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WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEWSPAPER • VOL. 3 ISSUE 4 - JUNE 2018

Regional airport soars into major new hubs

American Airlines, JetBlue offer new destinations



Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Timothy P. Murray hails the airport's second major carrier, American Airlines, during April's ceremony.

WORCESTER – A renaissance of its own is happening at Worcester Regional Airport with new daily flights being added this year by two major airlines with JetBlue flying to JFK International Airport in New York City and American Airlines to Philadelphia International Airport.

The comeback has been a long time in the making, with a projected 100,000 passengers at the airport annually since 2013 when JetBlue first began flying here by offering two daily flights to Orlando and Fort Lauderdale. Revenue at Worcester Regional Airport in fiscal

year 2017 totaled \$1.6 million and about 125 people are now employed there.

Crediting low fares and strong customer service as the core ingredients for continued growth, the NYC flights will feature the JetBlue Embraer 190 Aircraft that can accommodate up to 100 passengers in two-by-two layout rows with full in-air amenities. Once in New York at 7 a.m., passengers can then access more than 70 airlines that operate out of JFK or return back to Worcester same day just before midnight. New York City is JetBlue's largest focus city,

SEE AIRPORT, PAGE A6

AC Hotel helps anchor downtown renaissance

Luxury-infused facility opens

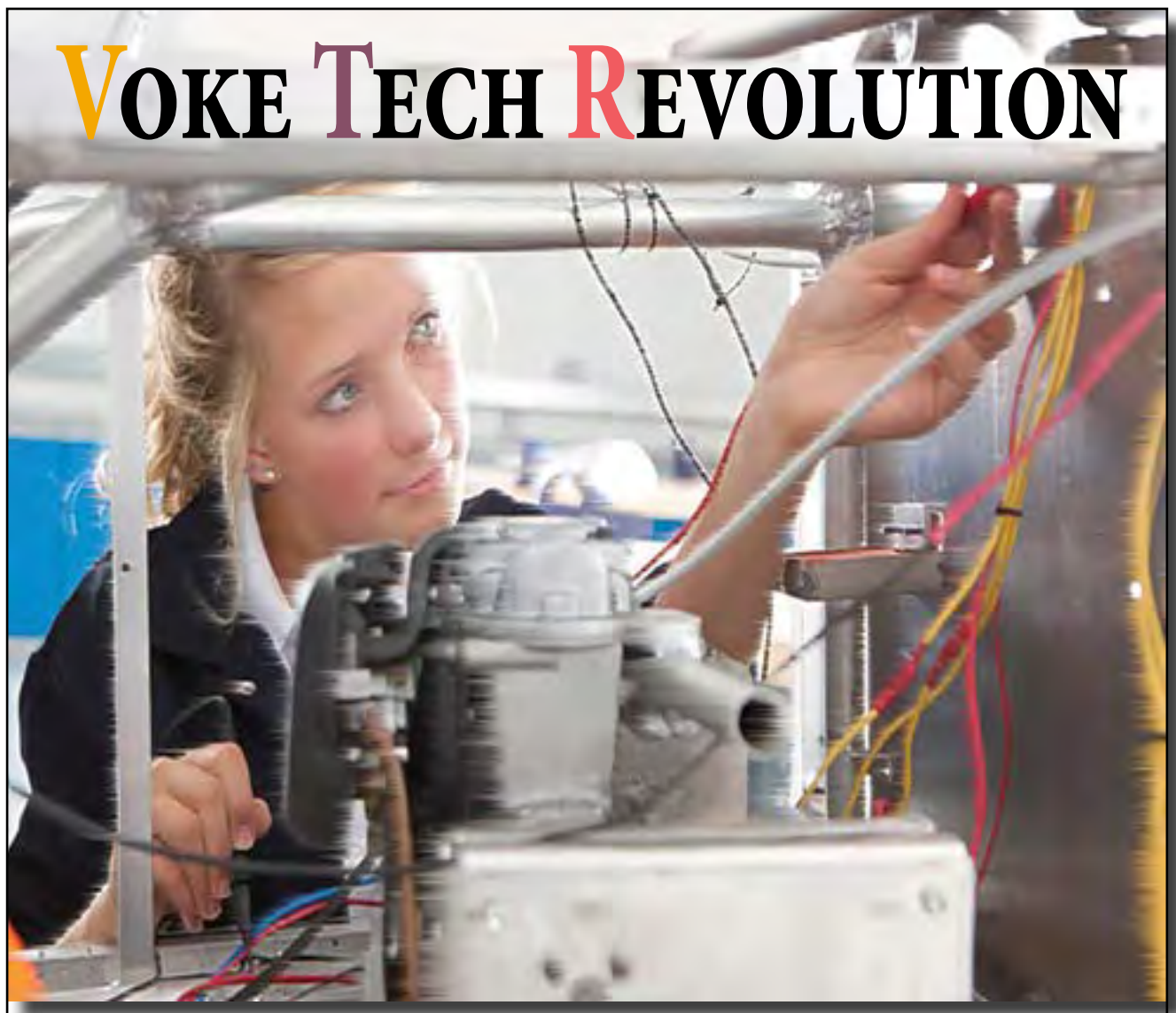
WORCESTER – With the AC Hotel Worcester now open as a signature feature of the CitySquare Project at 125 Front St., the Chamber Exchange Newspaper was invited to take its readers on an exclusive tour of the facility's many upscale offerings.

Opening this past April after nearly two years of construction, more than 200 on-site construction workers contributed to the project overseen by PROCON as architect and general contractor, and interior design by XSS Hotels. John Stebbins, XSS Hotels project manager, said the new Worcester location is one of the largest properties in the company. In comparison, AC Hotels recently opened a 99,000-square-foot hotel in Boston.

The six-story, 135,000-square-foot hotel with an adjacent 110 Grill restaurant (see related story on Page A11) offers 170 king suites– most equipped with pullout sofas - and double-queen guest rooms located on floors two through six. All rooms are decorated in classic European bash color patterns. Stebbins said the rooms don't offer a lot of unnecessary extras in order to produce an uncluttered look. Light switches are built into the walls next to the beds, and the rooms offer free Wi-Fi and 49-inch smart TVs with flexible workspaces.

The \$21 million hotel offers a robust package of guest-friendly amenities, including abundant wall space artwork by local artisans. The hotel boasts the largest fitness center of all 20 AC Hotels with a Fitness On Demand system offering hundreds of a-la-carte digital workout programs and separate yoga room. A 24/7 market and hydration station kiosks on every floor pad the guest experience. For

SEE AC, PAGE B8



Exhaustive study offers solutions to region's stagnant labor pool

Accountability and dwindling resources often pit Massachusetts academic, comprehensive, and vocational technical high schools against one another, creating winners and losers. However, the end result victims are young people, especially those from low-income families who are denied access to career technical education. The startling reality for many area employers looking to hire young people is that only one in five Massachusetts high school students is enrolled in a vocational

technical program and approximately 3,200 students are wait-listed each year across Massachusetts.

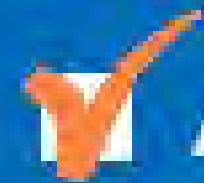
A new report, "High Quality Career Technical Education in Massachusetts - A Critical Investment in Our State's Future", produced by the state-wide Alliance for Vocational Technical Education (AVTE) helps pinpoint solutions to the vast challenge of a near crisis level industry labor shortage problem. The 28-page white paper calls for less competition and more equity among vocational students and schools; infrastructure improvements to many aging facilities; curriculum

SEE VOKE, PAGE A6

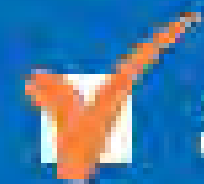
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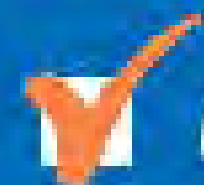
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PUBLIC POLICY

Sen. Spilka speaks to state budget challenges

WORCESTER - Senate President-Elect Karen E. Spilka, chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means 2nd Middlesex and Norfolk District, recently addressed Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce Business Government Forum attendees in a diverse discussion about the state's FY '19 budget.

With looming federal policies affecting many local businesses, Spilka maintains close communication with Worcester's federal delegation and their relationships with federal agencies. Recent response from those agencies has been conveyed back to Spilka as confusion over implementation protocols. The new challenge facing Massachusetts as a result of federal tax reform involves not only a reduction in tax revenue, but also transitioning to federal block grants to help fund Medicaid.

"It happened so fast, it's hard to know what the tax vote consequences are yet," Spilka said.

The senator fears the new changes will also drive down federal funding levels in Massachusetts. With the Commonwealth already boasting the highest rate of insured residents in the country, federal and state changes in health reform are combating each other. Spilka said that Gov. Charles Baker's proposal last June to cut off 400,000-500,000 people from Medicaid with no clarity as to whether those insured would still receive the

same benefits was countered by the State Legislature.

"We fought [years ago] to put more people into Medicaid by reining in costs," Spilka said, "so we pursued a health care cost bill last session."

Meanwhile, changing state reimbursement structures for education is another challenge before Spilka's Senate Committee on Ways and Means with a multitude of issues and subject areas to study. "The problem is something is said [from the Trump Administration] on Monday and by Tuesday it's changed, by Wednesday that has changed, and by Friday it

is the exact opposite," Spilka noted. "Often times it's not even worth figuring out what they say because it changes so much. It's that uncertainty that does create some anxiety."

In attendance at the forum, Susan Mailman, president and owner Coghlin Electrical Contractors, remarked about the last time the economy struggled in a major way. Solutions were found under the Patrick-Murray Administration with state infrastructure investments in local CSX and the state psychiatric hospital land construction projects

that helped her business during tough times.

"We're fortunate to now be doing a lot of work at MGM, in Everett and a lot of higher education work across the state," Mailman said. "When I look out

SEE FORUM, PAGE B7



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Gov. Baker praises Worcester's downtown development progress

WORCESTER – Citing his own Cabinet leadership team filled by Democrats, Independents and Republicans alike, Gov. Charles Baker told Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting attendees gathered at the DCU Center Dec. 1 that he is constantly impressed by the city's team-first approach to development.

"You can learn a lot from people you don't always agree with, and in some respects you can probably learn more if you're willing to hear what other people have to say, process it and think about it. It takes two or more to collaborate," Baker said. "You can't get there by yourself. In a distributed decision-making model, more than one point of view matters."

In many respects, Baker's vision mirrors what has transpired in Worcester over the past 10 years in terms of major progress and development. At this same event last year, Worcester City Manager Edward Augustus challenged attendees to start acting like the second largest city in New England. Augustus, who believes city leaders have answered that challenge, thanked Baker and his team for the state's \$10 million contribution to the Route 20 sewer project that will open what's known as the city's last frontier for commercial development. That area could potentially generate \$17 million in new tax dollars in the first 10 years alone. Moreover, the state's Open For Business initiative led by Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito has

spurred a new agreement between the state and the Worcester Business Development Corporation led by Craig Blais to redevelop 44 acres of former Worcester State Hospital land into a major bio-manufacturing park. Augustus also cited cooperation between the state and city in the ongoing \$11 million Main Street improvement project with pedestrian and business friendly sidewalks and roads, streetscape improvements and public art additions.

Worcester Chamber President & CEO Timothy Murray added to the teamwork conversation by citing the Chamber's creation of a statewide coalition to expand access to vocational education, leading to formation of the Alliance for Vocational Technical Education. The alliance attracted the support of the Baker-Polito Administration with a state investment of \$45 million over three years.

That support for Worcester, Murray continued, is also evidenced by the state's commuter rail expansion between Worcester to Boston with the MBTA's Heart to Hub non-stop daily line, as well as MassPort's \$30 million expansion and improvements at Worcester Regional Airport. In addition, the massive redevelopment of 150 Blackstone with developer Steve Goodman and continued rise of video gaming design company Petricore right downtown, Murray added, prove that the city is diverse in its ability to attract new and expanding businesses.

Chandler urges better economic teamwork

WORCESTER – Roughly 300 business professionals attended the Worcester Regional Chamber's quarterly Breakfast Club event at Holy Cross to hear Senate President Hargett Chandler address the Central Massachusetts business community.

Citing Central Massachusetts' recent growth and economic development, Chandler kicked off her speech by recognizing that "Greater Worcester is having its moment." "We are no longer the 'gritty mill city,'" said Chandler. "Rather, we are the 'exciting destination.'"

Chandler expanded upon this by also highlighting the statewide achievements of the Commonwealth. From healthcare to education, Chandler emphasized how the Bay State's top industries and sectors serve as a blueprint for the rest of the country.

Despite all these successes, the Chandler focused on the hurdles that Massachusetts has been faced with in the midst of its 'moment.'

"As much as this is a moment for Massachusetts and Worcester to celebrate, we are faced with a critical question...are we collectively, as legislators, as business owners, as civic leaders, willing to work together and take the next steps that we must in order to continue moving Massachusetts forward?," said Chandler.

First on her list of top priorities is housing. Referring to Gov. Charlie

Baker's recently announced housing plan, Chandler said, although it's strong, "we can go further." According to Chandler, the Commonwealth's out of date zoning laws significantly impact cost containment across the industry, affecting both the private and public sectors.

Citing the Baker Administration's estimate "that at least 17,000 new units are needed per year to meet the market's demand," Chandler stated the public sector simply cannot afford to bankroll the new units, but rather allow the private sector to bridge the gap by reducing limiting zoning laws.

"In that vein, as we look at housing, we must also look closely at transportation and infrastructure, and what our current systems represent for business and residents," said Chandler.

Much like the state's zoning laws, the Commonwealth's transportation system is significantly outdated, being built in the mid-1950s. "That simply doesn't reflect the reality for today's workforce, or the reality of Central Massachusetts as an economic center in its own right, attracting its own workforce," said Chandler.

Chandler also plans this year to call on the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to submit a plan for electrified regional rail to the legislature by 2022.

Chandler emphasized throughout that the Senate's goal has shifted to focus on business growth.



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New AVTE study offers solutions to state and region's stagnant voke tech labor pool

VOKE, FROM PAGE A1

innovations to meet 21st century workplace skillset demands and to avoid duplicative teaching efforts; and more career readiness, training and assessment of progress.

To fund its bevy of recommendations, the report supports establishing a dedicated \$3 billion bond program to fund the replacement and renovation of Career Technical Education (CTE) programs and school districts, and equipment purchases for Chapter 74-approved programs. Of the \$3 billion bond, \$2 billion would be dedicated to construction costs and \$1 billion to equipment. Additionally, the 10-year bond would pay for capital construction at three schools per year and up to \$250,000 for program development and operating costs.

Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Timothy Murray, who co-chairs the AVTE group and helped lead the report's compilation, said this is the single biggest issue he hears from Chamber members, no matter the size of the company. The solutions proposed in the AVTE white paper, both short and long term, aim to expand access to career and technical education to 80 percent of high school students who currently don't have that access, including 300-400 students on the waiting list just for Worcester Vocational Technical High School.

"Worcester is emblematic of the situation across the state. How do we expand exposure and access into high school programs? That's what this report sets out to do," Murray said.

Manufacturing worker drought continues

Manufacturing in Central Massachusetts certainly faces an uphill climb, despite occupying about 17 percent of the employment base in Central Massachusetts. Soon, 100,000 senior-aged employees will be aging out or retiring from those jobs. Jeff Turgeon, director of the Central Mass. Workforce Investment Board, said the coming wave of retirements in manufacturing will impact the economy if shared stakeholders don't make smart investments in helping the next generation of talent.

Workforce pipeline development is something Saint Gobain and many other area employers are keenly interested in furthering. Nicole Zea, plant manager at Saint Gobain, said her company starts at high school and early college level for recruiting now, but needs to start even earlier and build better partnerships. "One of the challenges we face is that we still may be one of the darker manufacturers in the sense that it is very much still traditional manufacturing," she said.

She added that, "We do have many employees earning college degrees and masters while working with us. We are a big company with a lot of paths. You have the opportunity to go from a research job, to a manufacturing job to a marketing job. The individual needs to have that want and that drive. You may come and make \$15-18 an hour and go home with a little dust on your hands, but give it two years and get some more training at QCC and then you'll be able to move up."

Construction/Trades Face Workforce Shortage

While the region's expanding manufacturing industry often gets the lion's share of attention in workforce shortage conversations,



From left to right, Kinefac Corp. Engineer David Willens, Jean Allain, Kinefac Corp. vice president of North American Sales, Timothy Murray, president & CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, and John Killam, MassMEP president & CEO, gather to discuss advanced precision metal manufacturing techniques during a recent tour. This lathe machine produces giant screws used for military aircraft.

construction and the trades are also feeling the crunch.

Over the past 40 years, productivity in construction has declined, slowing the pace of innovation and forcing companies to make hard decisions, particularly during recessionary times when companies are recruiting less which in turn detracts prospective students from entering the industry. In 2013-2014, 74 percent of construction firms nationally experienced trouble finding qualified trained craftsman such as carpenters and equipment operators while 54 percent of those same firms also had difficulty filling professional managerial positions. Research has shown there will be no growth in the construction workers over the next 15 years.

"Productivity problems in the construction industry are really a national problem," said Anthony Consigli, chief executive officer of Consigli Construction Co. Inc. of Milford. "We're seeing a decrease in both the quality and quantity of construction workers."

Consigli acknowledges that the productivity problem is much more apparent for companies operating outside of labor unions, and that changes in immigration policies nationally are going to have a lasting negative impact on the trades. "We don't have enough resources for what we are doing," he added.

Reducing competition among schools

The academic institution access divide between specialized voke tech and traditional high schools is a very real challenge and Worcester is not spared. AVTE's report addresses the false dichotomy between white- and blue-collar workers by suggesting the creation of a clear definition of high quality Career Technical Education (CTE) designed to break such barriers and misconceptions.

According to a report by Brookings Institute Senior Fellow Brian Jacob's, "CTE has been on the decline for several decades. Starting in the 1980s, states increased the number of courses required for high school graduation, and began mandating students take additional courses in core academic areas such as math, science, social studies and foreign language. These additional requirements, along with declining funding and a growing perception that all young people should be encouraged to obtain a four-year college degree, led to a sharp decline in CTE participation. Between 1990 and 2009, the number of CTE credits earned by U.S. high school students dropped by 14 percent."

Kate Blossveren Kreamer, deputy executive director of Advance CTE, said during a recent Fordham Institute podcast that in the last 10-15 years the long held stigma of voke tech students not faring well in traditional academics and not being college ready has changed. "If you're looking at a CTE program that is not preparing kids academically, then that's not a CTE program you should be supporting," said Kreamer. "Now, when you are looking at manufacturing programs, employers want folks to come in who can work all the machines and who can code the machines. It's a much greater demand of the workforce and more diverse opportunities."

The AVTE white paper also studied a collaboration among the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, the Business Roundtable, and the College Board, where researchers made the economic case for high quality career technical education, highlighting what they found to be its most important characteristics, including building career pathways, K-12 through adult; focusing on program design; curriculum framework; rigorous CTE curriculum; curriculum derived from industry and reflecting qualifications of future employment; curriculum delivered through projects that address

contextualized problems; curriculum continually enhancing related mathematics, literacy and science concepts; community-based learning; CTE teachers highly qualified in technical and pedagogical skills; CTE teachers focusing on core 21st-century skills; work-based learning that is developmental, progressive and progressively intensive; Career Technical Student Organizations that are an integral part of pedagogy; and an assessment framework.

In its report, AVTE recommends the following action steps:

- Revise the MassCore to include a minimum of one CTE course or an approved internship to increase all graduates' exposure to CTE fields, enabling students to have the knowledge to access both college and careers.
- Assure curricular alignment to both local employers' needs and expected national standards.
- Assure instructional ability and competence through the utilization of occupational advisory boards and nationally validated teacher competency testing.

Expanding Chapter 74

As a sign of progress and propulsion for the AVTE's less competitive recommendations among schools, Murray points to a Chamber-member business, Tri-State Trucking. Facing worker recruitment problems, the company worked with Worcester Public Schools and the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to create and implement a diesel-tech program at South High – a program Worcester Voke Tech is not currently offering. Moreover, North High is now seeking to create health care related programming through Chapter 74 funding as well.

"This is recognized by industry sectors as the baseline training you need and students often graduate with industry-recognized credentials," Murray said.

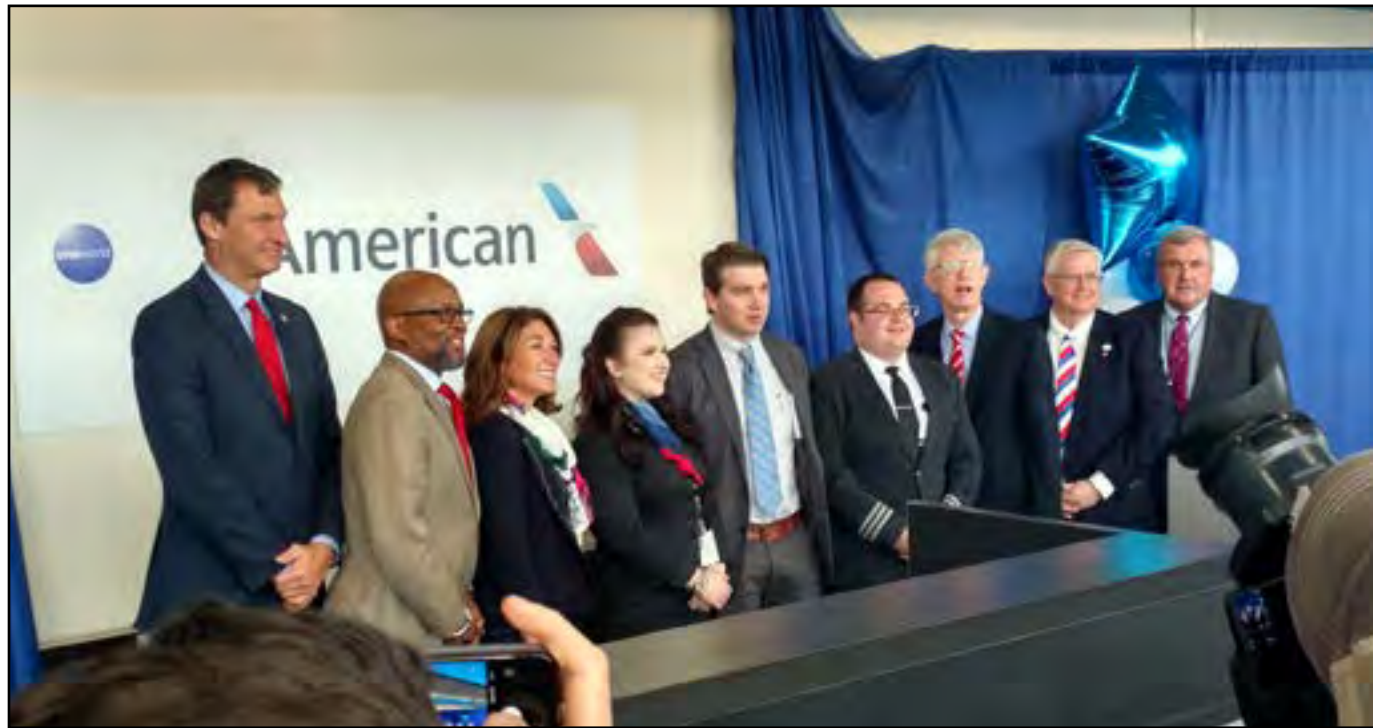
Expanding access to Chapter 74 programs, Murray added, can be viewed in three ways: expanding funding into traditional high schools; expanding bricks and mortar capacity by updating and renovating outdated facilities; and offering more off hours and after school programming within existing public schools during the summer.

A Bright Future Ahead

With Massachusetts being one of the nation's early pioneers in voke tech education, the reality of today's economy and fast pace of industry innovations does not allow stakeholders to remain complacent. To meet the demands of employers and allow students to become entrepreneurial and work-ready, expanding access in both traditional and non-traditional ways is critical. AVTE hopes its study maximizes the Commonwealth's CTE workforce pipeline to meet employer needs and provide high quality career pathways for more students.

Susan Mailman, president and owner of Worcester-based Coghlin Electrical Contractors, said during the AVTE white paper announcement that students in vocational-centric educational programs post high standardized testing scores and are more likely to graduate today because these programs are designed to keep students engaged with hands-on training.

"As a result, students secure good-paying jobs, possess strong academic, technical and professional skills, and are well prepared for employment in skills occupations or to enroll in post-secondary school," she said.



Dignitaries and American Airlines officials line up for a photo opp after the announcement at Worcester Regional Airport.

Smaller hub focus makes Worcester attractive for JetBlue, American

AIRPORT, FROM PAGE A1

with the carrier offering up to 175 daily national and international departures. Daily JetBlue flights began on May 3.

"Flight 671 is aimed to be a gateway to the world," JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes said. "And that's going to open up flights to Florida, Antigua, Saint Lucia and a lot of the JetBlue network."

The expansion here and elsewhere by JetBlue would not be possible, Hayes added, without a vibrant and well-trained staff. About 2,000-3,000 staff hires are made annually from nearly 250,000 applicants. "Take care of your people and they will take care of your customers," he said, evidenced by the airline being listed by Forbes in May 2017 as the 12thbest place to work out of 500 companies nationally, and as the number 1 transportation employer for the third year straight.

With recent investments in newer seats, larger television screens, and snack marketplaces, JetBlue is better positioning itself to compete in the premium market out of Boston and JFK against other major airline companies such as Delta, American, Southwest and United Airlines.

"This all talks to the spirit of innovation at JetBlue," Hayes said. "What we do is target sectors that are poorly served with poor

products and high fares and we come in and try to disrupt that."

The JetBlue expansion in Worcester follows completion of a new state-of-the-art \$30 million Category III instrument landing system spearheaded by the Worcester Regional Airport's owner, MassPort. That FAA-operated system will allow for the long sought ability to land aircraft in low visibility conditions. Some American Airlines aircraft are not combatable yet with that new system, however.

American Airlines to begin flights to Philadelphia Oct. 4

American's subsidiary, Envoy Air, will fly the 50-seat Embraer Eagle 145 jets to and from Worcester and Philadelphia beginning Oct. 4, which is one of its strongest hubs. Like JetBlue, the move is a strategic one for the company. In late January, American Airlines CEO Doug Parker told investors that the company planned to add 2.5 percent to aircraft capacity in 2018 in a move to better compete with U.S. Airlines who projects to grow by 4-6 percent. American Airlines made a full-year pre-tax profit of \$3.1 billion in 2017.

"We're taking existing aircraft, increasing utilization, and redeploying aircraft from markets that maybe aren't doing quite as

well, to places where we know we can do well where we have real strategic advantage," Parker said during a fourth quarter conference call with investors.

American Airlines is clearly committed to maintaining its small jet fleet in a competitive and often shrinking market, maintaining just over 200 aircraft of that type nation-wide in 2018. AMR is the parent company for American Airlines Inc., American Eagle Airlines Inc., and American Beacon Advisors. American Airlines and American Eagle average nearly 6,700 flights per day to nearly 350 destinations in more than 50 countries. American has hubs in Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C. American Airlines currently makes 430 daily departures from Philadelphia with 92 gates serving 23 different countries, opening up international travel and business destination options to travelers coming from Worcester.

Patrick S. Bowes, American manager of corporate real estate and airport affairs, said American's Flights will be scheduled to depart Worcester daily at 9:30 a.m., with an arrival time of 10:39 a.m. at Philadelphia International Airport. Flights to Worcester will leave Philadelphia at 8 a.m. daily, with a scheduled arrival time of 9:05 a.m. in Worcester. Ticket prices have yet to be disclosed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New leader takes helm at Discover Central Mass.

In the immediate future, Rainford hopes to further broaden the number of farms the Food Hub is buying from and the number of institutions it is selling to. He feels one large reason the food hub only “scratches the surface” is because its story has not been told widely enough. He added that the organization needs to scale up the amount of small businesses it works with.

“Central Massachusetts has a lot of farms and a thriving food scene so it’s the perfect time to take the food hub to the next level,” said Rainford.

Last fall, Worcester County Food Bank took over as the lead parent organization overseeing and hosting the Food Hub as its Shrewsbury headquarters on Route 9. “This is a great place for the Food Hub to be right now in terms of infrastructure and the long standing relationships the food bank has” Rainford said. “We have a great facility in our kitchen that offers start-up food entrepreneurs with a great place to begin.”

Rainford hopes to also build the food hub up in terms of more marketing and awareness. “The Food Hub is pretty much still a secret,” he said. “We hope to get the word out with some intentional promotions and proactive outreach and networking with chamber members and local farm and food organizations.”

The Food Hub is hoping to help sponsor the city’s “Out to Lunch” summer concert series on Worcester Common as well as partner with local food network, Central Mass. Growers, as well as host more open houses.



Stephanie Ramey is the new executive director of Discover Central Mass

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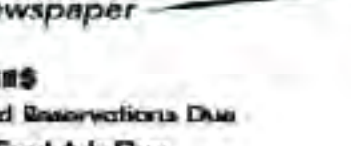
visiting planners and hosts. “We collect all of the information for the proposal process such as hotel pricing and room blocks available,” Ramey said. “Our goal is not to bring an event here and abandon it. We want to immerse planners more and more into our community so that they have a stronger economic impact year after year.”

The sprawling development renaissance that is changing Worcester’s downtown skyline and street ways in dramatic ways is something Discover Central Mass. feels it has helped effect. With the newly opened downtown AC Hotel and Brew on the Grid as well as the beer garden now under construction, entertainment and

recreational opportunities abound as well as in neighborhoods such as the Canal District and Kelley Square.

"It's refreshing to drive by on a Saturday, especially with events going on, and see lots of people crossing the street," said Ramey, who is a former sales manager for Charter Business News England and UMass Medical School. Walk for Cancer event manager. As a graduate of Worcester State University who was born and raised here and lives in the city with her husband and three children, Ramey believes Worcester has reached a turning point.

"I see great things ahead for this city. All the pieces are coming together," she said.



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DINING SCENE

Hotels, restaurants feed function planning

WORCESTER – Major hotel and restaurant growth in Worcester is supporting the push to accommodate more group meetings and conventions as well as increasing demand by visitors and employees.

In the past two years alone, 100 new restaurants have received permits to operate in the city, feeding the eclectic tastes of a much younger millennial workforce, burgeoning college population of 40,000 students, and thriving downtown commercial and retail district centered by the nearly complete \$470 million CitySquare project.

New hotels are popping up as the result of this progress, driven by an overall 75 percent occupancy rate sitting well above the national average. The arrivals of the new AC Hotel by Marriott and Homewood Suites by Hilton added even more density just within the last year, bringing the city's hotel stock from seven to nine facilities, and total number of rooms from 745 to more than 1,000. Additionally, DCU Center will help with that entertainment and sports facility's planned \$30 million upgrade of meeting rooms and exterior façade now in early design phase.

For newer restaurants to the scene, it's all about catering to the needs of their clients and being equipped to handle future growth.

Basil n' Spice Restaurant, which opened in 2015 at 299 Shrewsbury St.



Crust Artisan Bake Shop Owner Alexis Kelleher hard at work.

in Worcester, is getting great customer reviews and that only fuels more optimism for owner Bator Lachmann heading into 2018. Currently employing three full-time and five part-time staffers, the Thai restaurant's vision has always been one of homecoming. "We present an elevated Thai dining experience that speaks to the higher expectations that the growth in the city

brings," Lachmann said. "We offer an enhanced appreciation to the classic Thai cuisine that people know."

Basil n' Spice feels ready to handle any influx of new customers or conventions, offering private room functions and catering services for a small office party or much larger wedding reception at Mechanics Hall with custom menus.

Opening in 2016 at 281 Main St., Deadhorse Hill Restaurant with a staff of 25 carved out plans last fall for another property titled "simjang" that recently opened on Shrewsbury Street. Chef & Owner Jared Forman said, "we want to grow with the city and in the direction it needs to go in." The café, which specializes in southern fried chicken thighs and spaetzli, can currently handle parties as large as 24 for a sit down dinner or 40 for a standing event with the option to buy out the space for a day or evening.

"Worcester is affordable and has a large and diverse population in and around it," Forman said about his excitement for the city's future. "We were especially excited to get in during the start of a new movement and becoming part of the fabric of the city."

With a growing downtown business centric population, heads and beds are of critical importance to the city's continued and long-term development. Emily Mulhane knows this first hand as director of sales at the Hilton Garden Inn, which opened in 2007 as the official hotel for sports teams and partnerships at the DCU Center. With 45 full time employees and 10 part time employees managing room stays as well as 4,500-square-foot of banquet/meeting and pre-function space with up to 300 spaces in the city garage, the

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DINING SCENE

Dining grows with city developments

WORCESTER – The most recent restaurant boom is clustering around multiple developments building a massive mix of hotels, corporate offices, restaurants, retail stores and upscale apartments right downtown around city hall. Most of those developments are now finished or nearing completion.

Troy Siebels, executive director at the nationally-acclaimed Hanover Theatre, saw the writing on the wall and worked to acquire the 551 Main Street building adjacent to the theatre two years ago. "We did so in part in order to have the opportunity to put a first-class restaurant on the ground floor," said Siebels, adding that the theatre draws more than 200,000 patrons annually, and its new conservatory hosts classes for children and adults six days a week year round. "Having a restaurant next door helps to create the 'theatre district' experience; giving visitors the opportunity to park once, go to dinner, to a show, and even back out for a drink or dessert."

With so many different restaurant experiences to choose from in Worcester, Siebels knew his theater crowd restaurant experience had to offer something different and should also be connected to the theater's second floor meeting and function rooms. Set to open this spring, the 140-seat restaurant concept will be based around the roaring 1920s and singer Josephine Baker, led by restaurateur Chris Rassias, owner/operator of the famous Fairmount Grille in Boston. "We feel it ties in beautifully with our architecturally ornate historic theatre built in the same era," Siebels said. Menu items will focus on American food with a flair and geared toward the need to turn over a full restaurant of diners quickly as most all diners will be seeking to pay the check and leave at approximately the same time to catch the show.

A few blocks away, the demand for chain restaurants catering to business and room dwellers is enhanced by the new 170-room AC Hotel Worcester by Marriott Hotel that opened this past April. Around the same time, the first of 365 residential units will open at the adjacent 145 Front at City Square development (now called Mercantile Center).

Opening this past May, AC Hotel Worcester by Marriott now features a rapidly expanding 110 Grill chain that will include a 50-seat outdoor patio with a fire pit on Front Street, and a 6,000-square-foot interior with 190 seats and a large centerpiece U-shaped bar. Chief Operating Officer Ryan Dion of 110 Grill said the restaurant features modern American cuisine in a trendy casual atmosphere, with a menu including chef-composed entrees, steaks, seafood, sandwiches, appetizers and more.

"We pride ourselves on our seasonal specials, fresh ingredients and our scratch kitchens, as well as our allergen awareness commitment and extensive gluten free menus," said Dion.

The Mercantile Center apartment building will feature the healthy-eating restaurant chain, PROTEINHOUSE. Moreover, a new 5,000-square-foot Fuel America chain Coffeehouse Roastery-Cafe will open in fall 2018 in the Mercantile Center, also at Front and Mechanic streets. The cafe will roast coffee beans on the premises and serve specialty coffees, espresso drinks, baked goods and sandwiches.

Sitting across the city common from Mercantile Center is the now under



In the past two years, 100 new restaurants have received permits in Worcester.

construction Beer Garden adjacent to The Grid District's 538 new upscale apartments geared toward millennials. The Beer Garden outdoor brewery is one of several restaurants/bars opening soon on the first floor of The Grid that are all being managed by Frank Peace, founder and CEO of Craft Restaurant Concepts. Peace recently celebrated the opening of Stix, an Asian noodle restaurant, at The Grid as well.

"The beer garden will become the crown jewel for Worcester," Peace said. "This will be an outdoor, comfortable, hip place. We plan to have tribute bands in there and movies."

Just around the corner from these new key development areas are two establishments receiving rave reviews. Situated at 120 Main St. is Crust Artisan Bake Shop. Owner Alexis Kelleher knows old and new Worcester diners well as a core benefactor from the iconic family business, Coney Island restaurant, where she grew up working alongside her mother and grand-mother.

Kelleher branched out to take over for former Crust owners Alec Lopez and his wife Sherri Sadowski in January 2017 offering a daily selection of house-made breads and baked goods, breakfast and lunch sandwiches, as well as a wide variety of locally-sourced products from the Northeast and beyond.

"We are excited about the growth in Worcester right now," Kelleher said. "We are excited to grow with the city, but I also want to maintain a high quality selection of baked goods and pastry to offer the people of Worcester. I don't want to lose sight of what makes Crust special as the city grows around us. We are focused on making everything from scratch in house using local products as much as possible. Our menu is constantly changing based on what is available and how our bakers want to play with and experiment with those products."

Kelleher feels her bake shop fits in well with the dramatic development change by embodying a neighborhood coffee shop culture that fosters a true neighborhood feeling. She foresees the future apartments coming to the Old Courthouse building as a potential boom for her business and helping to make downtown Worcester offer pedestrian-friendly destinations. "I think Crust compliments the growing and developing professional market on Main Street," she added, "which will all tie together with the growing neighborhood downtown."

Deadhorse Hill Restaurant at 281 Main St. boasts an impressive culinary staff led by Executive Chef Jared Forman, offering a seasonal American restaurant inspired by the New England landscape. For-

man relies on the hard working farmers throughout the northeast and the fishermen along the coast to provide the best possible food at the table.

The restaurant offers two different experiences. During the day, the cafe is open for casual lunch, serving pastries, sandwiches and salads with a walk-in setting. In the evening, the dining room offers an à la carte and chefs tasting menu that speaks of the season, varying based on the availability of ingredients.

The restaurant is located in what used to be the first floor of the Bay State House hotel, which served as the headquarters for the Worcester Automobile Club, who held the historic Dead Horse Hill Climb from 1905-1911.

DINING, FROM PAGE A10

hotel is primed for success. "We are excited and prepared to address convention and transient business coming to Worcester," said Mulhane.

As one of Worcester's newest hotels in 2017, Homewood Suites by Hilton opened last June with a \$21 million six-story, 118-room, all suites hotel specializing in extended stays located in Washington Square across the rotary from Union Station. First Bristol Corporation President James J. Karam said the hotel now has about 35 full and part-time workers, offering patrons a salt water swimming pool, fitness center, and smaller and larger accommodations. Karam ruled out a large convention space or full service restaurant opting instead for small meeting spaces to handle 75 people. Karam added that the hotel is perfect for longer term stays, offering full services including grocery delivery, dry cleaning, direct MBTA commuter rail, and breakfast. And bookings for those rooms are filling up.

"Everybody is talking about Worcester," said Karam. "This city knows what it wants."

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LEADERSHIP - B Section

Women called to speak truth to power

Sell-out crowd fills DCU Center for 9th Annual Women's Leadership Conference

By Danielle Lamoureux-Kane

WORCESTER - Words have power, and the resounding advice for the nearly 800 women attending the 9th Annual Worcester Women's Leadership Conference, May 3 at the DCU Center, was to use them.

Women were urged to speak up, ask for what they want, speak their truth, and be mindful of the words they choose.

"Too many of us still are not stepping into our power. Too many of us are still pushing away those opportunities as leaders," said keynote Colette Carlson. "But here's what it comes down to: it's not because of our skill set. It's because of our mindset, which then influences our behaviors."

Carlson, an expert in human behavior, shared personal stories, and stories of those she's met, to illustrate behaviors that enable or hinder leadership opportunities. Inflecting her talk with plenty of humor and good advice in the form of pithy sayings and acronyms, Carlson engaged and energized the sold-out luncheon crowd. A Certified Speaking Professional and CPAE Hall of Fame motivational speaker, Carlson has over 20 years of experience in the personal development industry.

Awaken your self-awareness, she said. Carlson pointed to recent research by The Eurich Group that found only 10-15% of the population really has the internal and external self-awareness that they think they do. Knowing what you bring to the table and how others perceive you will help you make connections with others.

Instead of avoiding conflicts, Carlson said, we find success by addressing them.

"I've met so many of us, men, women, leaders, everything, we shy away from conflict. And yet I'm a big believer if we ever are going to have deep connections with people, there's going to be conflict we need to deal with," she said.

To facilitate difficult discussions, Carlson has developed a methodology she calls "DEAL": Describe data — not labels, interpretations, evaluations or opinions; Express emotion — without judgment, shaming or blaming; Ask assertively; and listen and learn.



Above, headline speaker Colette Carlson, an expert in human behavior, shared personal stories, and stories of those she's met, to illustrate behaviors that enable or hinder leadership opportunities. Below, Maysoon Zayid, an actress, comedian, and writer used personal stories and self-deprecating humor to educate her audience about society's treatment of people with disabilities.

Carlson differentiated between "speaking your truth" and "speaking your mind." Speaking your mind is disrespectful, she said, because it's self-centered, insensitive, and causes disconnect. "Speaking your truth is just the opposite. Speaking your truth is saying what you feel, keeping it real, being clear, sincere and respectful in that moment, but still getting it out. Mindful communication, that's what it is."

Here's what women should stop saying: I'm sorry. It's a speech crutch, Carlson said. "It's not, I'm sorry, please repeat yourself," it's "Excuse me."

Ask for what you want. Ask for help. "Asking for help is not a sign of weakness; it is the healthiest way to stay strong," Carlson said.

She advised attendees to be prepared, do their homework, keep the request specific, and hold themselves accountable. "Then you've got to go for it. Because nobody is going to give you what you need to go get for yourself."

"Here's the deal," she added. "Just because you ask doesn't mean you're going to get a yes, but the answer is always no if you don't ask. And besides, you know more about the person and the situation as a result."

Carlson's advice was reinforced throughout the day, from the morning's



"Speaking your truth is just the opposite. Speaking your truth is saying what you feel, keeping it real, being clear, sincere and respectful...."

- Colette Carlson

inspiring keynote by disability advocate, actress and comedian Maysoon Zayid, to workshops such as Communicating Confidence with Molly McPherson of Social Shift Media and a panel on Creating Your Own Opportunities moderated by Mary Ritter, founder of Maywood Consulting.

The panelists encouraged attendees to be vocal about their career goals, protect their priorities, and expand their leadership experiences by serving on nonprofit boards. "Every woman leader in Central Massachusetts sits on some board.... That's where you will find your tribe," Ritter said.

Panelists in the Women on the Move workshop offered advice to women looking to advance or change careers, including how to overcome pitfalls in

negotiation and confidence that can disadvantage women.

Between sessions, attendees browsed the Vendor Marketplace, took advantage of networking, and hit up the selfie station to have a photo taken with Carlson and Zayid.

The conference, presented by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce was made possible with the support of many area businesses.

The 10th Annual Worcester Women's Leadership Conference is scheduled for April 11, 2019 and promises to be even bigger and better.

"All the research, as many of you know, continues to show women are good for business," Carlson said. "If there's a woman sitting at the table, everything's healthier. Not just the finances. And I'm here to tell you, the world needs us."

Comedian, advocate Zayid embeds laughs with powerful messages

The conference opened with a healthy dose of comic relief and awareness for disability issues, delivered by morning keynote Maysoon Zayid, an actress, comedian, writer and disability advocate.

Zayid, who has cerebral palsy, uses

SEE WOMEN PAGE B2



LEADERSHIP

WOMEN, FROM PAGE B1

personal stories and self-deprecating humor to educate her audiences about society's treatment of people with disabilities today.

She started, "I don't want anyone in this room to ever feel bad for me because I have 99 problems, and cerebral palsy is just one."

Zayid is guest comedian in residence at Arizona State University and currently creating a comedy series with Hazy Mills Productions. She was a fulltime on-air contributor to Countdown with Keith Olbermann on MSNBC and had the number one TED talk of 2014.

Zayid is a Palestinian Muslim and also relates her experiences as an Arab American woman of color navigating schools, highways, airports, and relationships.

Growing up in New Jersey before the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Zayid credited her father's formidable advocacy for securing her place in mainstream education. While laws today protect the rights of students with disabilities, Zayid warned, "In the past year, 72 protections of students with disabilities have been rescinded. We are under siege in this country, and it is of the utmost importance that we make sure that every child has access to a free, accessible education in America."

Recognizing and understanding disabilities, especially invisible ones, is a particular challenge for law enforcement. Recalling her own perilous encounters with police, who mistake the shaking and unsteadiness



Kathryn Crockett, center, president of Lamoureux Pagano & Associates of Worcester, was one of the featured workshop speakers at the conference.

caused by cerebral palsy for inebriation, Zayid recognizes the situations could have ended deadly.

"Fifty percent of all Americans killed by law enforcement are disabled. Fifty percent," she said. "We can do better. We can work together with law enforcement so that they understand that, again, not all disabilities are visible."

Zayid urged people with disabilities, or parents of children with disabilities, to reach out to their local law enforcement to explain their disability and how it may present in an encounter with police. Those who are deaf may not be able to respond to police commands, or people with autism may react to the sirens and lights. It's important, she said, to have a conversation with police so they understand what invisible disability can look like.

"I know it's hard," she said, "but every one of us who volunteers to do

that maybe saves someone else's life."

As an actor and comedian, Zayid had her audience roiled in laughter describing her first forays into stage and screen. But her stories illuminated Hollywood's gaping omission of people with disabilities on screen and insensitivities prevalent in the workplace in general.

"Hollywood has a sordid history of having nondisabled actors play visibly disabled onscreen," she said. "People with disabilities are 20 percent of the population. One in three households has a member that is disabled. Yet we are nowhere to be found onscreen. We're 20 percent of the population, but we're only 2 percent of the images you see in media. And of those 2 percent, 95 percent are played by nondisabled actors."

As a child, she watched as actors portrayed people with disabilities, and describes the harm of using

nondisabled actors to play disabled characters.

"When we have people onstage imitating visible disabilities, to the people who don't have those disabilities it looks like an Oscar-winning performance. To us, it is cartoonish, it is offensive, it's inauthentic, and it's damaging to children with disabilities who are watching these people miraculously be healed on the red carpet."

It also perpetuates a stigma, Zayid said, that prevents even Hollywood's biggest actors from revealing invisible disabilities.

Zayid stressed to the employers in the audience the importance of creating a workspace where people with disabilities are accepted and feel comfortable asking for accommodations that will help them to succeed.

Finally, Zayid said, words matter. "We were taught that 'sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me,' and that is simply not true."

From the words we choose when talking about disabilities, to Internet trolling, and slurs and other offensive terms, Zayid acknowledged words have power.

"For anyone out there who's a writer: I constantly see the words 'wheelchair bound.' 'Wheelchair bound.' We are not bound by wheelchairs. People with disabilities are freed by them. So words matter."

Mostly importantly, she said, speak up. "Say no to being silent. Your voice is your weapon against injustice; I beg you to use it."

LEADERSHIP
Leadership Worcester graduates third cohort

WORCESTER – Now in its fourth year, the Leadership Worcester program identifies promising new professionals who aspire to take an active leadership role in the Worcester community and are interested in learning and honing new leadership skills for the long-term benefit of the community. The program, which runs from September through May, engages promising new professionals in greater Worcester's civic life and offers training and skill development to connect them with key players. Participants gain a first-hand understanding of critical issues facing Worcester while also building professional skills that contribute to civic advancement. Leadership Worcester is a joint initiative of Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"It's an exciting time of revitalization for the entire Worcester community," said Timothy P. Murray, president and CEO, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Identifying and cultivating strong leaders from all sectors in Central Massachusetts is an important component to that rejuvenation - one that the Worcester Regional Chamber and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation take pride in."

On May 17, future leaders graduated from the program. After spending the past nine months exploring the city, its industries, sectors, and people, the young professionals are excited to share their experiences:

Heather Mangione

• What is your role at your business/company?

I am a Community Relationship Manager at the United Way of Central MA. My role is designed to engage with all parts of a nonprofit organization, from fundraising to community investment grant cycles. It's a very dynamic position that allows me to be in every part of the community, from corporate workplaces where we do fundraising to grassroots community organizations. Every day is different and a lot of fun!

• What other communities/activities are you involved with in the city?

I am a co-founder of the LGBTQ community organization Airspray, where we primarily throw monthly queer dance parties at Electric Haze in the Canal District. Our parties average 200+ in attendance each month and we have been running for almost 5 years! I am also on the Board of Directors of Arts Worcester, Safe Homes LGBT Youth drop-in center, and am a Trustee of the Worcester Public Library.

• What were your expectations of Leadership Worcester? Were they met?

I expected to learn a lot during my Leadership Worcester year, and I certainly did! Leadership Worcester participants are exposed to all sectors of city and community life, from public safety and education, to government, arts, health, and many more topics. Some of the most important "learning moments" have come from conversations with my



Above, Vaughn Calhoun speaks during his cohort while Heather Mangione, below, takes in a business meeting.



we do at United Way. I met key individuals and experts in these fields, was given very informative overviews of how these topics are situated in the daily fiber of city life, and was encouraged to think critically about how I, as a future leader in my field, can enact change in my community. I am so lucky to have participated in this program!

Vaughn Calhoun

• What is your role at your business/company?

Formally, I am a Director of Business programs and Assistant Professor.... But informally, I often tell people I am a dream maker because I work at the happiest place on earth where dreams come true, not Disney, but Becker College. I say this because I am in the business of helping students realize their dreams.

• What were your expectations of Leadership Worcester? Were they met?

I have always heard of the high caliber people who were selected for this program. In fact, I would classify them as the rising stars of Worcester. As such, I expected to meet ambitious, motivated and like-minded individuals, and Leadership Worcester did not disappoint! During each of our monthly sessions we would often participate in group problem solving activities and I was always in awe of the diversity of thinking, curiosity and questions people would ask. It was very impressive and they inspired me to be better.

• Why did you decide to join

Leadership Worcester?

I joined Leadership Worcester for a few reasons. Foremost, I was captivated by their mission; engaging the next generation of leaders on issues vital to the growth and sustainability of the city and region. I think it is awesome that city leaders want to engage and prepare us to take the baton so we can run the next leg of the race. Secondly, I was excited to meet other like-minded professionals who I would not likely meet in my day-to-day professional or personal life. And lastly, it's just an exciting time to be part of the renaissance of Worcester in such a meaningful way. So much is happening in terms of economic development, the emergence of entrepreneurship and innovation, and the arts and culture scene, it's simply just cool.

• What was your favorite part about the program?

My cohort without a doubt. I can honestly say I have made some real friends through this experience. Going back to our overnight retreat, to monthly sessions, to hanging out outside of the formal sessions, they have made me laugh, think, and aspire to be better.

• What did you find most informative or useful?

I was always impressed with the lineup of speakers. Every month, we would have the opportunity to hear from local business owners, city councilors, state representatives, healthcare leaders, public safety leaders, educational leaders, investors and entrepreneurs. It was so enlightening to listen to this diverse set of leaders and their vision of what Worcester can be. They always encouraged us and challenged us to do our part and to get involved. They reminded us that it won't take just one of us, or some of us, but all of us to see Worcester's potential fully realized.

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SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE

StartUp Worcester CEO wins national award

WORCESTER - A major aspect of the revitalization of Worcester, which has been nationally recognized, is the bustling start-up community. Home to nine colleges and universities in the city alone, as well as booming industries like biomed and manufacturing, Worcester has become a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship. A shining example of this momentum can be found in a co-working space inside Becker College's new Colleen C. Barrett Center for Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Petricore Inc., an interactive software development company, fully represents the potential of Worcester's start-up ecosystem. Made up of a team of Becker graduates, Petricore, Inc. has achieved a lot of notoriety in just a few short years. In December, the company's mobile game, Battery Boy was nominated for mobile-game of the year at the 2017 Bit Awards in New York. Petricore's founder and CEO, Ryan Canuel, was also awarded the Rising Pixel Award at the event. Petricore has also created five full-time jobs and provides students with internship opportunities.

After rounding up several of his classmates, the Petricore Team put together a business plan and applied for StartUp Worcester in 2015, a Chamber initiative aimed at incubating new businesses and retaining the young graduates of the area's colleges and universities. Petricore was one of the first 12 businesses to be accepted into the program. "It was significant for us, being an unknown, and instantly being connected to a massive network of people who just want to see us succeed," said Ryan. "If this was Boston, we would just be a blip on the radar."

As a self-described "risk averse entrepreneur", Ryan knew his long-term goal was to be his own boss, but he felt he needed to experience the professional world before starting his own business in the field. Thanks to his mentor Monty Sharma, managing director of the Massachusetts Digital Games Institute (MassDiGi),



Ryan Canuel of Petricore Inc. and his team won a national game design award at the 2017 Bit Awards.

Ryan turned his long term goal into a short term one. "He said, you're at the most perfect time in your life to do this," said Ryan.

Leading up to the Bit Awards, members of the gaming community submit their nominations for best games, apps, and individuals who deserve recognition. Along with Petricore's game Battery Boy, Ryan also nominated Monty Sharma to receive the Rising Pixel Award for being an instrumental support system of the company. This award not only recognizes a developer's talents but their commitment to community as well. It

wasn't until a video created by his team, friends, and mentors, congratulating him on his success started playing, that Ryan realized he had won the award.

"I've been extremely fortunate in my life so far that I've had a lot of mentors and advisers give up their time to help me grow this business alongside an amazing team," said Canuel. "It's been huge, and pretty much one of the biggest reasons that we're around still. I've tried to put out some of the good that so many people have given me and try to help out those looking to do the same thing that we have done."

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Q&A WITH BARROWS HARDWARE

WORCESTER - The following Q&A as part of the Chamber's ongoing "Around the Neighborhood" series, highlighting prominent businesses in different sections of the city, was with Brian Barrows, president of Barrows Hardware in Webster Square, Worcester.

• **How long have you been a business owner in the city of Worcester?**

My grandfather opened this business in Webster Sq. in 1914 and we have been committed to this section of the city since. We strongly believe that our reputation of quality product and personalized customer service, attributes on which the business was founded and each generation has carried forward, remain a key component for the long-term success of our business.

• **Why did you decide to open a business in the city?**

My grandfather, father and uncle founded and expanded this business because they believed in Worcester and Webster Sq. in particular. We have expanded again for the same reasons. We believe our customers from Worcester and the contiguous towns still want personalized service at competitive prices –and we deliver that every day.

• **What is it like being a business owner in your particular neighborhood/part of the city?**

Long and strong reputation for service to our neighbors, near highway access if needed. Plenty of current and potential customers come by our store every day. Great visibility.

• **What are the benefits of being a business owner in Worcester?**

Diversity of, and plenty of potential for, new customers/opportunities.

• **What has the redevelopment of the city done for you and your business?**

There is an old yet very appropriate quote: "The Rising tide lifts all boats". The more progress in Worcester, the more people want to live, work and play here. We credit the city's political, business and neighborhood leadership for their focus and commitment to grow the city. The city cultivates new opportunities, we develop along with them. Simultaneously, if we invest in our businesses, the overall future of the city improves.

To nominate your business for an "Around the Neighborhoods" feature, contact Zaven at the Chamber offices.

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AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Altruism, dedication secrets to Mitra's success

WORCESTER - As current treasurer for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors while sitting on 10 other non-profit panels, Dr. Satya Mitra knows his own firm's bright future is a direct result of overcoming past adversity.

He expressed that mantra as headline speaker at the chamber's annual Woostapreneurs event at Worcester State University in May by inspiring the crowd with his life's story and secrets to success. Like many successful entrepreneurs, Mitra, president & CEO of The Guru Tax & Financial Services, Inc. in Worcester, grew up in poverty with extremely difficult conditions during his childhood. He explained to those gathered that his mother passed away when he was only three and a half years old. "There were times when my family was like vagabonds," said Mitra. "That makes you strong and realize that you can do anything."

Several occasions he felt many steps in his life were "divinely arranged", and there were several people who gave him support and encouragement that allowed him to be educated and now dedicate his life to helping people and give them hope. He initially was told he could not leave his native India. "They wanted a guarantee that I would return," Mitra said. "I told them if I didn't come back after three years, they could deport me. They agreed and I went to America."

Mitra finished his Ph.D. in Biochemistry from India and came to the United States in 1976 to pursue his career in bio-medical research. He initially performed research as a scientist in Worcester. However, he quickly became interested in tax and investment policy and took courses at Worcester State University at night. When he visited India later, a priest (known as a Guru there) learned of his interest in tax and



Dr. Satya Mitra worked himself up from childhood poverty in India to owning an international tax and investment business here in Worcester.

investments, and encouraged him to open his own firm back in America. "He told me to quit my job," Mitra recalled.

The first few years he ran the business from his home's basement before moving to current location at 446 Main St., Worcester. Today, he has seven employees and more than 400 clients in 25 states with many living internationally. He specializes in how to report foreign assets, and hosts a weekly radio show on WTAG, "Not Only Money".

For the last 25 years, he has not only raised a successful and reputable business, but also used the success of this business helping community in various ways. Mitra is a member and vice chairperson of the Worcester Planning Board, a board member of Tower Hill Botanical Garden, the Latino Community, the Foundation Board of Worcester State University, and a Corporator of Worcester Art Museum and Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

He was the president of Worcester Rotary Club, India Society of Worcester and Indian American Forum for Political Education, Boston. He is also the recipient of the Community Service Award and Action Hero Award. He is also recognized by the Mayor of the City with the Key to the City of Worcester.

"Develop a culture and some operating rules in your business," Mitra advised, adding that he created a set of written rules for all staff to follow early on to structure and guide his office climate. "Call your clients back with results of work done. The power of connecting is the most powerful tool. I don't manage my time. I manage my desire."

Mitra credits his wife Sheema for his success. They have two sons Abiskar and Alington. "You must climb the mountain," he concluded. "The peak of the mountain is not going to come down and touch you. The essence of successful entrepreneurship is in giving back to the community."

FORUM, FROM PAGE A3

two years, it's a different picture."

Mailman encouraged Spilka to keep thinking about the rest of the region, because Boston might have that back log that sits dormant, but that may not be in places like Springfield and Worcester, adding that MassDevelopment and historic tax credits make a huge difference.

A strength in Worcester that is potentially diminished by federal funding changes, Mailman added, is its well-developed model for vocational education training and apprenticeship programs. "You hear at the State of the Union about [the success] of vocational education, but in reality what's happening at the federal level is hurting apprenticeships and it's hurting our models," Spilka said. "Workforce development is where it's at."

Timothy P. Murray, president and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, said that back in 2014 the chamber held a state-wide summit with the Mass Alliance for Vocational School Administrators, and Mass Community Action Network to examine the overall state of vocation in the Commonwealth. Out of that process came the Alliance for Voke Tech Education attracting a number of business organizations across the state to join as well as Catholic Charities in Boston, Jewish Vocational Services, and a broad coalition. Murray said that an Alliance report authored by Barry Bluestone eventually produced funding of \$45 million over 10 years for public vocational school capital projects to modernize infrastructure and equipment. He noted, however, that the state has a looming crisis with in-district and regional vocational school districts that were built in the 1960s (see related story on Page 1).

"We have a waiting list of 3,000-5,000 vocation tech students to get into our schools," Murray said. "The single biggest issue we hear from our members is workforce development."

In response to Mailman and Murray's comments, Spilka said regional equity is of great importance to her: "I ran for the state Legislature because I felt my hometown and surrounding MetroWest communities were not getting their fair share of Chapter 70." A bond bill was recently filed this week by the Alliance for Voke Tech Ed, Murray added, that 19 senators signed and sent to study committee to look at the vocational education challenges across the state to ensure a more comprehensive approach to workforce development and funding.

Forum attendee Kevin O'Sullivan, president and CEO of Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives, said the steady culture of collaboration between business and the state really has

worked well over the last decade. He fears, however, that financial decisions now being made in Washington, D.C. are threatening to undo a lot of that progress as well as the many partnerships with local colleges.

Transportation development continues to assist and support Worcester's continued economic growth under Spilka's watch with 20 MBTA roundtrips from Worcester to Boston daily. Murray mentioned that with the ongoing update of the state-wide rail plan, new study money is needed to review construction of a rail spur between Worcester to Framingham in both directions. That would allow daily roundtrips to increase more flexibility along the routes.

A new Worcester Public Schools Strategic Planning Initiative – the first of its kind in more than 25 years – is beginning to take shape to deal with these many challenges, according to Linda Looft, asst. vice president of Govt. and Community Relations at Worcester Polytechnic University. She serves on that strategic plan's advisory board along with Mailman. Over the course of nine months, through the efforts of the Worcester Education Collaborative and the Worcester Regional Research Bureau in concert with the Worcester Public Schools, the advisory board and its partners developed a strategy for improving our public schools and ensuring that all students are prepared for success.

"Without that pipeline, none of our colleges are going to receive well prepared students," Looft said. "And consequently, we will not be able to deliver those students to the workforce." She added that Chapter 70 funding remains a priority and a constant concern.

With a state funding formula that has not changed in many years, and with cities falling behind in how they can support their communities, Looft believes an increase in state education funding or a more equitable and fair distribution process is needed, especially in a city like Worcester with many families who are not able to afford a tax system that exists in wealthier communities.

"We have made some changes in 2007," Spilka replied. "The next major overhaul is adopting the foundation budget review commission's recommendations, which we have at least started to try to implement."

Spilka said her committee has considered two different funding formulas and tasked the Department of Early and Secondary Education to come up with one that works after a formula Gov. Baker used to cost some towns tens of millions of dollars with no demonstrated change in student population.



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Lost jobs, lost tax base, lost opportunity

In January 2018, Oxford Selectmen voted 4-0 to adopt a single tax rate of \$17.12 per thousand. Town Assessor Christopher T. Pupka, who has held the position since 2008, told the Worcester Telegram, "The commercial tax base in my time in Oxford has grown from 16 percent to around 23.5 percent. So the commercial has been eating a large piece of the tax pie just by growing organically without splitting the tax rate." On the heels of this vote, IPG Photonics recently announced that it is planning to add 500 new jobs to its current location in Oxford and build a \$215 million, 960,000-square-foot expansion, which will include a tax increment financing package (TIF) from the town. The owner and founder of IPG Photonics is a Worcester resident. The situation in Oxford can be contrasted with what has occurred in Worcester.



TIM MURRAY

This past November, a majority of the Worcester City Council, led by Councilors Bergman, Carlson, King, Lukes, Rosen, and Russell, voted again, as they have over the past several years, towards taxing Worcester's businesses at the highest rate under the city's dual tax rate system. The recent vote by the above-mentioned councilors taxes Worcester businesses at \$34.03 per thousand. We have seen the folly of this policy manifest itself with the recent relocations of Curtis Industries from Worcester to West Boylston, and Primetals from Worcester to Sutton.

This past year, Curtis Industries relocated 125 good paying manufacturing jobs from Brooks Street in Worcester to West Boylston. They were able to relocate to a modern manufacturing facility and West Boylston was able to offer lower costs with a tax rate of \$18.45 per thousand and TIF to help facilitate the move.

Worcester's manufacturing base was then dealt another blow this past March when Primetals announced plans to leave Worcester for Sutton. Primetals, formerly known as Morgan Construction, has been based in Worcester since 1888. Sutton was able to offer a site for a \$28 million facility by offering a single tax rate of \$16.55 per thousand, as well as a TIF. As a result, 340 manufacturing jobs will be leaving the city.

As a regional Chamber of Commerce, we are grateful those jobs are remaining in Central Massachusetts. However, we are concerned about the disincentive for many businesses to reinvest in their Worcester properties because of a tax policy trend that has moved towards taxing Worcester businesses to the max by a majority of the Worcester City Council. It was recently reported in the Worcester Business Journal that 40 percent of Worcester's industrial buildings are empty. Property and business owners have difficulty contemplating upgrades and/or building new modern facilities knowing the impact on their tax bill because of the city's high tax rate on businesses. The result is more often than not they choose not to reinvest, beginning a downward spiral where manufacturers or others looking for modern space cannot find that inventory in the city, causing them to look beyond Worcester's borders. When people see a vacant building or vacant storefront, they should understand the disincentive for a business or property owner to reinvest in that property is often the direct result of Worcester's high business tax rate.

The impact of Curtis Industries and Primetals leaving the city will be felt by neighborhood businesses as well. These nearly 500 employees, once fully relocated out of the city, will be less likely to visit the small businesses in the West Boylston Street Corridor or along Lincoln Street from their new locations in West Boylston and Sutton. Local Worcester businesses such as coffee and pizza shops, dry cleaners, convenience stores, restaurants, mechanics, etc. will lose business because of these relocation decisions. Moreover, as new employees join these companies they are more likely to look for housing in communities where these businesses have relocated. Additionally, for the city of Worcester's budget, nearly \$600,000 in annual revenue will be lost. These companies philanthropic and charitable giving for schools, youth sports leagues, etc. will also likely focus around the new communities where they have chosen to locate.

While manufacturing has evolved, it is still one of the remaining sectors of the economy where many of the jobs do not require an advanced educational degree, and provide access to good paying jobs that allow individuals and families to build a level of economic security. When these jobs leave the city, they make it harder for Worcester residents to access these quality jobs thus exacerbating the city's poverty rate.

Since Worcester has moved to a dual tax-rate system, there are 538 less commercial properties in the city, according to the Worcester Regional Research Bureau. Additionally, unlike Oxford, as of 2015, Worcester's commercial/industrial tax base has shrunk from 35 percent to 28 percent since 1984 (the year Worcester went to a dual tax rate). Ironically, while City Councilors Bergman, Carlson, King, Lukes, Rosen, and Russell have moved towards taxing businesses to the max, their municipal colleagues in Oxford, Webster, Auburn, and Fitchburg have all voted to create single or more equitable tax rates. In many of these communities, the business tax base has grown as a result. Unless the Worcester City Council reverses this trend, Worcester's residential taxpayers should be prepared to see tax rates soar as the business tax base continues to shrink as a result of a tax rate that causes important and longtime companies like Curtis Industries, and Primetals to leave the city.

OPINION

Workplace sexual harassment

WORCESTER – In the current climate, all employers need to take steps to educate their workforces about and protect them from sexual harassment. In many cases, existing policies and training are inadequate and should be updated. As employers make this issue a priority, this primer will be useful.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

At its core, sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination that is unlawful under Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Massachusetts Fair Employment Practices Act, Massachusetts General Laws, c. 151B. These laws make it illegal for any employee to sexually harass another employee.

Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with an individual's ability to work because it creates a humiliating, hostile, or sexually offensive work environment.

In addition, sexual harassment includes using an individual's acceptance or rejection of such conduct to make employment-related decisions, e.g., refusing to promote an employee if he or she does not acquiesce to a sexual advance. Though not every inappropriate comment, joke, gesture, etc., constitutes sexual harassment, it is imperative for an employer to promptly and properly respond to every complaint of sexual harassment.

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS BE PROACTIVE?

The best way to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace is to prevent it from occurring and/or take appropriate steps to correct harassment. Massachusetts General Laws, G. L. c. 151B, §3A, which is stricter in many ways than its federal corollary, mandates employers with at least six employees to have well-developed policies against sexual harassment and to follow investigatory procedures.

Even if an employer has fewer than six employees, however, one may still bring a claim for sexual harassment under G.L. c. 214, §1C. Consequently, all employers should consider the policies and practices discussed herein.

Where an employer is legally required to have a sexual harassment policy, the policy must include, among other things, (i) the legal definition of sexual harassment in Massachusetts, which is found in G.L. c. 151B §3A; (ii) a description of the procedures an individual may follow if he or she believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace, e.g., filing a complaint internally and/or with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and/or the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; (iii) providing a general

overview of the employer's investigatory procedures; and (iv) confirming that any retaliation against an individual who complains about sexual harassment or cooperates in an investigation related thereto is unlawful and unacceptable.

In addition, Massachusetts law encourages employers to provide to their staff certain education and training concerning sexual harassment. Such education and training might prove particularly important, as Massachusetts law allows employers to be held directly liable for misconduct by persons with supervisory authority over a complainant and other third parties.

As indicated above, and under certain circumstances, Massachusetts law allows for the imposition of liability on an

employer based on an employee's actionable sexual harassment, e.g., if the offending employee is a supervisor of the complainant and/or if the employer had knowledge about another third party's actionable behavior. In fact, Massachusetts law is so broad that employers may be liable for the sexual harassment of their employees by certain non-employees, such as customers,

suppliers, independent contractors, or other third parties.

On the one hand, an employer's ability to show the existence and enforcement of cogent policies and practices could mitigate and/or eliminate an employer's legal liability. On the other hand, an employer may face additional liability or scrutiny if he or she fails to take measures to prevent and/or address sexual harassment in the workplace. Unfortunately, it is all too common for an employer to overlook an individual's seemingly minor sexual misconduct or complaints related thereto until faced with a legal claim, which could subject an employer to punitive damages and other harm.

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO WHEN THEY RECEIVE A COMPLAINT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

An employer should promptly investigate the complaint, even if the complainant asks that the complaint not be investigated. In doing so, the employer should designate a neutral, high-ranking, and competent individual to investigate the allegations objectively. An objective investigation should include but is not limited to (i) researching whether there is a prior history of complaints against the alleged harasser and (ii) interviewing the proper individuals, e.g., the complainant, accused harasser, and witnesses. An employer should endeavor to protect confidential information obtained during the investigation.

Scott E. Regan, Esq. works at Fletcher Tilton PC Attorneys at law. If you need guidance about your current and/or prospective sexual harassment policies or how to deal with a complaint, please feel free to contact him at sregan@fletchertilton. or (508) 459-8220.



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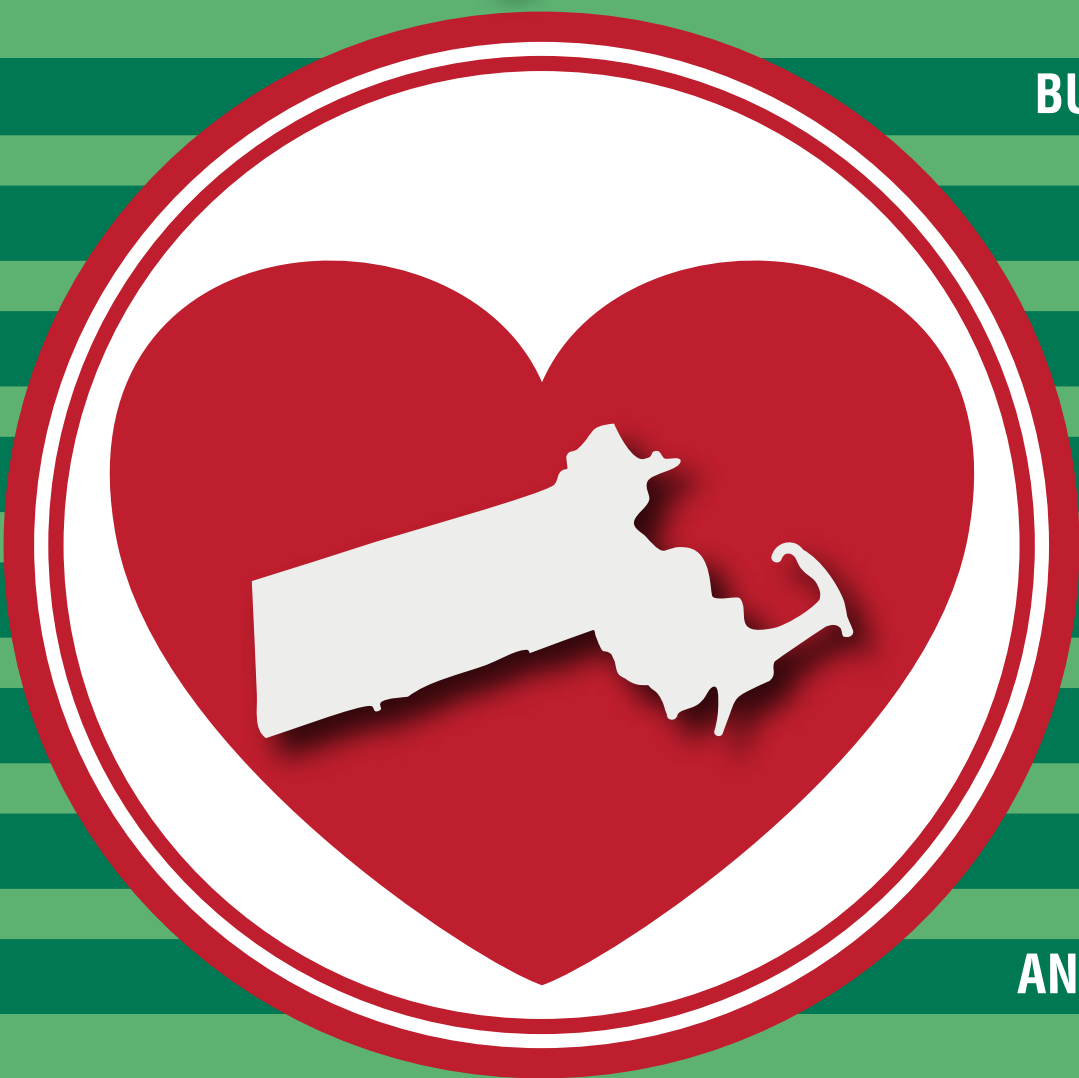
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