period to December 31, 2020, in which an employer may rehire or eliminate a reduction in employment, salary, or wages that would otherwise reduce the forgivable amount of a PPP loan. The forgivable amount will be determined without regard to a reduction in the number of employees if the recipient is 1) unable to rehire former employees and is unable to hire similarly qualified employees, or 2) unable to return to the same level of business activity due to compliance with federal requirements or guidance related to COVID-19. As currently drafted, this provision appears to eliminate the option for partial forgiveness by requiring 60% usage on payroll costs in order to receive any forgiveness. However, on June 8, the U.S. Treasury and the SBA indicated in a joint statement that future guidance will provide that “if a borrower uses less than 60% of the loan amount for payroll costs during the forgiveness covered period, the borrower will continue to be eligible for partial loan forgiveness, subject to at least 60% of the loan for-

givenness amount having been used for payroll costs.”

PAYROLL TAX DEFERRAL

This amends the CARES Act to allow PPP borrowers (even those that receive forgiveness) to take advantage of the payroll tax deferral provisions. Under the CARES Act, PPP borrowers were only able to take advantage of the employer payroll tax deferral provision until they received notice of forgiveness. This provision allows PPP borrowers to take advantage of the deferral provision even after receiving forgiveness on their PPP loan. Earlier in the year, the IRS issued notice 2020-32, which, in summary, states that there are parts of the tax code (Section 265(a)(1) in particular) that essentially prevent a taxpayer from claiming a deduction for expenses that are reimbursed. In notice 2020-32, the IRS concluded that expenses paid with PPP loan proceeds that are forgiven would not be tax deductible. The original CARES Act specifically stated that any PPP loan amounts forgiven would not be taxable but did not address Internal Revenue Code section 265(a)(1). Senator Grassley and Congressman Neal have stated this was not the intent of Congress and that this will be addressed by a legislative response. (Many are surprised that the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act did not address this issue.) Many loan forgiveness questions still remain unanswered; the passage of recent legislation only adds to the list! The SBA has issued and is issuing guidance but further clarification of the myriad of open issues is still

needed. Stay tuned...

Alan Osmolowski, CPA is a tax partner with blumshapiro (www.blumshapiro.com) at 100 Front Street in Worcester, where he leads the firm’s technology and life sciences practice. blumshapiro is the largest regional business advisory firm based in New England, with offices in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Virginia. The firm, with a team of over 500, offers a diversity of services, which include auditing, accounting, tax and business advisory services. blum serves a wide range of privately held companies, government and non-profit organizations and provides non-audit services for publicly traded companies. To learn more visit us at blumshapiro.com. Alan can be reached at aosmolowski@blumshapiro.com.



Alan Osmolowski, CPA

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Worcester’s Renovated ‘Central Building’ Provides More Opportunities to Live, Shop, and Play Downtown

Dominique Goyette-Connerty, Correspondent

Live. Work. Shop. Learn. Play. The heart of the Commonwealth is no stranger to these nut-and-bolt necessities of everyday life, but recently, Worcester’s Main Street is seeing more and more options to do so.

An emerging cultural hub in New England and home to more than 185,000 people, the bustling city has its fair share of attractions. From The Hanover Theatre and The Grid eateries and apartments near the Worcester Common Oval, to the numerous bars and restaurants on Shrewsbury St., and the soon-to-be Polar Park with surrounding developments in the Canal District, it’s safe to say the city has established itself as a “happening” epicenter in the state – and it keeps growing.

Now, the north end of Main Street is starting to add to that active atmosphere, with the completion of recent renovations to the historic Central Building bringing new apartments, a full-service grocery store, and a child care center to the area.

Built in 1926, the seven-story building located at 332 Main St. served primarily as office space for a number of years, but once the largest tenant, the District Attorney’s office, relocated, the Krock family shut the building down. Katie Krock, one of the Central Building’s co-owners, says that’s when they started working with the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) and the City of Worcester to re-purpose it, and were able to receive state and federal historic tax credits to do so.

“There wasn’t a need for any more office space when we hit the market,” Ms. Krock said, but they did identify a need for affordable living options and other businesses.

LIVE: 332 Main

The 332 Main apartments hit the market in June of 2019 and were fully occupied by that October, already with a growing wait list. “The overall response [we saw] of people wanting to be downtown and be a part of this was amazing,” Ms. Krock said.

A mixture of market-rate, workforce, and affordable living units, the 55 apartments are now home to hundreds of people, including families and children, and feature a number of amenities designed to fit those lifestyles – among them are a play area, a dog wash (as the facility is pet-friendly), a gym, and a bike room for residents to lock up the bikes they use to ride around the city.

“With more people living downtown,” Ms. Krock said the idea was then to “keep everything centrally-located.” So they didn’t stop at the apartments.

SHOP: Maker to Main

Despite a number of smaller convenience stores and bodegas dotting the Main Street area, there wasn’t a full-service grocery store close by for downtown residents. “So if you’re living at The Grid, or behind Elm Street, or on any of the surrounding streets, where do you get your full-service groceries? You get in your car and you have to drive somewhere,” said Lynn Cheney, owner of Maker to Main. It’s part of the reason why she opened the market in one of the two ground floor available retail spaces in the newly-renovated building. “Having a resource where you can get your groceries in walking distance: that’s what builds an urban environment and builds a community,” she said.

Formerly Lettuce Be Local, primarily a wholesale local food distributor, Ms. Cheney rebranded as ‘Maker to Main’ upon the opening of her Main Street brick-and-mortar business, which focuses on making local food more easily accessible to the masses.

And it’s not just food. Maker to Main sells all kinds of locally-sourced products from more than 150



Fresh vegetables are trucked in from all over Central Mass. and sold at Maker to Main.

regional farms, makers, and growers. So in addition to their fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs, and dairy products – to name just a sampling of what they offer – common household products like dish soap and even toilet paper can also be found in the store.

Pointing to what she calls “the great depletion of toilet paper 2020” as an example – something Maker to Main never had a problem keeping stocked during the pandemic – Ms. Cheney says it’s important to have this space where nearby residents “can walk to and have quick and easy access to household essentials and things they need on a whim.”

And for Ms. Cheney, the decision to open on Main Street was a “no-brainer.”

“A lot of people ask, ‘Why would you choose to be on Main Street or downtown?’ And my rebuttal is always: ‘Why not?’ This is a perfect spot. [...] There are residents all around me, and there are literally thousands of people who work downtown.”

“What Lynn has done is truly spectacular,” said Ms. Krock of the new grocery store. When it comes to those who work downtown, she says employees are conveniently able to stop in for a quick snack or lunch, or even purchase groceries needed for dinner before heading home. “So you’re eliminating that extra stop [...] It’s a one-stop-shop downtown,” Ms. Krock said.

Wholesale buying is still being offered to restaurants, caterers, chefs, and breweries, but is also available to any everyday shopper who’s looking to buy in bulk. Maker to Main also launched an online ordering and curbside pickup service for those who choose to grab-and-go.

LEARN & PLAY: Strawberries Early Learning Center

Much like the absence of a full-service grocer, the same was to be said about child care options: there weren’t any.

“With so many people working downtown, the demand [for child care] was quite high,” said Darlene Roth, director of the Strawberries Early Learning Center which now occupies the

other available commercial space in the Central Building.

The center opened their doors to families in October of 2019 and is licensed to serve as a daycare provider for up to 65 infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers.

The “beautiful, new, state-of-the-art child care center,” as Ms. Roth calls it, has an off-site playground, but for days when the weather doesn’t cooperate, they have a large, indoor gross motor room – something she says not many other daycare facilities have.

Ms. Roth, who has more than three decades in early childhood education, says the Main Street location is “a wonderful opportunity for people to have their children downtown so they can stop in and visit on their lunch break,” or breast feed, she added.

Again citing convenience of a central location, Ms. Krock said Strawberries is potentially saving those parents who work downtown “those 30 minutes or hour out of [their] day for pickup and dropoff routines.”

After having to shut down due to the pandemic, the center is now reopened. Ms. Roth says they’re “happy to be back,” and since they’re not yet at full capacity, they are currently enrolling.

Creating an 18-Hour Downtown

While the Central Building’s newfound purpose has a lot to offer as a standalone, when paired with other surrounding businesses like Crust Artisan Bakeshop, Armsby Abbey, North Main Provisions, Deadhorse Hill, and Doughnuts & Draughts, there’s a noticeable collective strength making a more livable, workable, walkable, and visitable community.

“I see people living here out walking their dogs, eating at the restaurants. It’s very, very exciting and that’s what we need. We need people downtown,” Ms. Krock said.

A slow but steady process, the new residential space and adjacent businesses are certainly a step in the right direction when it comes to transforming the area into a vibrant, 18-hour downtown, welcoming more foot traffic from residents and visitors alike to the heart of the city.



Strawberries Early Learning Center provides ample room for play and rest for children among the brightly colored decor.

FROM DEVELOPERS, PAGE 1

and recognize it is also going to be important to determine how we can allocate public money for the area to provide things like lighting, appropriate crosswalks, and maintenance for sidewalks and streets.”

Wally has noticed an influx of new residents attracted to the James Street area and acknowledges the neighborhood’s growing number of attributes. “The city recently approved the development of new housing on James Street,” said Wally, “Quality housing stock is important, specifically for people who are downsizing by selling their homes and want to remain in the city in addition to plenty

of people who live outside of the city and are looking to be closer to what Worcester has to offer.” He hopes his District will continue to serve as a great place to live, work, and play for locals and newcomers alike.

Wally points to recent improvements made at Hadwen Park as just one example of attractive features prospective residents will find along the James Street corridor. Assistant Commissioner of Parks Rob Antonelli described Hadwen Park as, “One of Worcester’s prime facilities,” calling it a “mixed park” because it features waterfront and wooded trail access as well as courts and play-

grounds. “Over the last 3 years, we’ve put in almost \$2 million to build a new basketball court, a playground, and a lookout over the pond,” said Antonelli. “We have also completed the first portion of a boardwalk for better views of the water.” Future plans include extending the boardwalk into the park and making Knox Street fully accessible from one end to the other.

In the midst of a global pandemic, Worcester remains a rich tapestry of growth and grit. Developers who recognize and invest in the city’s existing strengths, like the James Street corridor, are those who will prove instrumental in its rejuvenation.

MassHire Innovating with Job Seeking App During Unemployment Crisis

By David Sullivan, Economic Development Fellow

With the worst unemployment crisis since the Great Depression currently unfolding, many are asking what will happen when the pandemic is finally over, leaving millions of Americans jobless in its wake. One local agency is stepping up in the Worcester area to help alleviate the economic turmoil and get people the jobs they need – MassHire.

MassHire is a no cost, state-run organization designed to bolster the workforce system and help both job seekers and employers find what they need. There are two branches – the overarching Workforce Boards, which are responsible for 16 different regions in Massachusetts, and the 29 statewide Career Centers that provide customized employment services, advisement, and candidate matching.

I sat down with four MassHire leaders to discuss the ways in which MassHire is leading the way for both job seekers and employers looking to safely get workers employed again. Janice Ryan Weekes, Jeff Turgeon, Bruce Mendelsohn, and Jibrael Younis all took the time to discuss with me the implications and solutions to a pandemic-related unemployment crisis.

The pandemic has ravaged our nation's economy. As businesses began to furlough employees in the spring, millions of Americans began losing jobs that they could not get back – in April alone, 2.5 million U.S. jobs were lost.

However, we know that this is an unnatural unemployment crisis – people had to leave work not because of shifts in the demands of the business cycle, but rather to ensure public safety. Since mid-June



Jeffrey Turgeon, Executive Director of the MassHire Central Region Workforce Board (left) and Janice Ryan Weekes, Executive Director of MassHire Central Career Centers (right).

in Massachusetts, the number of reported coronavirus cases has started to plateau and the number of deaths is declining and many are starting to think about safely getting people back to work.

For the week ending July 18, the U.S. Labor Department had reported that Massachusetts's unemployment claims declined by 24%, down to 5,818 weekly statewide claims. However, unemployment in Massachusetts as of June is still the worst in the nation, and a lot of work remains to be done.

That's where MassHire comes in. "During the pandemic, we have continued to operate and serve both targeted populations – employers and job seekers," said Janice Ryan Weekes, the executive

director of the MassHire Central Career Centers in Worcester and Southbridge. "Our doors are physically closed to the public, but we are still working with them remotely." Weekes cited the fact that remote work was already the norm of MassHire's operations with regular emailing and calling to set up meetings between employers and job seekers.

In response to the increased rate of unemployment and the need to remain socially distant, MassHire has added new remote services including a virtual job fair that was the brainchild of Jibrael Younis, team supervisor for Business Engagement Solutions at Worcester's Career Center. The MassHire Workforce Board, which oversees the region's employment efforts, turned their website into a self-service job portal where employers could post opportunities that job seekers could then find and apply for.

Early on, Jeff Turgeon, executive director of the MassHire Central Region Workforce Board, and Bruce Mendelsohn, communications coordinator for the Board's Resource Development, spearheaded the effort to adapt to the growing unemployment crisis.

"In early February I texted Jeff and said, 'Hey, do we have any contingency plans in case the coronavirus closes our offices? How can we provide continuity of resources remotely?'" said Mendelsohn. The two developed the job-posting function on the Workforce Board's website and began manually connecting employers and job seekers through request forms.

At first, forms came in at rate of 5-10 per day, but

SEE MASSHIRE, PAGE 21

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Bottling up a Bubbly Taste of Home

FOOD HUB'S AZ NORDIC KVASS LOOKS TO BRING RUSSIAN FLAVOR TO MASSACHUSETTS

By Dominique Goyette-Connerty, Correspondent

The so-called dog days of summer are here and there's no better way to cool off than with a cold, refreshing drink.

No, not beer. We're talking about kvass.

Described by Russian-born Mike Zubairov as "a unique-tasting, fermented, non-alcoholic beverage," kvass is traditionally an Eastern European drink, and has been enjoyed in countries like Russia and Ukraine for centuries.

The drink is made when stale bread, yeast, water, and a couple of other ingredients ferment for a few days during which carbonation occurs naturally – a process similar to how beer is made, just without the hops.

"It's essentially kind of like a soda in the way it bubbles. It's traditionally consumed within families who grow up there; [similar to] having a Coca Cola here, it's just something you've grown up with," said Mr. Zubairov.

After immigrating to the U.S. from Russia in the mid-90's, now Mr. Zubairov and his father, Anatoli Zubairov, are launching their own brand of kvass, hoping to bring that taste of home to Massachusetts.

Already capable of making the beverage with a generations-old family recipe and piqued by the possibility of entrepreneurship since his move to America, Mr. Anatoli Zubairov wondered if he could combine the two, turning his passion into a business.

"I've always had the thought in the back of my mind since coming to America that I wanted to start a business, but couldn't pinpoint exactly what. I guess a big reason [influencing the start of AZ Nordic] was to bring a traditional, natural kvass to the market since I didn't see any in stores," he said.

Quickly recognizing that purchasing a facility outright to produce the drink

would be a "substantial capital investment," the Zubairovs started exploring other options like shared kitchens, stumbling upon the Worcester Regional Food Hub.

"From the start, the Food Hub was very helpful and supportive in making sure we could get this venture off the ground. [WRFH Director] Shon Rainford and his team have guided us in many ways and we thank them for everything

they've done," said Anatoli Zubairov, adding that access to the kitchen space itself has been a "fantastic resource" and "instrumental" to launching the business.

Although there are dozens of kvass brands on the market even in the U.S., Mike Zubairov says what makes AZ Nordic unique is its homemade quality and its "old country" taste.

Crafted with only four or five ingredients, Anatoli Zubairov says it offers an all-natural alternative to mass-produced kvasses and any other beverages packed with sugar which are typically found in stores.

As they focus their initial efforts on Russian specialty shops where they know there's a demand for it, the product is currently only being sold through Bazaar Supermarkets which has a handful of locations in Allston, Brookline, Framingham, and Newton. But if they can get it off the ground in Massachusetts, the father-son duo hopes distribution can then take off to New York, where they

say there's an even larger Russian-speaking population.

So while the overall goal is to bring what for many Eastern European living in the U.S. is a nostalgic taste of home, the Zubairovs would eventually like to see their small-batch, startup beverage venture also win over some new customers who may have never tried or even heard of kvass.



A bottle of kvass from StartUp Worcester company AZ Nordic is pictured in a marketing shot for the new brand.

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Worcester Regional Airport Update

By Timothy P. Murray, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO

In a July 25 memo from Southwest Airlines chairman and CEO Gary Kelly to Southwest employees, Kelly stated that since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States, Southwest has lost \$1.6 billion with revenue down 70%. This is just one example of the plight of the airline industry in the midst of the COVID-19 international health and economic crisis. And, it is anticipated by airline industry experts that it will take the industry approximately 2 1/2 years to return to pre COVID-19 levels.

Nationally, to avoid massive employee layoffs and bankruptcies, many U.S.-based air carriers have availed themselves of assistance through the federal CARES Act. This \$1.8 trillion stimulus bill includes \$50 billion in grants and loans specifically for the airline companies.

In April, Airlines for America, an industry advocacy group, reported that U.S. passenger travel was down 95% with thousands of planes grounded. Without the CARES Act funds, many carriers would not remain solvent.

To date, American Airlines is accessing \$5.8 billion in CARES funding; Delta Airlines headquartered in Atlanta is using \$5.4 billion; and JetBlue Airways \$936 million. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S.

DOT) has allowed the airline industry to suspend service in markets across the country to help mitigate airline operating losses.

Like many other areas, in Massachusetts, the reduction of flights has been dramatic. As reported in the State House News Service in June, Massport CEO Lisa Weiland said the airport (Logan) typically has 600 flights per day during this time of year. That number dropped to 100 at the height of the pandemic.

Even more locally, the impact to the Worcester Regional Airport has been significant. Both JetBlue and American Airlines have suspended service after receiving approval from the U.S. DOT.

Delta continues to fly daily out of Worcester Regional Airport to the Detroit Metropolitan Airport with the call sign of DTW. The daily flight departs Detroit at 1:50 pm and arrives in Worcester at 3:33 pm. The flight then departs Worcester at 4:13 pm and arrives in Detroit at 6:12 pm. Access to Detroit links Worcester to one of Delta's eight major hubs in the United States. DTW was added as a Delta hub when it merged with Northwest Airlines in 2008 and is one of the largest aviation hubs in the United States with nearly 150 daily connections and an

excellent on-time departure rate.

The growth in airline service and activity at Worcester Regional Airport over the past 10 years has been significant. A 2019 economic impact study by the Mass. Department of Transportation indicated that the airport is responsible for 587 local jobs, \$29,617,000 in payroll and a total economic output of \$96,747,000. It is clear that the pandemic will stunt this growth.

As parts of the U.S. have slowly reopened, and a number of countries across the globe have begun to contain the virus, airline activity has gradually increased at a number of airports including Logan.

At Worcester Regional Airport, JetBlue has opened up reservations to Florida with flights beginning in October. While this is a positive sign indicative of JetBlue's return, recent virus spikes in Florida, the south and Midwest demonstrate that the situation is fluid. The aviation industry is making decisions on a monthly basis concerning the deployment of airplanes and the location of flights. Accordingly, prospective travelers need to monitor these changing dynamics closely as they contemplate air travel in the months ahead.

SURVEY WRA DESTINATIONS

The Chamber and Massport are launching a survey to collect input from residents in the Worcester area regarding usage of the Worcester Regional Airport.

These responses will be important in determining the demand for new air service and direct connections from Worcester.

This survey will take an estimated 5 minutes and can be found on the home page of the Chamber's website at:

WorcesterChamber.org

Please encourage family, friends, and colleagues to take the survey. You could win tickets and seats to the Chamber's VIP box for a WooSox home game in their first season in 2021!

Thank you.

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Chamber Teams Up to Promote the Region with Livability.com

By Sharyn Williams, VP of Marketing, Communications, Programs, and Events

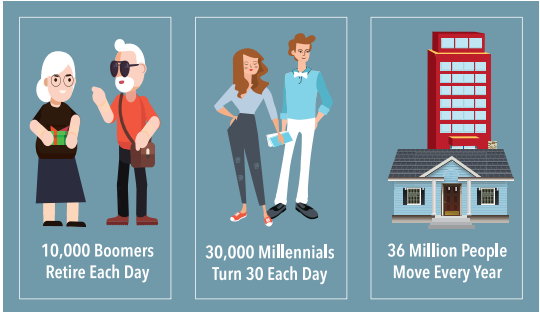
The Chamber is one of the lead organizations charged with attracting businesses who are moving or expanding and are seeking a region in the Northeast in which to do so. New businesses and residents increase a city's tax base, support local businesses, and add to its vitality. More than ever, people are relocating to communities based on an area's quality of life. Progressive communities and companies are touting lifestyle as much as jobs for talent recruitment. As part of the Chamber's strategy to Recruit, Retain, and Incubate businesses, we have partnered with Livability Media, a nationwide, content marketing and media company to produce a print magazine and web content highlighting our many assets. Livability will tell our story with outstanding content and compelling design to help us attract talent, investment, and tourism.

Livability.com is a nationally recognized authority on best places to live, work and visit with custom content that will market the assets of Worcester and the region. And there are many. They include our educated and skilled workforce, colleges and universities, hospitals and healthcare, our cultural and entertainment amenities, proximity to major cities, transportation systems, and much more.

Beginning soon, Chamber members may advertise in the magazine and on Livability.com which draws more than 10 million visitors and 37 million page views annually. Advertiser messages will be in front of this large audience of individuals and businesses exploring the great communities in America. People who relocate spend more during the 3 months surrounding their move than a non-mover spends in 5 years. And, those who relocate are looking for the people that they want to do business with. In fact, Worcester made their top 100 places to live in 2019.

State and regional options allow businesses to pinpoint their audience across counties, regions, and states. And their local advertising options with original articles, videos, and photo galleries showcase the best the community has to offer including shopping, food, attractions, neighborhoods, healthcare, and more.

This marketing piece content will help the Chamber to attract investment, create jobs, and draw talent to our communities. Additionally, it will support the efforts of Discover Central Mass., and other organizations, that aim to attract visitors and their dollars to the area. And, it can help you get the word out to a new audience. The Livability team will reach out soon with information, or, you may contact the Chamber: 508.753.2924.



REACTORY, FROM PAGE 4

PUTTING WORCESTER ON THE MAP

Its name and branding are designed to represent the forward momentum of Worcester and how the park's innovation will respond to the changing dynamics in the biopharma industry. The Reactory signifies the heart of the Commonwealth's pioneering approach to new challenges.

While Worcester already has a long history in life sciences – home to UMass Memorial Medical School and Hospital, other R&D facilities, MBI, Gateway Park, and AbbVie, to name a few – Mr. Blais stresses the importance of The Reactory by emphasizing what he sees as a growing need to manufacture.

"We do not do a good job in this country of manufacturing pharmaceuticals. It's all sourced out and it's based on price," Mr. Blais said, adding that while it's cheaper to manufacture in other countries, it would be concerning if the U.S. lost access to the common, necessary drugs we outsource.

"I think [those concerns are] coming to light now when we're going to have to mass produce a vaccine. That's going to have to be done in this country and we don't have the infrastructure to do that," Mr. Blais said.

As the deadly COVID-19 pandemic confronts the world and the race for a vaccine is underway, the arrival of this new biomanufacturing park is what Mr. Blais calls "very timely." Though the WBDC and other partners responsible for The Reactory's existence of course couldn't have

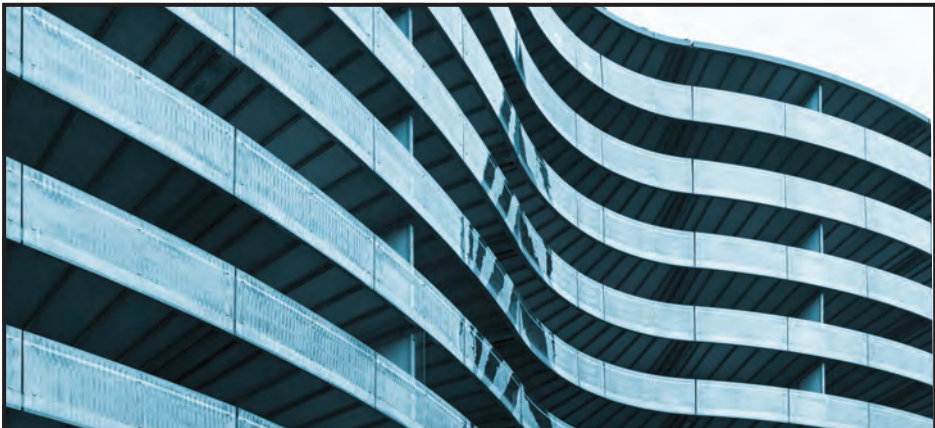
predicted a pandemic, once a vaccine is approved for market, many contract manufacturers will be needed to produce the millions of doses in demand.

"A lot of these companies are going to be looking for space because it's going to take years and a lot of space to manufacture vaccines for the pandemic, so we're hitting the market just right," he added. The Reactory "puts the exclamation point" on Worcester's life sciences atmosphere by providing that lacking manufacturing space, which he says is "overdue."

Pointing to the fight against this virus as evidence of the importance of this type of facility, CEO of Galaxy Life Sciences Mike O'Brien says in the release, "The need for flexible and sustainable biomanufacturing in the region has never been greater. We stand ready and able to help our potential life sciences partners turn their innovative ideas into commercial products at faster-than-industry-average speed to market."

Coupled with other significant projects happening in the Worcester region, including Polar Park, The Reactory is another major stepping-stone in putting the city's economic development and revitalization efforts on the map.

As Worcester City Manager Edward Augustus Jr. says in the release, "The attention that this campus has drawn from the life sciences sector proves that Worcester is a burgeoning biomanufacturing destination. It is no longer a prospect of potential but a certified reality as we continue to build momentum in the City."



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Soaring to New Heights with TMS Aerial Solutions

By Jennifer Ingham, Correspondent

Chamber member T Matthew Staten's passion for his business is evident from the moment he begins talking about the complexities of his work. Staten is the owner and chief operating officer of TMS Aerial Solutions, LLC, a drone video and photography business he founded in 2017.

With more than 10 years of professional experience in the geospatial information industry, which includes aerial mapping and satellite imagery, he has married his love of technology, creativity, and science into a thriving business that shows no signs of slowing down. Through his work, Staten has seen a bird's eye view of much of Worcester and the Central Massachusetts region.

Staten's clientele portfolio includes businesses in the real estate, construction, and environmental sectors who are looking for a unique way to showcase their properties directly with their stakeholders and on digital platforms including social media company websites. Roof inspections, 3D modeling, and custom video editing are just a small sample of the versatile projects he has tackled for his clients.

Staten shares that when drones first arrived on the market, they were promoted as toys for children. With his vision and intentionality for this work, Staten is investing in consumer education around their capability and the specialized technological processes and equipment he uses. His ultimate goal is to show the value of drone technology to those who have not yet considered how drone video and photography can solve a business problem. "When I named the business, TMS Solutions, I wanted to emphasize the 'solution' aspect," says Staten. "I want you to come to me with your problem and together we can create an effective and affordable solution."



Aerial view of downtown Worcester by T Matthew Staten of TMS Aerial.

The pandemic has changed business operations in virtually all industries, and with that, Staten's offerings have become even more sought-after because they allow teams to visually share updates with their stakeholders, while respecting social distancing recommendations and putting customer and client safety at the forefront. "Because people are not able to currently travel and visit spaces as easily, my clients are very interested in translating site visits to a virtual format," says Staten. "I can provide a view that shows you more than a site visit ever could, like rooftops and tight spaces."

While Staten has enjoyed seeing his business take flight, he is completely transparent that operating a full-time business has presented him with learning opportunities along the way. These "A-ha!" moments many entrepreneurs navigate on their journey have offered him insight into the best way to evolve his client profile and market directly to key audiences. "Being able to adapt is so critical," says Staten. "I'm working in a field that didn't exist 10 years ago. The

industry is still burgeoning and shifting, so articulating the wide-range of services I offer can still be a challenge, but I'm up for that."

When reflecting on what keeps him motivated, Staten says one of the best things about the job is getting creative when implementing ROI-focused business solutions. He enjoys translating and refining service approaches to ensure his clients get a tailored experience.

Staten's process requires a deep understanding of technology and a focus on efficiency, all encapsulated by his personal standards for a quality product. He is licensed and insured and follows Federal Aviation Administration legal requirements for flying drones and as a professional, adheres to best practices for privacy. "That ethical part of the job is important and I take that seriously," says Staten. "That's part of my integrity as a business owner."

With so much to look forward to as he evolves TMS Aerial Solutions, Staten is grateful for the community he's been able to access through being a Chamber member. "From the beginning, the Chamber has made me feel like a valued member," says Staten. "Having access to like-minded, small-business folks to bounce ideas around has been an amazing help as I grow."

Staten remains goal-oriented and is excited about what the future holds for his business. "I wouldn't be doing this work if I didn't find the work fascinating and fun," says Staten. "I think you gain a new appreciation for the world when you can change your perspective on your surroundings. Being able to see the world from a different view has shown me how interconnected our communities really are." To connect with TMS Aerial Solutions and explore their services, visit tmsaerialsolutions.com.

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Diana Gallego**

Submission by Trigon Creative Chosen as Winner to Re-Brand Tri-Chamber Veterans Event

By Bayla Cohen, Intern, Boston University School of Communications

Building on the success and excitement of last year's first ever Tri-Chamber Networking Event and Salute to Veterans, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce will once again partner with the Marlboro Regional Chamber of Commerce and the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, November 12, 2020, from 4 to 7 pm, at the American Heritage Museum in Hudson, MA.

In preparation for this event, the three Chambers asked various ad agencies to put together their most creative proposal for re-branding the event. In each proposal, they were asked to include a tagline, a save the date, and graphics. After receiving many submissions, the committee, comprised of representatives of the three chambers and the museum, voted to go with the design created by Trigon Creative to brand the 2020 tri-chamber veterans event.

Trigon Creative, a part of BlueHive Exhibits – an exhibit manufacturer and event management company in Worcester – is a full-service Advertising Agency that offers its clients creative branding content. The agency's six employees work together to create unique and compelling visuals designed for multiple platforms.

"We all come about it from our different perspectives," said Jillian, Trigon's creative director. We begin the designing process with a discovery call, where the team gathers together to discuss the project. In this open environment, different ideas are explored, then brought to life with refinements made until they are ready to unveil it to their client.

Trigon Creative is committed to excellent customer service and work with their clients to tweak their concepts until each customer is satisfied that the visual reflects the company's image. In fact, Trigon's original design for the tri-chamber veterans event went through a revision process where they provided tweaks and enhancements to the original concept resulting in a design that best reflected the event. "We continue to have check-ins and revision time [with the Chamber]" Jessica, Trigon's art director, added.

Trigon Creative was eager to take on this project since it allowed them to use their skills for a good cause. Their goal for this assignment was to create a uniquely captivating design and tagline. "We wanted everything to be patriotic without being cliché," Jessica noted. Their graphic incorporates the traditional red, white, and blue with an image of three, diverse saluting soldiers. "The three soldiers signify the three chambers," Jillian emphasized. Originally they submitted three different taglines from which the committee could select. However, the Chambers really liked two of them so Trigon found a way to combine them into one powerful tagline. "The tagline is so important," Jillian remarked, "it has to be simple enough to get the message across and clever enough to be interesting." The tagline attached to the graphic is "Tri-Salute to Our Troops." They used "Tri-Salute" to signify the three Chambers coming together for this important event. Following the tagline, Trigon added, "Your History. Our Heritage," to show the importance of honoring our veterans and telling their stories for a positive impact.

"Veterans day is here to celebrate our veterans who are alive and have done so much and are still here to tell the tale," Jillian added on the importance of this event. Additionally, this event provides area business with an opportunity to network, which the staff at Trigon Creative believe is crucial to running a business.

"It's all about building relationships," Jillian explained. In fact, that is why Trigon Creative, along with BlueHive Exhibits chose to be a part of the Worcester Regional Chamber. "We joined because it helps us get our name and our presence out there, as well as build relationships," Jillian remarked. In particular, "We always attend the Chamber's Business After Hours to be a part of the local businesses of Worcester."

As an advertising agency, Trigon Creative's goal is to be accessible to local businesses. They cater to small, unique businesses rather than focus on large conglomerates. "I'd rather have a lot of clients than one notable one, because if you lose that one then you lose the business," said Caitlyn, vice president of Trigon Creative. "I am proud of the diverse types of clients we serve," she continued. While Trigon hopes to grow in the future, its mission is to serve the local businesses to help advertise their unique brands. "We want to be local and the Chamber helps us achieve that goal," Jillian concluded.





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Make Your Room Enchanting with a Fireplace or Stove

By Virginia K. Murphy, Chamber Staff

March is known for coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb. This year, the opposite was true. Our world changed as Massachusetts residents, and indeed, as citizens of the world. A state of emergency went into effect, schools closed, non-essential workers were ordered to stay at home, and dining in restaurants came to an abrupt halt. Suddenly, we became hermits in our own homes, and so began our life of quarantine. We took to social media where people showed off their gourmet cooking skills; first in the kitchen, and as the weather warmed, by grilling in their backyards. We shared TikTok videos, boredom busters on YouTube, and made long-awaited home improvements. With the passing of July's heatwave into the dog days of summer, many are thinking ahead to the changing of seasons and ways to make their homes more comfortable and save on their heating bills for the upcoming winter. Let us introduce you to a Chamber member of 10-years, Enchanted Fireside. Located at 728 West Boylston Street in Worcester, Enchanted Fireside has been in business for 25 years. Husband and wife owners, Rocco and Karen DiVerdi, first opened their doors in the town of West Boylston before moving down the street to their current location in 2001. Their product offerings include fireplaces, fireplace inserts, stoves, glass doors, mantels, outdoor cooking grills, and awnings, among other accessories. A full-service shop, they offer maintenance plans, and repair services for the homeowner and their business clients in Central Massachusetts. "Our passion for making home heating beautiful and efficient fuels our goals to provide outstanding service and superior product knowledge when you purchase a product from Enchanted Fireside."

During the quarantine over the past five months, how many times have you looked at the most-used rooms in your home and pondered what would make your home more energy-efficient? The experts at Enchanted Fireside help their customers identify energy-efficient and cost-effective options to offset heating bills. Their piece de resistance is helping clients create an ambiance that is relaxing, maintainable, and enchanting while conforming to each homeowner's unique style. Husband Rocco DiVerdi is proud of their customized approach, "Our goal is to make the experience of enhancing your home environment enjoyable, rewarding, and to exceed your expectations." According to Karen DiVerdi, fireplace inserts are their biggest seller, largely because they are easier, cleaner, and more efficient than masonry or metal fireplaces. For those who do not already have a fireplace, but love the look and feel of one without the maintenance, they suggest customers consider a gas, pellet, or electric fireplace. They offer the warmth and charm of a wood, pellet or gas stove to the corner of any room. Today's hearth appliances are clean, efficient, and friendly to both the indoor and outdoor environment. For the chef in the family, Enchanted Fireside also sells the Big Green EGG ceramic grill, an all-in-one grill that cooks like an oven and a smoker without adding heat to the kitchen. Better yet, the EGG can be used all year long. To keep your outdoor deck or patio cool and comfortable while grilling or relaxing, Enchanted Fireside also offers high-quality awnings with optional heating and lighting as well as the ability to manage the amount of shade with a remote control. This environmentally conscientious company has



Rocco and Karen DiVerdi pose in front of one of the fireplaces available at their Worcester store, Enchanted Fireside.

a long-standing partnership with the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center where they have helped customers replace old, high-emissions wood stoves with cleaner, much more efficient wood and pellet stoves keeping our air cleaner. In the community, Enchanted Fireside strives to help those who help others. Now in its third year, their #PayItForwardToTeachers campaign donates hundreds of dollars of "wish list" supplies to one lucky teacher selected in a random drawing. Nominations of teachers were accepted through August 17. Enchanted Fireside is a 2017 Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce Small Business Award winner and three-time recipient of the Best Of Business Central Massachusetts award. Offering friendly service and expertise in the hearth sales and service industry, the team at Enchanted Fireside helps people find the best fireplace or stove to fit their home and lifestyle.



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A photograph of an elderly woman with white hair, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, walking with a red walker. A caregiver, wearing a dark blue shirt, is walking alongside her, with one hand on her back and the other holding the walker's handle. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

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BUSINESS HEALTH: How Central Mass Businesses are Doing

By Aviva Luttrell, correspondent

Worcester County businesses, like millions of others globally, are facing a new reality: They must adapt amid the COVID-19 pandemic, or risk closing their doors permanently.

Many are meeting the challenges head-on, and in a variety of ways. But what of the common threads across different industries? Accessibility, mobile-based commerce and, ultimately, safety and peace of mind for their customers.

Take Maker to Main, for example. The small downtown Worcester grocery store opened just three weeks before non-essential businesses were ordered to close in mid-March. Owner Lynn Cheney bid farewell to her staff – many of whom couldn’t work without childcare – and began running the operation herself. Within five days, she had set up an online ordering system for curbside pickup and soon brought in two others to help.

Cheney said the online ordering system roll-out was filled with glitches, but her customers have been supportive throughout the process. “We just did it very prematurely because we already saw that people, within days, had cleaned out grocery store shelves,” she said.

But there was also a silver lining. Between curbside pickup and Maker to Main’s small size, Cheney said it became a place where people felt

comfortable shopping. While Instacart and other grocery delivery services experienced delays due to a surge in demand, Cheney was able to fulfill orders the same day, on average.

“I didn’t have depleted shelves and logistical challenges with food supplies. My food system is local, and the aspect of people hoarding toilet paper or flour to make copious amounts of bread wasn’t a problem,” she said. “I had all of this stuff, and so many

members and customers, and our brewery partners, too,” said Jon Salois, vice president of sales.

Now, as the economy begins to re-open, the team is still working virtually and has set up an online ordering portal for customers – a new feature for the 87-year-old company. “It pushed us in a technology direction,” Salois said.

Domitek is among the area IT companies helping businesses roll out remote solutions during the pandemic.

BUMPS ALONG THE ROAD TO RECOVERY GIVE WAY TO INNOVATION AND OPTIMISM IN CENTRAL MASS BUSINESS COMMUNITY

people tried us and felt like it was an opportunity and a safe place.”

Last month, she was able to resume her wholesale operation, which distributes locally grown food to area restaurants, and has brought back her entire six-person team.

For Auburn-based Atlas Distributing Inc., the pandemic has represented a substantial shift in how daily business is carried out. The beverage distributor, which serves 1,800 liquor-licensed accounts and 1,200 non-licensed accounts throughout the region, immediately took all of its sales representatives off the street and asked them to begin working remotely.

“Our guiding principle was to do the best and safest things for our team

Founder and President Libis Bueno says his 10-person staff has remained busy over the past several months, helping clients adapt to changing needs – especially security concerns and virtual workspaces.

Domitek has migrated many of its clients to “the cloud” and saw a spike in demand for VoIP phone systems – which allow users to make phone calls using an Internet-connected computer – as well as security and alarm systems for unoccupied offices. The company has also worked with a vendor to supply thermal cameras that can detect fevers, and is working on creating a touchless door-entry system.

“We’re a system integrator in helping businesses put in place secure infra-

structure, but also putting in place solutions that can help open businesses back up,” Bueno said.

At the Worcester Public Market, President and Founder Allen Fletcher was able to take advantage of a Payroll Protection Loan to help support his small staff. The market’s bank was also flexible on payments, he said, which allowed the market to decide, early on, not to charge its 29 vendors rent while the establishment was closed.

Fletcher even picked up several new vendors before the market reopened in June with numerous social distancing guidelines in place. Since then, he’s seen a steady flow of patrons, which he expects to increase gradually. New outdoor tables have helped, Fletcher said, and some vendors have debuted online ordering systems and curbside pickup.

The market is still dependent on walk-in traffic, according to Fletcher, but its vendors are doing a good amount of business with the number of people coming in the door.

“It’s small compared to what it used to be, but under the current circumstances we can’t have that amount of crowding, anyway,” he said, adding that he remains optimistic about the business community’s future. “Part of it is such an incredible relief to be back in business after a long period of suspended animation. That feels great.”

SmashIt2: New Worcester Venue is All it’s Cracked Up to Be

By Sharyn T. Williams, VP of Marketing, Communications, Programs, and Events, Worcester Regional Chamber

The sound of shattering glass, the crunch of plastic on steel, the whack of a sledgehammer coming down on glass, ceramic, and a mixture of other satisfyingly breakable items.

Sound enticing? The Chamber staff will tell you it is. Our team visited member, Smashit2 to check out this new, and might we say, timely business who is offering a unique opportunity to do something that most of us have thought about doing... smashing the heck out of something just because it feels so good.

And with the pandemic, ongoing racism, social isolation, financial uncertainty, and whatever might be on your own, preferably un-smashed plate, the sledgehammers and baseball bats offer a welcome and safe way to release some of those pent-up emotions that might otherwise come out in unhelpful ways.

Sister and brother team, Darcy Cook and Joe Ceccarelli created and own this unusual business, there’s only nine like it across the country, as a way to become involved in the community and support their other business, Safety Trainers.

Ms. Cook puts it this way, “We see our unique business as a way to try something new, celebrate a special moment in time, process life, and build relationships. We love hearing everyone’s stories and we ask visitors to sign the walls of our smash rooms, so they can be part of our story.”

Since 1998, Safety Trainers, based out of Auburn, Mass., has provided on site emergency management and OSHA training, policy development, safety site supervisors, consulting and resources throughout New England.

This family business was formed when Darcy, a physical therapist, and her firefighter brothers who were teaching first aid and CPR followed their father’s suggestion and created a safety training company. After the 9/11 attack, the company grew from an emergency management and training company into an occupational, health and safety company for general industry and construction and now serves 20 different industries throughout New England.

The Smashit2 building, located at 49 Canterbury Street in Worcester, offers no exterior hint about the carnage to small appliances, dishware, and other smashable items, taking place inside.

A room with a kitchen and a small gathering space greets ‘smashers’ as they enter. This quickly

gives way to rooms specifically built to let loose in with bats swinging and hammers crashing down amid the satisfying sound of breaking glass. But before you get started, safety is the first course of business. After signing a waiver and donning protective gear, the fun starts and the Chamber staff wasted no time getting going. Four different smash rooms and viewing windows provide an opportunity to check out techniques while waiting to be a part of the action.

Techniques varied. From the toss and swing, to the smash from above, and the fire a baseball at it, the result was the same, flying shreds of what used to be a mirror, plate, cup, became shards glittering and decimated on the floor. And that’s not to mention the cheers and smiles replacing the quiet consternation that has been the last several months.

“The team thoroughly enjoyed smashing things and not having to clean it up! If you’re looking for a unique team building activity this is the place to go. Darcy and her staff go above and beyond to create a fun experience. Smashit2 is truly a wonderful addition to the business community – and, we were so happy to support her opening, no small feat during a pandemic,” said Kristen Luna, the Chamber’s membership sales and services representative.

The sledgehammers are heavy and get the job done pretty quickly. But not to worry, there’s plenty to smash. Cook has plenty of clean out companies, trash haulers, and others who are keen to donate breakables. Smashing these items into bits makes them easier and cheaper to dispose of. You could call it a win-win-win for Smashit2, disposal businesses, and the wielders of those hefty hammers and bats.

Smashit2 is way to take charge and just waiting for you to take out your frustration and energy on. Oddly, the sparkling fragments littering the floor offers an interesting view of once intact items that are now

the remnants of unwanted and out of style goods that once served a useful purpose and decorated homes. There are plenty of packages and specials from which to select including the ‘Let It Go Package,’ ‘Smashy Hour,’ and ‘Mom Break Time.’ Art classes, yoga, and more add a little variety and creativity to your Smashit2 experience.

And, they’re teaming up with other small businesses to create packages and events that expand the experience. This month, a partnership with The Beer Garden offered the first beer compliments of Smashit2 and 20% off your first appetizer. Want to get even more physical? Their upstairs room offers a fun twist on the usually sedate yoga glass with fuzzy mats, raucous poses, and a whole lot of fun. Want to get creative? Their art events include painting a wine glass, smashing it and then turning it into something else.

Whether it’s a girl’s night out, corporate team-building, a fun family activity, Smashit2 is a fun time that offers a unique, new experience in Central Massachusetts. For now, Smashit2 is available by appointment only and kids under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent. For more information, including cost and hours of operation, visit smashit2.com.



Chamber intern, Bayla Cohen, gets ready to swing at a ceramic dish sending it flying against the wall with a crash.

ALL RISE: Courthouse Lofts Nearly Ready for Tenants

By Aviva Luttrell, Correspondent

When Trinity Financial was selected to redevelop the former Worcester County Courthouse into a mixed-income housing community three years ago, the Boston-based company knew an exciting yet ambitious challenge lay ahead.

The iconic downtown Worcester building, which dates back to the 1840s, had been vacant for a decade. It had undergone numerous renovations in the past, including a substantial expansion in the 1950s. And when construction crews finally arrived on site, they discovered a myriad of unforeseen conditions.

"There are all these different parts of the building that are mismatched together, and the building had sat empty for years before we got involved," said Michael Lozano, vice president of development at Trinity Financial. "The state and the city really maintained it and all the details are still there, but it was in difficult condition."

Over the past several years, Trinity worked with various historical committees and organizations to restore the 214,000-square-foot building's original grandeur and adapt it into

The apartments range in size from studios to three-bedrooms, and feature amenities including washers and dryers, quartz countertops, custom lighting and stainless steel appliances.

"They all have some sort of historic details from all these different eras," Lozano said. "It's pretty cool in that respect. There's just an amazing amount of unique detail throughout the building, and we really made a lot of effort to keep as much as we could."

Common areas include many original elements such as marble corridors, ornate plaster medallions, large light-streaming windows and woodwork. One of the building's most elaborate courtrooms was converted into a lounge area with nearly all of its original details preserved – including the jury boxes. In the 1950s section of the building, original phone booths were incorporated into the renovation.

The development also features a media room, courtyard, fitness center with attached children's play area, club room, pet-washing station, outdoor playground, and on-site parking.

At the Courthouse Lofts, Trinity also expects to house a robust artistic and creative community – so much so that the company incorporated a makerspace into the building's design. The room, located on the second floor, features space where tenants can network, share resources and work on messier projects outside of their apartments.

Once the apartments come online, the increased foot traffic is expected to further activate the northern end of Main Street, taking Worcester one step closer toward creating the 18-hour downtown the city has been striving to build over the past five years.

"I think the building is ideally located so that you can walk to anywhere in downtown," Lozano said, adding he expects that residents will take advantage of the various cultural offerings in the area, including the Worcester Art Museum, Tuckerman Hall, and the Salisbury Cultural District.

HONORING MAJOR TAYLOR

The Courthouse Lofts will also pay homage to one of Worcester's most accomplished athletes.

vivid imagery and text. The space will also include interactive screens with images and videos about Taylor's life, as well as a bicycle-racing station that allows visitors to find out whether they can keep up with his record-setting pace.

When the city originally put out a request for proposals for the building, Lozano said officials hoped to see a retail component incorporated into the design. It quickly became apparent that the former courthouse, which is set back from the street, wouldn't lend itself well to that use. When Trinity Financial was selected as the developer, Lee, who had previously become acquainted with Taylor's story, suggested that the non-residential component honor the cyclist.

"He said, 'This is something really important – we should look into the possibility of making a space honoring this figure that a lot of people don't know about,'" Lozano said. "It started as a small idea and grew into something really impressive."

The museum will also allow members of the public to step inside part of the historic building – an opportu-



ABOVE | Work continues on the common area as the original structure is preserved and restored to its original grandeur.

FROM UPPER LEFT | Detail of original staircase, artifact preserved from time gone by, loft kitchen, retained judge's bench in the community space.

a modern residential living space for households of all incomes. The developer, which specializes in complex urban projects, preserved many historic details – from judges' benches to original signage – and incorporated them into the building's overall design.

Now, the company is preparing to begin leasing the first of the Courthouse Lofts as soon as early October.

The phased opening will begin with the section of building originally constructed in the 1950s, followed by the rest of the complex in January. The development will also include a public museum dedicated to American cyclist Marshall Walter "Major" Taylor, who trained and competed on the streets of Worcester more than 120 years ago.

"It has proven to be crazy and a very challenging project to pull off, but it's totally worth it," Lozano said. "It's a truly unique building. It's still iconic and it's going to be an amazing place for people to live."

DISTINCTIVE CHAMBERS

From vaulted ceilings to intricately crafted molding, each unit's features are unique.

A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Once the Courthouse Lofts is fully leased, the development promises to be as diverse as the surrounding Worcester community.

Lozano says he expects that tenants will range from young professionals to empty-nesters, and come from a wide range of economic backgrounds. The Courthouse Lofts will feature a variety of affordable units, making the development accessible to renters of all income levels.

"It's very important to Trinity to provide housing for everybody, and the vast majority of our projects really do incorporate a mixed-income model," he said. "We feel that provides for more stable communities – both within our apartment buildings, but also in the neighborhoods and cities where we work."

Diversity is a core value for the 33-year-old company, which is 50 percent minority-owned and boasts a diverse staff comprised of 59 percent women and/or minorities, according to its website. Its co-founder and principal, Patrick Lee, is a prominent Black leader in the industry.

More than 120 years ago, cyclist Marshall Walter "Major" Taylor trained and competed on the streets of Worcester, going on to become the second Black world-champion athlete in history and breaking seven world records.

Assistant Project Manager Aaron Horne said the development will include a public museum featuring cable-hung panels that tell Taylor's story in chronological order through

nity they might not have had otherwise – and attract more foot traffic to that side of Main Street.

"We're very excited to be downtown and contribute to everything that's been happening there over the last several years," Lozano said. "We wanted to make something that was really positive and help activate that northern end of Main Street and return it to the gateway status that it had long been."



Artist's rendering of what the completed common area might look like upon completion of construction and addition of furnishings.

MEET STARTUP WORCESTER: STACY CHIN

StartUp Worcester Participant is Closer to Reinventing the Condom

By David Sullivan, Economic Development Fellow, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Worcester has long been a city of innovation. From being the first venue of the National Women’s Rights Convention, to Robert Goddard’s launch of the first liquid-fueled rocket, to the invention of the wind chill factor, Worcester has always been on the front-line of changes that have benefited the entire world. Now, Worcester is closer than ever to adding a new innovation to its resume – the reinvention of the condom.

That’s where CEO and Co-Founder of HydroGlyde Coatings, Stacy Chin, comes in. “There’s been many issues with the usage of condoms,” she told me in a July 21 interview. “People don’t use them properly or don’t use them at all. This creates more risk for disease and unwanted pregnancies as well.” HydroGlyde was a participant in the 2017 iteration of StartUp Worcester, a program run by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce intended to recruit and incubate the region’s most impressive entrepreneurial businesses.

Since 2017, HydroGlyde has received \$1.4 million in grants to pursue its mission of revolutionizing the way the condom is designed.

According to Chin, the condom has not been significantly redesigned in the past 70 years. Some would argue it hasn’t been redesigned in a major way in the past 500 years, apart from the switch from linen to lamb’s intestine and eventually to latex, as well as the addition of the reservoir tip in the mid-20th century. Either way, HydroGlyde is addressing a serious issue that hasn’t been looked at in a long time.

HydroGlyde is not alone in recognizing that the typical condom has an outdated design.

In 2012, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sent out a worldwide request for a company to fix the condom’s current issues to combat STDs, STIs, and unwanted pregnancies across the globe in an effort to address poverty and inequality. And it’s not just an issue for the poorer parts of the world, where condom access is infrequent if available at all. In the United States alone in 2018, the CDC reported a “record high” of STD transmissions that amounted to a staggering 2,457,118 combined cases.

So, what’s the key to fixing the condom? According to Chin, it’s all in the lubricant.

Currently, lack of lubrication is the primary cause of leading the condom to improperly function – bodily friction during intercourse can dry up the lubricant and cause small holes and tears in the latex and discomfort for the people involved.

Usually, a silicon jelly is applied to the surface of the condom during manufacturing, but that rarely holds up long enough when it comes to usage. At HydroGlyde, they are developing a prototype latex design where the coating is permanently attached to the surface and can be activated with a few drops of water. This would eliminate the need for supplemental condom lubricants, make them far less likely to break, and create greater access to safe condoms.

Currently, HydroGlyde is securing the necessary FDA approval for testing trials for their prototype. “Right now we have 3 patents granted, which is excellent,” says Chin. “We are moving towards a small human trial...to figure out if we have a viable option that consumers want. This has been in the work for years and years.” Recently, HydroGlyde also secured IRB approval for the testing, which recognizes the product’s safety for human use. Once the trials are complete, they will begin to move closer towards commercialization.

Chin told me that a big part of her company’s success has been its lab location in Worcester. To her, being headquartered in the WorcLab building downtown has reinforced a positive, innovative culture in her company. “I like to say we have the best of both worlds in Worcester here with Boston nearby – the exposure to the bioscience ecosystem in Greater Boston and the innovation community in Worcester,” she told me.

She also talked about how the universities in Worcester are training the next generation of startup entrepreneurs, especially in life sciences. Chin herself graduated from Holy Cross with a degree in chemistry.

StartUp Worcester was a key factor in pushing HydroGlyde to its current success. Each year, about a dozen businesses are selected by a competitive process and offered a seat in the program. Several of these start-up companies have been purchased by larger companies or have gotten the publicity and resources needed to take them to the next level. It also includes access to the laboratory space downtown through a partnership between the WorcLab and the Chamber, and Chin identified this as a crucial part of her company’s early development. “Having space at the Worcester Idea Lab [now WorcLab] was really instrumental in testing and prototyping and getting us to where we are now,” she explained.

The next big thing is already in the works. Keep an eye out for Worcester’s next big innovation.



Stacy Chin, CEO and Co-Founder, HydroGlyde Coatings

Giving Worcester a Voice

By Bayla Cohen, Intern, Boston University School of Communications

Downtown Worcester is on the rise, and Talk of the Commonwealth, Worcester’s local radio show, is committed to giving Worcester the recognition it deserves.

“Local voices are going away,” Hank Stoltz, the host of Talk of the Commonwealth and founder of Radio Worcester Network, disclosed. Thus, the show is devoted to maintaining a local voice for the city of Worcester.

Why is maintaining a local voice so pertinent? Often, people get their information from large media conglomerates. However, these stations frequently lose a personal connection with their audience. “They are impersonal,” Ben White, the show’s executive producer and the co-founder of Radio Worcester Network, commented about large radio stations. “They tend to focus on maintaining high viewership and less on the citizens they claim to be serving.”

In order to maintain a local voice for the city of Worcester, “All of the show’s information and content is through a Worcester lens.” In fact, the radio show is caller-driven, which allows the people of Worcester to guide the direction of the show.

Even the physical location of the studio is located in the Green Island neighborhood near downtown

minutes away from their old space, to Stoltz, “it feels like a world away.”

The studio is spacious, welcoming, and very unique. “We wanted a space to reflect ourselves,” said White. The studio is filled with unique aspects that display Talk of the Commonwealth’s mission to conserve a local voice for Worcester.

For instance, in Ben White’s studio space, there is a large mural of a yellow “smiley face.” In fact, Worcester is home to the “smiley face” as it was created by Harvey Ball in 1963 in Worcester, Massachusetts. “It’s not often you will see a cup collection in a radio studio,” Stoltz remarked. Along with the cups, Stoltz has a collection of bobbleheads of influential people. One of the bobbleheads is Tim Murray, the president and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to signify the impact he, and the Chamber, have had on Talk of the Commonwealth.

“I cannot give enough credit to the chamber,” Stoltz commented. His voice filled with passion while speaking on the topic. “Without the Chamber, I am not sure we would have gotten off of the ground,” Stoltz added. After working for WTAG for ten years, Stoltz was unsure of his next move. He knew he loved radio and was passion-



Hank Stoltz, host of Talk of the Commonwealth and founder of Radio Worcester Network with Ben White, the show’s executive producer and co-founder in their new Worcester studio.

Worcester to ensure local accessibility. “We are very accessible,” White noted. They maintain accessibility through their streaming platforms. Talk of the Commonwealth is available for streaming on iTunes, Spotify, Soundcloud, and several other platforms.

In such uncertain times, it is especially important to know what is going on locally. Local radio stations, such as Talk of the Commonwealth, do a great job of bringing back a sense of community and authenticity. “We are the only guys who can really talk about local news,” Stoltz added.

Hank Stoltz has been a local radio host for more than two decades. “I have been waking-up Worcester for twenty-two years,” Stoltz remarked.

He originally began his journey in radio on WTAG, where he worked as an anchor for ten years. He then had a dream to create his own radio station for Worcester, Massachusetts. Shortly after, he found Ben White, a radio producer with a similar passion to Stoltz for giving Worcester a voice. For several years they worked together to produce Talk of the Commonwealth. The show was originally located in Westborough, working from the WCRN studio. However, they had always intended to find a local space in Worcester to host the show. Fortunately, they found the optimal studio location in downtown Worcester. While the new location is only twenty

ate about giving Worcester a voice, but he was uncertain about where to begin.

“It was a conversation with Tim Murray on the importance of local media that made the biggest impact,” Stoltz explained. Murray encouraged Stoltz to join the Chamber and turn his dream into a reality. Ever since, Talk of the Commonwealth has been a part of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce, attending almost every event, networking, and making a name for themselves. As a business, “If you are not a part of the Chamber, what are you doing?” White concluded.

The Chamber currently partners with Talk of the Commonwealth every morning to inform Worcester on the Chamber’s updates along with Worcester events and happenings. The 12-minute show runs Monday through Friday at 8:45 AM. Additionally, the Chamber has a radio show called “The Voice of Business,” which airs every Wednesday on WCRN from 9 - 10 am which allows its members to share their business updates and events.

To be featured on the Radio Blast or the Voice of Business, please contact Virginia K. Murphy at 508.753. 2924, ext. 240. If you are not a member and wish to hear more about the Chamber’s marketing benefits, please contact Kristen Luna at 508-753-2924, ext. 226.

MASSHIRE, FROM PAGE 10

the Workforce Board’s website and began manually connecting employers and job seekers through request forms.

At first, forms came in at rate of 5-10 per day, but quickly picked up to 10-20 a day. “In the final analysis we had 300 requests,” Mendelsohn explained. “This COVID resource page was the first we know of in all the MassHire regional offices.”

Soon, the Workforce Board found a more permanent solution – developing a public-private partnership with the app JobGet. Since then, the app has gotten national attention because of its unique form that addresses the pandemic’s unemployment crisis. The JobGet – MassHire Central relationship was recently praised in a Brookings Institution article for its adaptability and cost effectiveness.

“Bruce and I had seen the tool being used out near Boston and we noticed the functionality of smartphone technology – it made more sense, since a lot more people have more access to their phone than to a laptop or a desktop computer,” said Turgeon when describing why they decided to partner with JobGet. “They are also a Massachusetts-based company,” he added.

JobGet impressed MassHire with its accessibility and new approach to job-finding. Unlike other apps or websites, JobGet uses a social media-style interaction to deliver a user-friendly experience. “It’s like Facebook meets Indeed.com meets LinkedIn,” explained Younis.

The app allows job seekers to

create a profile and search for jobs immediately, rather than having to upload a resume. Applicants can then interact with employers to communicate their interest and explore if the job is a fit. From both the job seeker’s and employer’s perspective, the time commitment is significantly reduced, a bonus given the urgency of the current economic crisis.

Turgeon noted that the Commonwealth is looking to develop a statewide system for quick, remote job seeking, and that JobGet is on the short list.

While JobGet is an innovative response to our crisis, Mendelsohn remarked that, “[JobGet] is intended to complement our current services, not replace them.” Weekes added that JobGet was a useful tool to help the Career Centers have greater accessibility, but that their usual, customized employment advising options were still available remotely through their website.

MassHire leadership emphasized that employers who are struggling to find new talent can reach out to any of them or visit the Career Center’s website. “We have a database of thousands of job seekers and we can screen them for you and provide candidate matching services,” explained Younis. He also indicated that they are launching a new “hot jobs” page where employers can feature their positions right on the website.

To get in contact with Worcester or Southbridge’s career center, visit masshirecentralcc.com. Employers can visit the “Business Services” page at masshirecentralcc.com/employers/.

Meet Leadership Worcester: PETER DUNN

By Peter Dunn, Correspondent

Worcester is often described as a place with all the benefits of a big city while maintaining a small town feel. We’re the second largest city in New England, but still have great neighborhoods – and more than sixty public parks. We have a growing airport, an expanding train station, and now we are starting to get the national recognition we deserve. At the same time, amidst our growth, our community remains a close-knit family. I’ve heard people compare Worcester to the story of Goldilocks, where the porridge is “just right.”

With the right energy, and one or two helpful connections, anyone can make a difference in our city. The Leadership Worcester program presents the perfect opportunity to spark the imagination and the energy, while making those connections happen.

There’s no better example of that dynamic than the Pow! Wow! Mural installations. A grassroots group of artists and community members put energy behind their inspiration and gathered the necessary resources and support that enabled them to install more than 100 murals across the city. That initiative is more than just an art project, it’s a robust community development project that inspired our city. And, if you look at the past and present committee members, you’ll find many Leadership Worcester alumni.

Kevin O’Sullivan, retired president and CEO of the Mass Biomedical Initiatives, has long said that the difference in Worcester is that we have the “collaborative gene.” Look no further than the recent Worcester Together initiative for a case in point. This amazing partnership led by the United Way, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, and City of Worcester has raised more than \$10 million to support immediate and long-term recovery efforts in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

But, Worcester Together is more than a fundraising initiative. For months, between 50 and 100 dedicated people, representing a diverse cross-section of organizations, institutions, and businesses have come together multiple times each week. They share information to address the community’s critical needs, identify gaps in resources, and work together to ensure the most vulnerable among us get the support they need. This remarkable effort has been a



Peter Dunn, Chief Development Officer, City of Worcester, Leadership Worcester Alum

shining example of the city coming together to make a difference. Once again, alumni from Leadership Worcester have been a major part of the effort by bringing their skills and energy to the table. And they put their money where their mouth is. The Leadership Worcester alumni association challenged themselves to contribute financially to the Worcester Together initiative, raising more than \$7,500 in just a week.

As a Leadership Worcester participant, the program content opened my eyes to the city to a depth I had not experienced before. It has stayed with me, reminding me to challenge assumptions, embrace different points of view, and discover more of Worcester. The connections that I made and the relationships that I built with fellow classmates are long-lasting. Many collaborations among Leadership Worcester participants have had a positive impact on our community and I applaud the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and Greater Worcester Community Foundation for reestablishing the program and their commitment to helping develop our community’s future leaders.

The Leadership Worcester philosophy of collaboration and partnership is critically important, now more than ever. I encourage emerging young professionals and aspiring leaders to: Get involved. Make a difference. And don’t let our porridge get cold.

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Tourism Spending from the Bottom Up

By Monique M. Messier, Executive Director, Discover Central Massachusetts

By now you most likely have a good idea about the devastating effects of COVID-19 on the tourism industry and the havoc it continues to cause. Hotel occupancy is down by more than 50% from where it was at this same time last year in 2019. Travel experts are forecasting a 40% loss in travel spending in 2020 due to the pandemic, which translates to a loss of 1,600 jobs and close to \$20 million in state and local tax revenue (taxes include lodging, meals, sales, payroll, excise, property, fuel, etc.) in Central Massachusetts.

The question is how far does tourism reach down into our communities? It may be further than you think.

Tourism is an industry with deep roots in the economy, and it touches many more businesses than most

people think about when they hear the word tourism.

To get technical for a moment, the definition of a traveler, used by state travel offices across the U.S., is someone who travels 50 or more miles one way from his or her home or stays overnight in a paid accommodation.

Travel spending supports 6 main industries including: public transportation, auto transportation, lodging, entertainment, recreation, and general retail trade.

According to VISA domestic credit card data provided by the state office of travel and tourism, the impact of traveler spending reaches far and wide and is a major contributor to our local economy. The data shows a significant impact to small businesses that most would not associate with

tourism but is indeed traveler spending. Again, these are people who do NOT reside in the region.

Spending by VISA domestic credit cardholders residing outside Massachusetts in 2016 shows that in Worcester County alone, these travelers spent more than \$1.4 million in pet stores, in excess of \$1 million in motion picture theaters, over \$700,000 at opticians, almost \$500,000 in parking fees, garages, and meters, more than \$350,000 in walk-in dry cleaning, almost \$300,000 in antique shops and roughly \$80,000 in bowling alleys.

Remember, these numbers are from just one of the major credit card companies and do not include travelers who paid with cash, nor spending by international travelers to our region. So, multiply these spending numbers by three (or four) and it creates a compelling case about the important role that tourism plays in supporting both small business and our overall health of the economy.

Supporting small business through hospitality is critical in weathering the COVID-19 storm. The numbers show the power of the industry and how its comeback can help rebuild the economy through the tourism sector.

The #WeLoveWorcester campaign created by Discover Central MA was created to do just that, support small business while respecting the



COVID-19 guidelines. Patrons of local establishments, were and are, encouraged all summer long to submit a photo while wearing a face covering ultimately showing their support of Worcester's small businesses.

Each week one winner has been awarded \$25 for the most creative photo and at the end of the summer, one lucky patron will be awarded a cash prize of \$1,000. Photos may be submitted to Discover Central MA through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, or by sending an email to pcoit@discovercentralma.org.

Visit www.discovercentralma.org to learn more about this campaign and how you can help support the region's small businesses.

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<https://www.sba.gov/paycheckprotection/find>



WORCESTER SPORTS STREET:

A lull in the action is followed by baseball’s duel from the mound

By Timothy P. Murray, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO

For many on Sports Street, the sounds of summer and fall are back with the Red Sox playing on television and radio. The summer experience also included the Bravehearts playing – albeit at a dif-

ferent location – as well as playoff NBA basketball and NHL hockey. Strange, but certainly a sign of the times given the COVID-19 situation, but for sports fans live games beat re-runs.

Beanball and Fighting Joe Kelly

It is as old as the game of baseball itself and it is referred to in a multitude of ways, ‘the fastball by the chin’, ‘a high heater or high and tight’, ‘the brushback pitch’ or the old ‘beanball.’ Each of these phrases or words means essentially the same thing, a baseball pitcher throwing the ball at or towards the batter to send a message. The message may be to not crowd the plate or that sliding into base with their spikes aimed at a teammate’s opponents body part is unacceptable. Or, the message could be to stop trying to steal signals. Which brings us to former Red Sox pitcher and fan favorite Fighting Joe Kelly.

Joe Kelly endeared himself to Red Sox fans in the spring of 2018 when he went toe to toe with Yankee first baseman Tyler Austin after Austin was hit by a pitch and charged the mound to go after Kelly. The fisticuffs that ensued added another chapter to the Red Sox-Yankees rivalry but also helped vault Kelly into Red Sox lore. Kelly further cemented himself in Red Sox history later that season during the playoffs when his clutch pitching contributed to the Red Sox claiming their 4th World Series Championship of this young century.

In addition to the ‘beanball,’ sign stealing has also long been a part of baseball tradition. However, it rose to a new level of awareness this past year as a result of the Houston Astros sign stealing scandal. The Astros’ major transgression involved the use of technology, namely a centerfield camera, to steal signals from the catcher to the pitcher that was then relayed to the Astros batter. A live feed from the camera into the Astros dugout alerted staff and players who would tip off the batter about the pitch that was coming by banging a baseball bat on a bucket signaling whether it was a fastball, curveball, etc. This became known as the ‘banging scheme.’

An MLB investigation determined that the scheme occurred during the 2017 and 2018 seasons. Ultimately, the Astros defeated the L.A. Dodgers in the 2018 World Series. Teams throughout the league, including the Yankees and Dodgers suspected the Astros of signal stealing and registered their complaints. The MLB investigation resulted in the suspensions of a number of Astro managers and coaches including Alex Cora who went on to become the Red Sox manager in 2019. To make matters worse, the Astros were not a well-liked team by opponents because of their brash playing style epitomized

by players like Alex Bregman, Jose Altuve, and Carlos Correa.

The fallout of the MLB study was that many players on opposing teams felt their baseball season and careers were undermined because of the Astros’ cheating and use of technology. Many players publicly voiced their anger at the Astros. Some even promised retribution on the field. In particular, many on the Dodgers believed that they had been cheated out of a fair World Series match-up.

While Joe Kelly was not a member of the Dodgers during the 2017 World Series, he became the instrument that channeled the Dodgers frustration when he either intentionally or unintentionally threw at Astros players at the beginning of the season in July. Kelly threw three, 96 mph fast balls by the head of Astros player Alex Bregman. He did the same to Carlos Correa before striking him out and then swearing at Correa. This led to a bench clearing confrontation between the teams and the MLB suspending Kelly for an unheard of 8 games.

Fighting Joe Kelly is now also permanently cemented as a hero in Dodger baseball history as he is with the Red Sox. He is a fan favorite on both the east and west coasts. How many athletes can say that?

Chamber’s Alex Guardiola Recognized as a Forty Under 40

By Sharyn Williams

The Chamber’s own Alex Guardiola, the Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy for the organization has been recognized by the Worcester Business Journal as one of 2020s Forty Under 40 professionals.

In Alex’s two years at the Chamber, he has helped hundreds of businesses navigate the often-confusing labyrinth of regulatory commissions, understand business regulations, and connect them with the people and tools to move their business endeavors forward. In Alex’s role, he also represents the Chamber in a variety of governmental and community settings and in recent months has been integral in helping to curate information about the CARES Act and PPP loans, where to find PPE, and the reopening plan for business.

Alex is an extremely hard-working individual who tackles and solves problems, works collaboratively with his colleagues, and has a diverse set of skills. Willing to jump in and help on a moment’s notice, Alex is often the ‘go-to’ guy for a wide range of unique tasks.

The Chamber congratulates Alex on this well-deserved recognition.

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