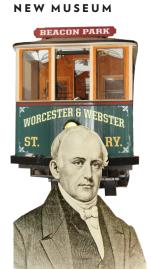
THE NEWSPAPER

Spring 2021

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Samuel Slater Experience Museum Aims to Capture Local History, Educate 19

POLAR PARK OPENS Worcester Red Sox' Inaugural Season Underway

by DOMINIQUE GOYETTE-CONNERTY

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

t was a win for Worcester in more ways than one. On a sunny and mild spring afternoon in the Canal District, the Worcester Red Sox (WooSox) secured a win over the Syracuse Mets in their home opener game at the brand-new Polar Park on Tuesday, May 12.

Their inaugural season started on the road on May 4 in Trenton, New Jersey against the Buffalo Bisons after Major League Baseball delayed the minor league season start date due to COVID-19. By the time the WooSox made it back home to Worcester, the team had a losing record of two-and-four but were determined to turn things around as they debuted at Polar Park.

After trailing for much of the beginning of the game, the WooSox applied the pressure in the seventh inning with back-to-back home runs off the bats of

POLAR PARK, PG 10



Above: The left field video board at Polar Park welcomes fans to Worcester Red Sox' home opener on May 11, 2021. Photo by Dominique Goyette-Connerty

SENIOR HOUSING PROPOSED FOR FORMER BOYS CLUB WinnDevelopment Plans for 95 Units at Historic Lincoln Square

by DAVID SULLIVAN,

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FELLOW

he Canal District isn't the only part of town that is abuzz with new development. Lincoln Square at the top of Main Street is just starting to recognize its own potential as a gateway to the city's downtown areas.

Former Worcester City Manager and current WinnCompanies Executive Vice President Michael O'Brien delivered a press conference to local policymakers and media on April 9, highlighting his company's plans to repurpose the former Worcester Boys Club. The Boston-based developer bought the property from the city in 2019 and intends to develop it into a housing complex focused on senior living.

The Boys Club, which will now be called One Lincoln Square, sits at the top of Main Street. It is one of three major Lincoln Square properties — the Worcester Memorial Auditorium, the old Worcester County courthouse, and the Boys Club — which have been under-utilized but possess high potential for development.

Worcester City Manager Edward Augustus, Jr. said the development would be the first senior housing in downtown in a newly beautified Lincoln Square area that will serve as the "gateway to the Salisbury Street cultural district."

The Boys Club development will complement the Courthouse Lofts, a 118-unit mixed-income housing development across the street which represents a \$60

million investment by Trinity Financial.

Meanwhile, the adjacent Worcester Memorial Auditorium was purchased by the Architectural Heritage Foundation in 2019. The plan is to renovate the space into a state-of-the-art commercial entertainment venue and an educational center.

The Boys Club development will create about 30 units of housing in the historic building, with a new five-story development being appended next door. This new construction will take place on top of the Johnson Tunnel, which connects to Main Street. This new building will create 65 to 70 units, totaling roughly 95 one- and two-bedroom units across the development. Eighty percent of the units are expected to be income-accessible for seniors ages 62 and older.

WINNDEVELOPMENT, PG 14



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

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

Worcester Regional Chamber CALENDAR of EVENTS

lune

JUNE 3 • 8:00AM - 10:00AM • AC HOTEL BY MARRIOTT WORCESTER

The Breakfast Club

Presenting Sponsor: BC/BS of MA Supporting Sponsor: Rollstone Bank & Trust Friend Sponsor: Country Bank

JUNE 8 • TIME TBD

President's Council Karen Spilka, State Senator Sponsors: Fallon Health, Marsh McLennan

JUNE 14 - JUNE 17 • 10:00AM - 11:30AM • VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

2021 Game Changers - Business Conference and Expo

Planning for an Equitable Future: Economy, Justice and Education

Sponsors: Allways Health, Saint Vincent Hospital, DCU, Bowditch & Dewey, Tocci, UniBank, Clark University Graduate Studies, Health New England, The Hanover Insurance Group, Unum

JUNE 21 • 9:00AM- 5:00PM

31st William J. Short Memorial Classic

Sponsors: Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, AIS, ACS, UniBank, Karl Storz Endoskope, Gilbane, TD Bank, Leominster Credit Union, Wells Fargo, Webster Five

JUNE 22 • 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Construction and Real Estate Roundtable

Sponsors: Bowditch & Dewey

JUNE 24 • 10:00AM - 11:00AM • VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

Seminar Series: Climate Policies and Impact

Sponsor: TD Bank

JUNE 24 • 6:00PM

Diverse Professional Roundtable - Cocktail Connection

Sponsor: BC/BS of Massachusetts

July

JULY 1

StartUp Worcester applications due. Apply online at worcesterchamber.org

August

AUGUST 2 • 1:00PM

Green Hill Golf Tournament

Sponsors: Rollstone Bank & Trust, Outdoor Lighting Perspectives

AUGUST 18 • 6:00 PM

Diverse Professional Roundtable - Cocktail Connection Sponsor: BC/BS of Massachusetts

AUGUST 24 • 4:00 PM

Young Professionals Night Out Sponsors: Bartholomew & Company, UniBank

WORCESTER GREEN CORPS TO CLEAN UP, BEAUTIFY CITY

Chamber, City of Worcester, United Way **Launch Partnership Program**

by TIMOTHY P. MURRAY, PRESIDENT & CEO



hile undoubtedly there are new levels of private investment taking place in Worcester that create jobs, expand the tax base, and generate economic activity, there has been one negative issue that has continued to fester: the amount of trash and litter along city streets, and in neighborhoods and environmentally sensitive areas.

Here at the Chamber, we have observed this problem and have regularly heard complaints about it from Chamber member businesses and Chamber board members alike. Recently, former Worcester Mayor Raymond Mariano, who now writes a weekly column in the Worcester Telegram and Gazette, wrote about litter throughout the city, as did Worcester Magazine columnist Janice Harvey. Both correctly stated that a more collective effort was needed to address this challenge.

Back in August of 2019, the Chamber strongly backed City Manager Augustus' Comprehensive Clean Worcester initiative that he presented to the City Council. Unfortunately, after nearly a year of deliberation and hearings, these recommendations were not adopted.

As a result, Chamber staff and the Chamber Executive Board began internal discussions about what role we could play in partnership with the city, our members, and other organizations to address this persistent challenge. Given the Chamber's 146-year-old history with the business community, many of whom have an interest in a clean and presentable



Above: Leaders from the City of Worcester, the Chamber, United Way, WCAC, and MassHire gather at a press conference to announce Worcester Green Corps on May 10. Photo by Dominique Goyette-Connerty.

city, we reached out to the United Way of Central Massachusetts. The United Way, with its 101-year-old history, has a similarly deep relationship with the many community nonprofits that exist in the city. United Way President and CEO Tim Garvin and his board immediately stepped up to partner with us and begin a conversation with City Manager Augustus on how we could build a sustainable, year-round, public-private partnership to clean and beautify the city.

The result is the formation of the Worcester Green Corps. The Chamber will hire and fund a year-round Worcester Green Corps Coordinator. This position will look to support existing volunteer cleanup and beautification efforts as well as fill gaps where they exist. Additionally, the coordinator will oversee a summer jobs cleanup effort funded by the city in partnership with the Worcester Community Action Council's (WCAC) YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program and MassHire of Central Massachusetts (MassHire). WCAC and MassHire run the YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program annually, employing Worcester's young people at a variety of locations across the city.

Each of the five city council districts will have a dedicated Summer Clean Team of five students plus a site manager for a total involvement of 25 high school students and five site managers. The Chamber, the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC), and the United Way have agreed to fund the summer district site manager positions. Also, Fallon Health has stepped up as an early sponsor of Green Corps.

These young people will not only be involved in cleanup and beautification efforts. One day each week they'll take part in tours and workshops introducing them to educational and employment opportunities in the growing environmental and green jobs sectors of the economy.

Additionally, we'll form an advisory board of business, environmental, nonprofit, and neighborhood leaders from across the city to assist us in building collaborations and identifying projects and sites in need of cleanup.

The Chamber hopes to have the Worcester Green Corps Coordinator position filled within the coming weeks, aiming for a June 1 start date. The so-called 'Clean Teams' and summer cleanup jobs for high schoolers are expected to start shortly after the school year ends, likely around the end of June.

It's not just the job of the city to ensure we have clean and safe communities, but rather, everyone has a role to play. Everyone has a responsibility. And everyone wants to live in a city they can enjoy free of litter and trash. That's why we're so thrilled to announce this partnership program that's a true collaboration between several organizations and businesses in the city. Through the Worcester Green Corps, we'll all come together to help keep Worcester beautiful!



Reliable Public Transportation a Necessity for Central Mass.



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

ith all the excitement around Polar Park and the Worcester Red Sox inaugural season underway, it is easy to lose track of some of the major projects happening outside of the Canal District. Worcester is poised to grow in ways that many of us could have never even fathomed 20 somewhat years ago, and that begins with access to quality transportation in the Heart of the Commonwealth.

Beginning now through 2025, major upgrades to the city's multimodal transportation hub at Union Station will continue the work of making Worcester accessible from all parts of New England. Union Station will undergo platform, track, and accessibility improvements.

Rider benefits such as a new high-level center platform will be the focal point of the major upgrades, but more than that, safety upgrades such as track, signal, and communications systems will make the entire Union Station much more user-friendly. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) will also add a new elevator system, stairways, and pedestrian bridges. It will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), allowing those populations to also be able to use the facility with ease.

The new pedestrian bridge and elevators will be a steel and glass structure with new lighting and wayfinding signs. This will provide a fully accessible route for riders to move safely and comfortably to-and-from the new center platform, the MBTA parking area, and the neighboring communities.

NEW COMMUTER RAIL SCHEDULE CHANGES

One of the promising highlights for the Commuter Rail going forward is reliability. In the past, one of riders' major concerns surrounding commuting into the state's capital was timing. With the aforementioned infrastructure upgrades comes continuity. Here in Worcester, folks will be able to know with confidence that there will be a train available every hour, on the hour.

Previously, there was an express train that left the Worcester station and made it to Boston in approximately an hour. Unfortunately, it was not optimal timing for everyone. In order to get to South Station, one had to be on the concourse by 7:37 a.m., and on the return, one could not catch the train departing Boston any earlier than 5:00 p.m.

New MBTA Schedule Provides More Convenience for Commuters

While having an express train from Worcester sounded great in theory, it was really only convenient timing for the folks who did not have to be in the office by 9:00 a.m. and could leave the office before 5:00 p.m. For all others, the train was rendered irrelevant. Going forward, knowing that the Worcester/Framingham line will be available on the hour might encourage more people to live in the Worcester area and will also serve as a selling point for businesses looking to expand or relocate to the city. For many residents and companies alike, knowing they have access to quality and affordable transportation is more than just a luxury - it's a necessity.

The collaboration between the MBTA, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), and the City of Worcester has made it possible for Worcester residents to commute to Boston for work, but also for quality of life and leisure purposes. Now more than ever, the COVID-19 pandemic has proven that many people can successfully work remotely whilst living in gateway cities like Worcester, Lowell, and Springfield, just to name a few. But in reality, there will still be times when they'll have to be in attendance for face-to-face meetings in Boston.

Ensuring availability of reliable, public transportation will help to mitigate other pesty issues including traffic congestion on our roadways and lack of access to parking; it will also work to lessen the environmental negative impact. Having an exceptional

AMTRAK RECENTLY

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REGION WILL BE ABLE TO

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HOP ON A HIGH-SPEED

TRAIN AND BE IN NEW

public transit system in place will help the entire Commonwealth grow and become more cohesive.

While we had made strides to double the number of roundtrips to-and-from Worcester, this new schedule will help with consistency. As people are getting priced out of Boston and the MetroWest area,

having a sustainable and reliable public transit option makes Worcester a much more rewarding place to live.

In the fall of 2019, the Chamber rolled out its year-long housing study highlighting the need for more housing at all levels. We learned that options from all fronts — from affordable to market/upscale homes — are what will continue to grow the city. It will help us retain graduates from all of our colleges and universities rather than forcing them to live close to the subway system in Boston because having a car in Boston is not always affordable.

Although students from this region may have to work in Boston, they can afford to live in the second largest city in New England instead and still be in a growing region with a great restaurant scene and some

of the best arts and culture venues in the country. This all stems from having a transportation system which makes it possible to live under an hour from our state's capital.

Over the last few decades, the cost of living has continued to increase exponentially while wages have not. Graduates are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on their education with the expectation of obtaining a high quality, good paying job. Though that is not always the case, knowing that there are affordable living options in a location with transportation connections to surrounding major cities will make Worcester an attractive place to live.

AMTRAK TO MAKE NEW ENGLAND MORE CONNECTED

Under President Joseph R. Biden's new infrastructure bill — also known as the "American's Job Plan" — \$2 trillion will be allocated to rebuild the nation's decaying roads and bridges. But just as importantly, the Biden-Harris administration has carved out \$80 million to revive the dilapidated rail system in the country. That bill, coupled with a host of legislators in Massachusetts arguing that the state needs an East-West Passenger Rail, has put rail service on the list of top priorities for policymakers once again.

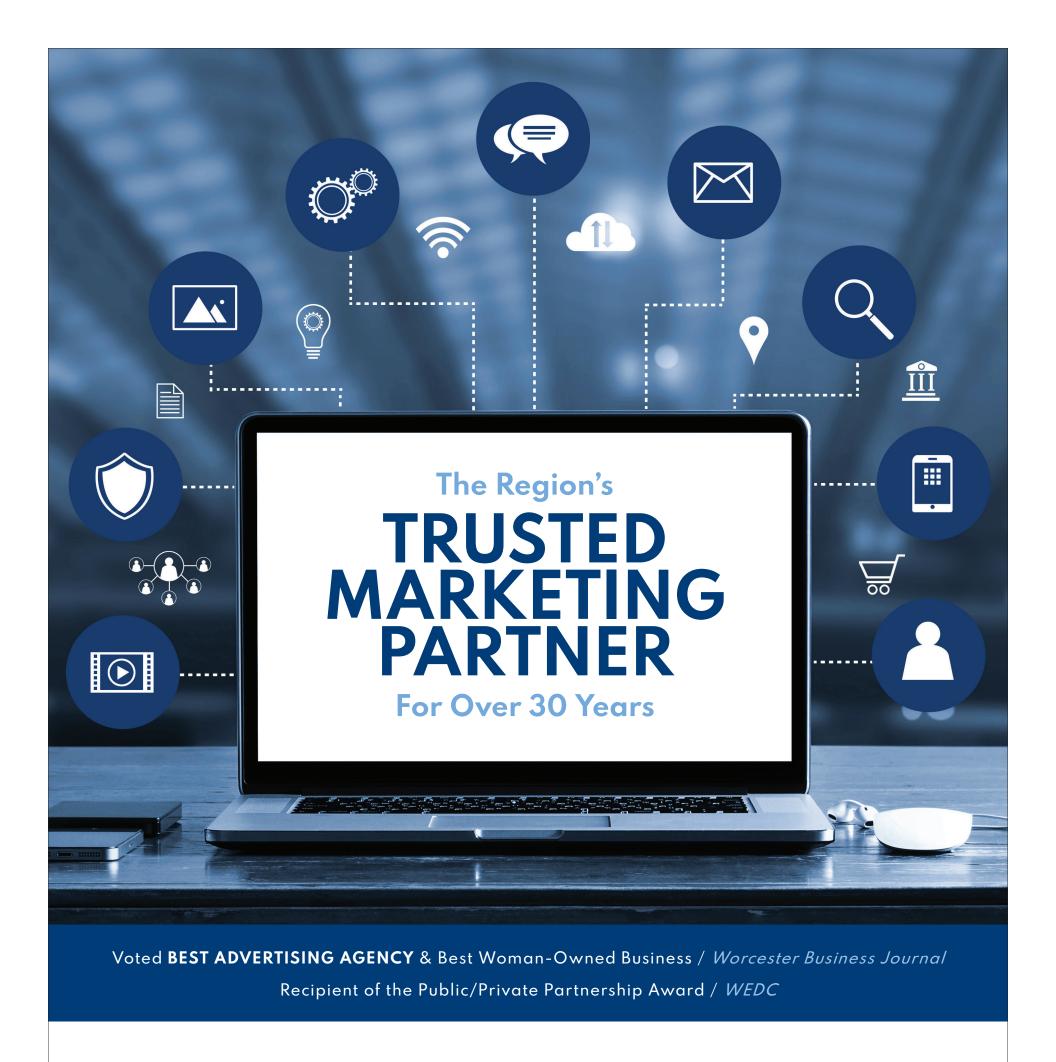
Amtrak recently announced their expansion and future goals for New England. Luckily for us in Worcester, we serve as the connector to all the major cities in the Northeast. Folks in the Central Massa-

chusetts region will be able to hop on a high-speed train and be in New York City in two hours.

Moreover, those from outside of the area will be able to come to Union Station and walk two blocks to Polar Park. This is a win-win not only for the City of Worcester, but also for all other surrounding cities

in this region. There are still many team fans who live in the Pawtucket/Providence area who will be able to head north on a train and watch the Triple-A affiliate team play in their new home ballpark.

As mentioned earlier, having the Worcester Red Sox in the Canal District is without a question a driver for economic development in the region, but reliable transportation is and will continue to be part of the equation. As we start to see more people return to their brick-and-mortar businesses now that COVID-19 vaccination rates are growing rapidly among Massachusetts residents, we have to learn from our past and understand that waiting in two hours of traffic each way to-and-from Boston is not productive. Trains will have to be part of the solution.



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Research Bureau's 2018 edition of "The Worcester Almanac," 7.3% of the city's

population is made up of Asian individuals and 8% of children under 18 living in the

city. In addition, Asian students in the Worcester Public Schools boast the highest

graduation rate of any race or ethnicity. With nearly 14,000 Asian residents in Worcester, it is no surprise that the Asian business community is thriving along

with cultural institutions like the Southeast Asian Coalition of Massachusetts

where Executive Director Anh Vu Sawyer reports more than 10,000 visits to their

Here is just a small sample of Worcester's finest Asian-owned establishments

downtown Worcester office by local Southeast Asians annually.

we hope you will support as we head into summer:

n the aftermath of several recent hate crimes across the nation targeted at Asian Americans, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce would like to take a moment to acknowledge that we stand in solidarity with our Asian and Asian American community. We would also encourage you to patronize our city's tremendous Asian and Asian American-owned businesses as a show of collective action, whether they're Chamber members or not.

According to the Worcester

We Stand in Solidarity: Support Worcester's Asian-Owned Businesses

by SARAH CONNELL SANDERS, CORRESPONDENT

rolls are second to none. Wrap them in lettuce leaves with mint and cilantro, then dip them in her homemade fish sauce for the full experience.

GONG CHA

24 Southbridge Street

Nothing says summer love like heart jelly bubble tea from Gong Cha where tea is sourced from the finest Taiwan tea estates and brewed every four hours for ultimate freshness. The same goes for Gong Cha's precious pearls, which are batched out every

four hours and cooked to perfection. Fun flavors include winter melon, lychee oolong, and tasty taro.

HOLY POKÉ

2 Oliver Street

The term "poké" translates to "cut into chunks." A typical poké bowl includes marinated raw fish such as tuna or salmon, served over sushi rice. Holy Poké offers over a dozen fresh toppings like edamame, mandarin oranges, pickled ginger, cilantro, jalapeño, scallion, red cabbage, wasabi, seaweed salad, kani, and masago. Holy Poké's Tsunami fries have developed a cult following, drenched in spicy mayo,

> sweet teriyaki sauce, and furikake. (Furikake is a Japanese seasoning that most often combines dry fish powder, sesame seeds, and seaweed.)

ANH THU RESTAURANT 2

91 Stafford Street

Anh Thu 2 is known for serving up a killer Bánh mì. This Vietnamese specialty is assembled on a fresh and toasty baguette with a generous dose of mayonnaise and a healthy smear of pate, then loaded with shredded carrots, daikon radishes, and thinly sliced jalapeños along with barbecue pork. Anh Thu is also a pho favorite. Order the Bún Mắm for a warming fish stew with thick rice noodles, squid, shrimp, and roasted pork.

GLAZY SUSAN

50 Foster Street

Worcester's first independent doughnut company, Glazy Susan, is the passion project of Susan Skrzek and her husband Joe. Throughout the pandemic, Glazy Susan has maintained a line of loyal guests every weekend vying for Vietnamese nitro cold brew and mochi doughnuts. Mochi is a Japanese rice cake characterized by its uniquely chewy texture. Glazy Susan boasts popular mudpie mochi, mango

KYOTO BAR AND GRILL

mochi, and PB & J mochi creations.

535 Lincoln Street

Experience hibachi in Worcester at Kyoto Bar and Grill. Watch as your chef's cleaver stills a spinning egg on the grill to kick off a showy evening of Japanese cuisine. Wait for the precise moment when your onion volcano bursts into flames

JUICY SEAFOOD 1269 Main Street

Suit up with gloves and bibs accordingly. You're about to embark on a traditional Vietnamese-Cajun seafood boil and it is sure to be a beautiful mess. Butcher paper covers the tables along with a mountain of wet naps to mop up your buttery hands at the end of the night. Don't be shy; breathe in a cloud of garlicky steam and tear into a lobster tail. Juicy Seafood is an immersive, fun, social dining experience-plus, the draft beer starts at \$2.99 —a 'must' for your summer bucket list in 2021.

CHASHU RAMEN + IZAKAYA

38 Franklin Street

Located along the Worcester Common is one of the city's newest

restaurants, Chashu Ramen + Izakaya. Order small plates of seared cajun togashi tofu and fried chicken bao bao after work along with a craft cocktail or a bottle of sake. Don't pass up the charcoal grilled short ribs and sizzling skewers of wild prawns. Need some nourishment? Dive into a deep bowl of ramen made with spicy red miso. The decor is posh, but



609 W Boylston Street

the vibe is casual.

You are going to feel the love when you meet the Eggroll Lady, Phuong Lam. Lam fled Vietnam on a riverboat 35 years ago on a treacherous journey, in search of peace. She will never forget the taste of bread the volunteer handed her when she arrived to safety at a refugee camp. She knew right then and there that she wanted to repay the favor by keeping her new community well fed and cared for. Lam's egg







Above: Ramen from Chashu Ramen. Photo by Sarah Connell Sanders.

NETWORKING STILL POWERFUL IN PANDEMIC TIMES

by ALLISON CHISOLM, CORRESPONDENT

usinesspeople join a chamber of commerce to broaden their networks. New people. New opportunities. New ways to learn about a community.

Throw a pandemic into those plans, however, and networking just doesn't look the same. But for many Worcester-area business owners and staff members, whether it takes place in-person or online, networking has remained at the heart of their sales strategy throughout the last year.

"It's just another way of communicating with people face-to-face miles apart," said Alex De-Quattro, smiling during a Zoom call conducted from his car in a parking lot. District Sales Co-ordinator for Aflac and chair of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce's Ambassador Group, he said of the three parts of his business, cold calls, referrals and networking, networking is still the most effective.

Mr. DeQuattro also is a member of the Chamber's Connect for Success networking Group 2, which shifted to virtual meetings almost immediately. The group has grown, gaining new members even during the pandemic.

"We've got a well-versed and diverse group of people that enjoy meeting and sharing a lot to help each other," he said.

For fellow Group 2 member Suzanne Wigen, that's exactly what she wants. As a Career Options Coordinator for Horace Mann Educational Association (HMEA), she said networking with the Chamber's

referral group members "helps me learn about the community ... the businesses and their hiring needs."

Building those relationships is critical for her work, she said, noting that "people just want to get to know you and get to know your story."

A peer group of job developers whose meetings Ms. Wigen had regularly attended also shifted to a virtual format, after an initial pause. Two-hour in-person meetings became one-hour Zoom calls every other week to discuss "needs and leads" for local jobs.

Relying on virtual meetings has meant networking no longer has geographic limitations for some business owners. Karen Ceppetelli, EA, has built much of her business, Acorn Business Advisors, through referrals over the last 20 years. While a member of the Chamber's Connect for Success Group 1, she also belongs to a national networking organization and several women business owners' groups.

"I was able to visit one group meeting in Hawaii," she said. "It was the week before Christmas - everyone was in T-shirts and sundresses with Santa hats!"

Virtual access has also meant far less time spent driving and parking, a definite advantage, said Ms. Ceppetelli.

The Chamber's Roundtable Forums also quickly pivoted to alternative formats to meet their member needs. Michelle Memnon, who co-chairs the Diverse Professionals Roundtable with Eurayshia Williams Reed, said their 50-plus members have appreciated first quarterly, and now monthly, online meetings for a mix of educational and social purposes. The May 2021 meeting, for example, hosted a panel of WooSox

executives, after a Cocktail Connection in February and a March session on mind-mapping.

"I'm always excited to be connecting with someone," said Ms. Memnon, whose business, Spiritually Fabulous Ministries, is a service-oriented enterprise with a mission to inspire others. An author and designer of "She Ties" accessories, in the past year, she has participated in Boston vendor markets both outdoors and in repurposed mall spaces.

In-person contact, when carefully planned, became a novel way to network for Charles D. B. King II, co-owner of Fast Signs in Worcester. He and his brother launched in January 2020 with a carefully crafted business plan. COVID-19 shifted the business landscape, but walk-in business was never a focus for his customer base of small- and medium-sized businesses, he said.

Instead, "the goal was always to grow through relationship building." Declared an essential business, Fast Signs generated goodwill by printing a few dozen "Open for Takeout" banners. Team members dropped off the free banners at local restaurants, together with a business card.

"We thought restaurants were probably the hardest hit, so we wanted to do this as a gesture," said Mr. King.

Whether masked in-person or on screen in a Zoom box, Chamber members continue networking with prospective customers and referral sources. Building those relationships remains essential. As Mr. DeQuattro advised, "No one's going to do business with you if they don't know, like and trust you."



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Below, right: Worcester Chamber President and CEO Tim Murray (left) speaks at the ribbon cutting for Anokye Krom's second location. Anokye Krom owner Richard Boateng stands in the middle. Photo by Dominique Goyette-Connerty.

IMMIGRANT-OWNED WEST AFRICAN RESTAURANT ANOKYE KROM EXPANDS TO PARK AVENUE

by DAVID SULLIVAN, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FELLOW

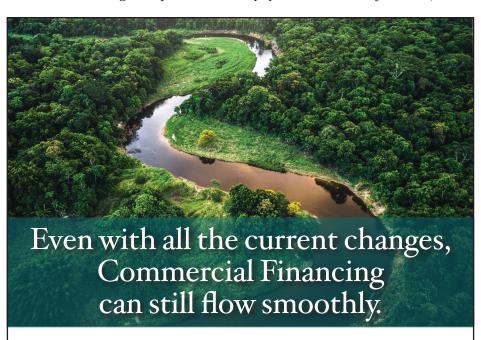
orcester is home to a large number of immigrant communities, as it has been for its entire history. This international heritage is what makes the city so great, whether it be in the workforce, education, or culture. Worcester's different immigrant cultures also each bring their unique cuisines to the Heart of the Commonwealth, and Anokye Krom does its part to represent West African tastes in New England's second largest city.

"With the influx of Africans, especially Ghanaians in Worcester, I felt we needed a place, a hub where after a hard day's work, you can come in, relax, and have good food and drinks," said Richard Boateng, owner of Anokye Krom.

Mr. Boateng, a native of Ghana who moved to Worcester in 1997, recognized early on that the city was quickly becoming a destination for the West African diaspora. He wanted to create a place for his fellow Ghanaian immigrants to have a taste of home while living in America.

Ghanaians make up the highest percentage of all 37,000 foreign-born residents in Worcester: 10%, meaning this city has the highest concentration of Ghanaian immigrants in the country.

Mr. Boateng's restaurant serves a wide variety of West African appetizers and entrees. Among Anokye Krom's most popular dishes is the jollof rice, which



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is rice cooked in tomato sauce with added spices and a choice of meat, served with a boiled egg and shredded lettuce. Fried plantains, bean soup, and rice are all popular and delicious sides.

Anokye Krom, which means "Anokye's village" in one of Ghana's native languages, is named after the historical leader Okomfo Anokye, who is revered as a legend in West African cultures as a powerful military and political leader in Ghanaian history. Mr. Boateng says this name helps his fellow members of the Ghanaian community feel at home in Worcester.

The best thing about owning a business, according to Mr. Boateng, is providing his patrons with good food and a communal place to gather. He notes that his friends and family will often come to the restaurant after church or sporting events on Sundays for a traditional Ghanaian lunch.

But Anokye Krom is not just for the Ghanaian community - Mr. Boateng wants people from all different backgrounds from all over the area to feel like his restaurant can be a new home for them, or at least their new favorite takeout destination. "Some people always want to look for new places and new food and we can provide that for them," he said, speaking to the uniqueness of West African cuisine.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been painful for the restaurant industry, resulting in thousands of permanently closed food purveyors in Massachusetts in just a year, Anokye Krom is bucking the trend by recently expanding to its second location on Park Avenue.

The initial Anokye Krom location on Millbury Street had problems with parking availability as the business grew, leading Mr. Boateng to select the former location of Thai restaurant Bahn Thai, which closed during the pandemic, as his new flagship location at 2 Coes Square. This plaza right off Park Avenue has a parking lot for Anokye Krom patrons to use.

The interior design features vibrant colors and notes of West African cultures, plenty of booth and table seating, and a bar inside the spacious entrance. The kitchen in the new building, which is larger compared to the Millbury Street location, has already helped the restaurant manage its volume of orders.

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce along with elected officials and other community leaders held a ribbon-cutting in March to celebrate the new location. Mr. Boateng says the Chamber's help during the pandemic and in acquiring the new location was essential for his business to not only survive, but to thrive.

"The Chamber's help was an immense contribution," he said. "All the people at the Chamber made this happen. They want to help minority businesses, small businesses, and everyone in this city." Mr. Boateng said he had taken the initiative to tell his fellow Ghanaian business owners about the benefits of joining the Chamber like he has already done.

"The rate at which Africans, Ghanaians especially, are coming into Worcester... pretty soon our children's children will be everywhere in the city," he said of the growing Ghanaian business community in Worcester.

When asked what was next for Anokye Krom after opening its second location, he noted that he wanted to take things "a step at a time." While the restaurant has enjoyed considerable success in Worcester, he first wants to be able to find more workers to staff the Park Avenue location. "With cooking ethnic African food, you put in a lot of time and labor," Mr. Boateng said of his duties at the restaurant, where he doubles as a business manager and chef.

His wife and children help him run the business by cooking and serving, but the challenge ahead is finding people to staff his larger restaurant. For now, the success of opening a new location during a pandemic will have to do.

If you are looking to support local minority-owned and family-owned businesses and experience the cultural tastes of West Africa, consider Anokye Krom for your next dinner or lunch. "Anybody who wishes to try a sizzling hot and well-seasoned meal should come here," Mr. Boateng noted proudly. "They will love it and not regret coming here."

Anokye Krom is located at 2 Coes Square off Park Avenue and is available for delivery on DoorDash and Uber Eats. The new location is closed on Mondays but is open from 12pm to 11:30pm Tuesdays through Thursdays, from 12pm to 2am on Fridays, and from 12pm − 12am on Saturdays and Sundays. ♥

POLAR PARK, CONTINUED

Josh Ockimey and Boston's third-ranked prospect Jarren Duran - his second of the game.

And they weren't the only ones to go bridge during the afternoon. A total of six homeruns were crushed during the opening day game; four were courtesy of the home team. If there were any doubts about it before, we now know with confidence the WooSox' home field will be a hitters' ballpark.

Those seventh inning bombs put the boys in red and white up 6-4. Right-handed reliever and two-time World Series Champion with the Boston Red Sox (2013 and 2018) Brandon Workman entered in the top of the eighth inning to make his debut for Worcester, allowing one run before pitching his way out of a bases-loaded jam. The Red Sox organization had just signed Workman to a minor league deal the week prior, after he was designated for assignment by the Chicago Cubs.

The Worcester Red Sox went on to score two more runs in the end of the game, giving them the comfortable, three-run cushion lead they needed to wrap with a win. Final score was 8-5, marking a perfect end to the perfect day.

A FIGURATIVE HOME RUN FOR WORCESTER

But the victory over the Mets wasn't the only Worcester win of the day. It was all smiles all around as fans from near and far were welcomed to the new ballpark for the first time ever.

Due to coronavirus restrictions at the state level limiting outdoor stadiums and ballparks to 25% capacity, the roughly 9,500-seat Polar Park was only able to admit a couple thousand fans to experience the opening day festivities. But, one would have thought there were tens of thousands in attendance upon hearing the crowds roar. Every play in favor of the home team -- from a simple pop-up fly or an easy first base out, to double plays and balls off the aptly-named Worcester Wall - resulted in cheers that seemed to echo throughout the city. Simply put, the fans were electric.

The organization went all out with the pregame ceremony to properly christen the new ballpark. There was no shortage of special guests on deck for the big day. From elected officials and community leaders, to hall of famers and organization executives, there were a number of VIPs on hand to help celebrate the historic occasion for Worcester and the city.

Six-time Grammy Award winner and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer James Taylor joined his 20-year-old son Henry in singing a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. Taylor is a Massachusetts native. Governor Charlie Baker and Shrewsbury native Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony and traditional first pitches. They were joined on the field by Boston Red Sox greats and Baseball Hall of Famers Pedro Martinez and Jim Rice. Plus, former Boston Celtics point guard Bob Cousy came out to deliver the iconic words so many Worcester residents had longed to hear: "play ball!" The 92-year-old was a standout in his time at the College of the Holy Cross and has lived much of his life in Worcester where he currently resides.

All the while, Worcester Red Sox Owner and Chairman of the Board Larry Lucchino and legendary ballpark architect Janet Marie Smith were around throughout the day admiring their work and that of the hundreds of men and women from the construction trades that labored on the project. The team also paid tribute to fallen Worcester firefighters during the pregame ceremony, selecting Ava Roy, daughter of the late firefighter Christopher Roy, to deliver the game ball to the mound. Moreover, the Worcester Red Sox have already retired jersey number six in honor of the "Worcester Six" - the six firefighters who lost their lives battling a cold storage fire in 1999.

BRINGING IN BUSINESS

In the last edition of *Chamber Exchange: The Newspaper*, we wrote about how Polar Park had already attracted a handful of developers to the area who wanted to build housing, hotels, office space, retail space, restaurants, and other mixed-use projects. These include Madison Properties' multiple sites, Boston Capital's plans for housing and retail space in the former Table Talk Pies headquarters, and Churchill James' vision for mixed-use developments on Green Street including more housing and a flatbread pizza restaurant with a candlepin bowling alley.

Some of those projects are already underway, while others are still in the planning stages. Nonetheless, what was once a brownfield not too long ago has been transformed into a "green field," if you will, with Polar Park and plenty of surrounding developments.

As exciting as these new establishments are, they're coming into the Canal District to be part of an already-existing, vibrant neighborhood - not to create a totally new one. With the brand-new ballpark generating buzz and attracting thousands of people to each home game, businesses in that area are bound to benefit from increased foot traffic, too.

Located inside the Worcester Public Market, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce member Alan James Co. creates handmade leather goods. Just a stone's throw from Polar Park and with prime real estate in the public market, Owner and Designer Bill Laudon says he's thrilled to essentially have a front-row seat to the action and the opportunity for more exposure to potential customers. "Alan James Co. couldn't be more excited about the ballpark and the continuous growth of our beloved city. To have a space where I can share my gift and build

Below: Polar Park pregame festivities featured a star-studded lineup. Ceremonial first pitches were thrown by Gov. Baker, Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, Hall of Famers Pedro Martinez and Jim Rice, and Worcester Mayor Joseph Petty. Photo by Dominique Goyette-Connerty.



beautiful, new, and exciting leather pieces right in the heart of it all - it's beyond special to me [...] Worcester is my home. My family and myself at Alan James Co. are proud to be a part of something greater than us."

Restaurants, bars, and other eateries in the area are ripe with potential for business as well, likely to see an influx of customers before and after games looking to grab a bite to eat.

In this sense, from the perspectives of both the Chamber and local tourism organization Discover Central Massachusetts (DCM), Polar Park has already proved to be and will continue to be an economic driver for the region.

"Tourism is about more than families going on vacation; It represents a business sector that brings millions of dollars into the region," said DCM Executive Director Monique Messier. "From the newly-opened Polar Park to the hundreds of businesses and destinations throughout the region, Central Massachusetts attractions bring smiles to thousands of faces each year."

"This was a huge win for the City of Worcester. We have a beautiful, new ballpark and a top-notch Triple-A baseball team affiliated with the iconic brand of the Boston Red Sox which is known across the globe," said Worcester Chamber President and CEO Tim Murray. "Polar Park will create memories for hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, adding significantly to the local economy."





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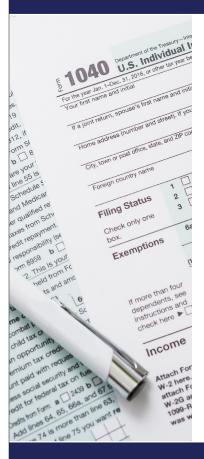
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After Pandemic Left Them in a Pickle, Stretch's Finds New Home at Worcester Regional Food Hub

by DOMINIQUE GOYETTE-CONNERTY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Below: Just a few Stretch's Pickles products. Photo courtesy of Stretch's Pickles.

ike a local craft beer company. But for pickles. That's how Cheryl Gaudreau, co-owner of Stretch's Pickles, describes the small business.

With her 30-plus years in banking, her husband Todd's experience as a roofing foreman, her son Erick's expertise as an electrician, and their family-friend Jon's position as a country store general manager, one might not imagine this group of four would own a specialty pickle company together — but here they are.

In fact, Ms. Gaudreau says she can't really believe it either. "I never thought in my life that I would own my own business — especially a pickle company," she said laughing during an April interview.

According to the Fitchburg native and current Ashburnham resident, Stretch's Pickles was established in 2011 and bought in 2015 by Brian Vincent of Vincent's Country Store in Westminster. "They were small. He bought it just to have a good time, something to do as a little hobby type of thing," Ms. Gaudreau said of Vincent, whose family she knows well in the small, North Central Massachusetts town. Her son Erick Gaudreau, who worked part time at the country store, would help with the pickle business.

One day, Erick suggested to his mom that they buy the pickle company from Brian. "Are you crazy?" she recalls asking. "I don't know anything about pickles. Dad doesn't know anything about pickles. What are we going to do with a pickle company?" But her son was convinced they could do more with the business and really take Stretch's "to the next level."

After a few months of negotiating, the Gaudreau family, together with friend and Vincent's Country Store General Manager Jon Aho, bought Stretch's Pickles in April of 2019.

With Mr. Aho serving as the lead, given his understanding of the pickling process, the team of four kept the small business going for a while. Then COVID-19 hit. And Stretch's owners found themselves in a bit of a pickle.

"We couldn't do anything for like, over a year," Ms. Gaudreau said. Production was halted as they searched for a new place to make their pickles at, striking out left and right due to heightened coronavirus restrictions and location closures.









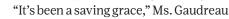
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Then entered the idea of the Worcester Regional Food Hub (WRFH).

The minute they laid eyes on the Food Hub's commercial kitchen with long tables, spacious countertops, and an eight-burner stove, they were sold. Working with Director Shon Rainford, Stretch's Pickles quickly joined as a member of the WRFH and was able to resume pickle production in their new space February of this year.



locally-sourced products.



But for the co-owners of Stretch's, the biggest benefit to being a part of the Food Hub is having 24/7 access. All four owners still have full-time jobs, so the ability to produce the pickles late nights, weekends, and anytime in between is also a significant convenience. Ms. Gaudreau says from where they all live in Ashburnham, Westminster, and Winchendon, Worcester is a bit of a drive, clocking in at about an hour, "but it's worth the hour."

The Stretch's brand currently has eight signature flavors: Boston Deli Dill, Garlic Dill, Zesty Dill, Bread and Buttah, Sweet Mustard Bread and Butter, Wasabi Bread and Butter, Zesty Bread and Butter, and Zesty Larry Imperial IPA Dills — a collaboration with Wachusett Brewery in Westminster that uses their Larry IPA beer in the brine.

Part of what makes Stretch's unique and different from other pickle brands is that Stretch's Pickles are not fermented. Rather, the cucumbers are packed in jars fresh with spices and brine and then water bathed, which allows for the product to be shelf stable.

Additionally, Stretch's makes other pickled products that aren't cucumber-based, including a Bloody Mary mix and Buzzed Bourbon Pineapples.

Even after a year without production, Ms. Gaudreau says their customers never wavered in support. Now that they've settled into a rhythm at the Food Hub, she says demand is high and business has been non-stop. "People have just been calling. It's just been phenomenal. [...] We've been able to really pin down our process to really start making some good profit."

Currently, Stretch's Pickles are sold in a number of locations across the state including Roots Natural Foods Market in Leominster, Patriots Package Store in Templeton, William's Package Store in Winchendon, Central Mass Gardens in Lunenburg, Johnny Appleseed Visitors' Center in Lancaster, Mill No. 3 Farmstand in Fitchburg, and of course, Vincent's Country Store in Westminster — where Ms. Gaudreau says they have trouble keeping their products in stock.

Stretch's Pickles are also available for sale via the Food Hub and their weekly food pickup program, which is helping get their products out into Worcester more a city Ms. Gaudreau says has been unbelievably welcoming.

Though just the small team of four, they hope to have employees at some point, and Ms. Gaudreau can eventually see herself retiring to run the pickle business full time. She says they'll have to see what the future holds.

For now, they're excited to have finally found a home in the Food Hub, and can't wait to meet more people in Worcester and share the products they're so proud of. "We make our craft pickles with love because every single jar is special," she said. "We make sure that it's perfect because we can, because we're local."

WINNDEVELOPMENT, CONTINUED

The Boys Club property is also home to the "Whispering Wall," a World War I memorial for Worcester veterans. The City plans to use the \$300,000 from the sale of the building to WinnCompanies to redo and improve the memorial site. WinnCompanies agreed to be responsible for maintaining the landscape around the



Above: A WinnCompanies rendering of the new five-story building to be built for senior housing at the former Boys Club.

building, including upkeep on the memorial site and its green space.

Like the Courthouse Lofts have introduced the Major Taylor Museum to honor the former Worcester resident and the first Black person to win a world championship in bicycling, WinnCompanies is planning to line the halls of 1 Lincoln Square with panels and artwork which tell a "living history" of Lincoln Square.

Mr. O'Brien said that the site's construction firm would be Cutler Design, based at nearby Harvard Street. In addition, 50% of subcontractors will be hired from within Worcester County. Construction may begin as early as 2023, pending processes with the city government.

The project fills an important need for housing that targets consumers at life stages such as seniors, young professionals, families, couples without children, and more. This need was identified by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce's 2019 housing study, which emphasized that housing stock is most useful when it is constructed to fit the needs of consumers according to their lifestyle.

Neighboring municipalities are also looking to fill needs for senior housing. Auburn recently announced plans to build out two underutilized school buildings. The Julia Bancroft School will become a four-story, 55-unit senior housing development, and construction is continuing on the Mary D. Stone school building. Construction on Mary D. Stone began last year and is slated to bring 45 affordable and 10 market-rate senior housing units to Auburn, totaling 110 new senior housing units in Worcester's neighboring city.

This project represents yet another addition to WinnCompanies' strong Worcester portfolio. The company recently built the \$30 million Voke Lofts immediately adjacent to the Boys Club and already manages the Canal Lofts, Wellington Community, and Coes Pond Village in Worcester.

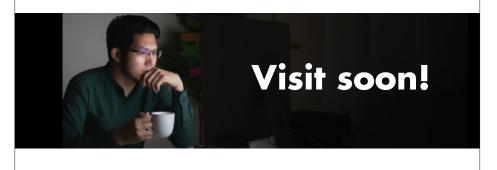
Of their presence in Worcester, Mr. O'Brien said, "We wouldn't want to be anywhere else." ♥



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Worcester Chamber to Spearhead New Regional Startup Resource Consortium

by DAVID SULLIVAN, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FELLOW

he Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is the recipient of a \$180,000 grant from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) to create a startup resource cooperative to be known as the Central Massachusetts Startup Consortium (CMSC).

The Regional Pilot Program under which the Chamber received the grant aims to "promote regional recovery from the economic impacts" of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to MOBD. The Chamber teamed up with the City of Worcester, the Town of Leicester, and startup incubators The Venture Forum, WorcLab, and the Worcester Business Development Corporation's Idea Lab to plan the project.

CMSC will fill a need in the Worcester area for a centralized clearinghouse on entrepreneurial resources. Its primary medium will be a professionally-constructed and search-engine-optimized website to increase accessibility for startup owners from all backgrounds. The idea is to reduce confusion among entrepreneurs who may not know where to start when looking for assistance in starting a business.

This "one-stop shop" will unite the resources of the wide-ranging incubator ecosystem in Central Massachusetts, providing a comprehensive listing of all local incubators, accelerators, business resource bureaus, and makerspaces and also giving these organizations an opportunity to reach out directly to entrepreneurs looking for assistance.

Given the massive amounts of job losses and business losses that resulted from the pandemic, introducing new small businesses into the economy is crucial for a successful and equitable economic recovery. Worcester aims to leverage its strengths as a city with a bustling innovation ecosystem to provide a supportive place for these businesses to start.

CMSC will help the Chamber promote Worcester as the ideal location for startups. With an innovation economy supported by established incubators and accelerators such as the Massachusetts Biomedical Initiative (MBI) which has supported a booming local life sciences cluster, a large talent pool of more than 35,000 college students, and significantly lower real estate costs than the greater Boston area, it is no wonder why Worcester has been recognized as the second-best city in New England and the 33rd best in the country to start a business.

Leveraging these advantages of starting a business in Worcester and promoting them to potential entrepreneurs is going to be another essential piece of CMSC.

The CMSC website will feature a forum, an interactive events calendar, ecommerce capabilities for membership and sponsorship, a social feed for related entrepreneurial social media content, and a detailed resource directory.

The funding from the grant will go towards subsidizing membership vouchers at the WorcLab and Idea Lab as part of this project, as well as paying for the website's construction and maintenance through a third-party web design contractor. \heartsuit



David Sullivan To Assume Full-Time Position with Chamber

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce announces the hiring of another full-time staff member. As of July 1, David Sullivan will assume a full-time

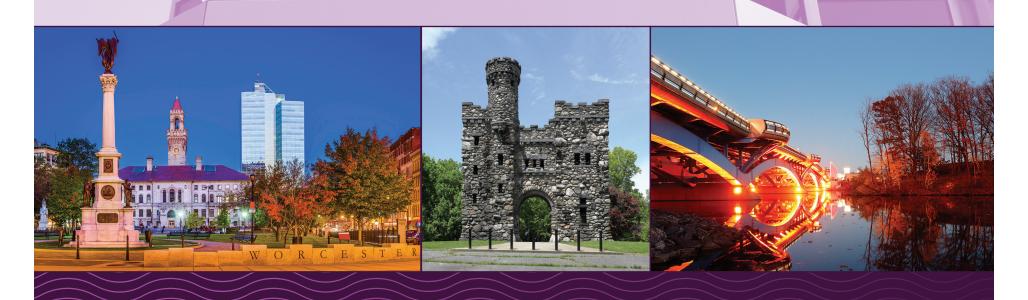
position as the Chamber's Economic Development & Business Recruitment Associate. David has been with the Chamber part time since October of 2019 as our Economic Development Fellow. He will graduate this June from Clark University with his master's degree in public administration. David will be working to promote economic development in the Worcester area by recruiting new businesses; building relationships with local, state, and federal government; and advocating for equitable economic development policies and projects. He will be supervising the Chamber's StartUp Worcester program and serving as the liaison to the Worcester Regional Food Hub as he continues to write grants and help manage the nonprofit's capital project in moving to Union Station. David is originally from Amesbury, Massachusetts and has a bachelor's degree from Clark University in political science. He is passionate about environmental justice; loves dogs and cats; and is an avid Patriots, Celtics, and Red Sox fan.

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Michael Welch, CEO

STARTUP WORCESTER PARTICIPANT **MULTISCALE SYSTEMS MASTERING** ENTREPRENEURSHIP by Jesse Silverberg, PHD ceo and research director, multiscale systems



remember growing up with parents that owned their own small business. Going to work with them (and being put to work while I was there) must have planted a seed. In 2018, starting a business to

commercialize research from my PhD was such an obvious next step in my career that I didn't even stop to second guess it. Since then, I've learned that starting a business is different than running a business. Yes, starting was exciting, but it turns out that running it is where the adrenaline really gets my heart pumping and endorphins flowing.

Three years in and Multiscale Systems has evolved from a home office and residential garage to a 2,300 square foot facility in the new Armory Business Center on Canterbury Street in Worcester. We have a full-time team of four (soon to be six) and have acquired the dedicated special-purpose engineering equipment needed for developing our advanced materials technology called mechanical metamaterials. Our work focuses on engineering complex 3D geometric patterns that enhance the physical properties of ordinary matter. We specifically chose Worcester as a home for our business for its industrial and manufacturing roots. It's the perfect setting while we focus on building our intellectual property portfolio around specific metamaterials tailored for lightweighting in transportation, accessing clean energy resources, and impact protection for defense.

Starting a business is quite the adventure, and it never would have been possible without all the help we've had along the way. Our membership with WorcLabs through the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce's StartUp Worcester program directly supported our ability to bring in nearly \$140,000 in funding from the U.S. Department of Energy via the American Made Challenge prize series. The competition leverages a nationally distributed network of connectors, which includes WorcLabs. Our affiliation with WorcLabs allowed us to compete at a higher level, and our winnings directly supported growth of the business by purchasing revenue-generating equipment and adding new jobs to the community.

Being a member of the current StartUp Worcester cohort has other benefits: as we take our technology to market, it always helps to listen to more people, learn from their experience, and pivot accordingly. We recently reached out to the Chamber for help connecting to shipping and transportation companies that own and operate their own fleet

of semi-trailers. These warm introductions paid out in spades - not only did we end up gaining valuable insights, but we learned important, new information that will help us focus our technology on that industry's most vital pain points.

While our entire team is working long and hard to secure Multiscale Systems' future, our ultimate success is built on the groundwork we undertake today and the connections we make to our community. Our journey is supported by a mix of federal funding through SBIRs grants and contracts, and local programs like StartUp Worcester. Yes, in retrospect, starting the business was easy. But with the help of programs like these, running and growing a successful business becomes that much more attainable.

StartUp Worcester is currently accepting applications for the 2021-2022 cohort. Applications can be found online at worcesterchamber.org and are due by July 1, 2021.



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INSIDE LEADERSHIP WORCESTER Thoughts from a Class of 2021 Participant

by RONALD B. WADDELL JR.,

LEGENDARY LEGACIES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



"Nah, I'm good; you want how much for what?"

As the executive director of Legendary Legacies Inc., a start-up nonprofit, this is my response to most opportunities that threaten to take from my already-limited time. In the true form, it was my response when I first heard about Leadership Worcester. I had seen some articles, social media posts from friends, and other marketing content for the program. I figured it was just another way

of paying for friends and I wasn't interested in it.

It had a similar aura of the rush week in college for me — every fraternity and sorority making their case as to why pledging their particular Greek letters was the thing to do. Even though a couple of my good friends had done Leadership Worcester and spoke very highly of the program, I was still skeptical.

My friend and Executive Director of the Worcester Education Collaborative Jennifer Carey Davis emailed and personally encouraged me to join the 2021 Leadership Worcester cohort. Jen's words have a great degree of influence on me, so her recommendation commanded my attention. I optimistically but cautiously applied for the 2021 cohort amidst an unpredictable year due to the global pandemic. I have made many bad decisions during the pandemic, like having one more snack between Zooms, but the decision to apply was not one of them.

I pride myself in knowing a lot about Worcester, but one thing is for sure: I can always learn more. Our cohort has developed from being a bunch of strangers



in Brady Bunch-like Zoom squares, to becoming real people who support each other's work in the city. My favorite day to date has to be the education session; no wait, public safety was good too, yeah; economic development also had some great things to say, too... I can't choose, every session has been great and it is hard to distinguish which had the greatest impact on me.

Professionally, Legendary Legacies Inc. has benefited greatly from my participation in Leadership Worcester. Here are just a few of the ways:

- A cohort member joined our organization as a board member. (Ryan Wilkie)
- Our Conflict of Interest Policy was drafted by a cohort member. (Nina Dow)
- A major funding opportunity was referred to us by a cohort member, which we received. Shout out to Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA. (Allison James)
- An additional funding opportunity came our way and we made it to the second round of the application process. (Karen Pelletier, WRCC)
- We were invited to co-lead a webinar as part of OpenSky's Bridge Training Institute. (Suzy Langevin)
- We hired a cohort member as a consultant to assist with one of our social media campaigns. (Jennifer Hubert)

Personally, the network of friendships that I have developed through Leadership Worcester are ones that have inspired and encouraged me to continue to work toward creating a better future for our city. The foundational principle for Legendary Legacies Inc. is found in Proverbs 13:22. It states: "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children." This is the focus of Leadership Worcester — equipping participants with the knowledge, networks, and know-how to create a Legendary Legacy for generations to come. \checkmark

Leadership Worcester is currently accepting applications for the 2022 cohort. Applications can be found online at leadershipworcester.com and are due by May 28, 2021.

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MEET KOLA AKINDELE WPI's AVP of External Relations and Strategic Partnerships

By DOMINIQUE GOYETTE-CONNERTY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS



n each edition, editorial staff of *Chamber Exchange: The Newspaper* look to include one question-and-answer-style interview with a Chamber member who's really making a change in the community. This month, I sat down with Kola Akindele, Assistant Vice President of External Relations and Strategic Partnerships at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). Below are excerpts from the interview with Mr. Akindele chronicling his upbringing and schooling in Worcester, his work in higher education, his volunteerism efforts, and his passion for this city and its people.

After several years with Hartford HealthCare and UMass Medical School, you recently started in this new role at WPI, but you're no stranger to Worcester. What's your connection to the city?

I was born and raised in Worcester. My parents had me here in Worcester. They took me back to Nigeria when I was about a year old and then I came back when I was around eight or nine years old. I went to a number of elementary schools in the city including Vernon Hill and Adams Street School, and then went to Forest Grove Middle School and onto Holy Name High School. I've lived most of my life here. I actually grew up right across from WPI. Then I came back to work here at the medical school for about seven to eight years. So I've really spent the bulk of my life in Worcester.

What exactly does being the Assistant Vice President of External Relations and Strategic Partnerships at WPI entail?

I oversee the community government foundation and corporate relations functions at the university. WPI has this sort of long-standing history of applying these resources to develop leaders who will make an impact in the world through STEM activities and education. A lot of that work is supported and for the most part funded by corporate partners, foundation partners,

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and through relationships with our community and government partners. My role is to sort of steward a lot of those relationships, and to build and cultivate them in a central way.

You serve on the Chamber's Board of Directors as well as a number of other boards and committees. What drives you to stay so voluntarily involved in Worcester and your community?

Given the fact that I was born here and raised here, I have a soft spot for Worcester. I think whenever Worcester does well, it makes me feel better about

my home town. Whatever I can do to make sure the community advances, the city advances, and the residents of the city advance, I think I try to do those things. Again, if Worcester does well, I think I do well because I'm from Worcester. It's sort of this "back home" feeling that allows me to have such a passion for the city.

And your experience with community and government relations isn't limited just to your job title or your volunteer work. You also ran for Worcester City Council previously. How do civic engagement and political action align with your passions and personal mission?

I think for the community as a whole to advance, everyone needs to feel that they have a voice in the advancement of that community. Every sector, every constituent, every culture, every neighborhood needs to feel like they have a part to play, they have a role, and their voice is heard. Overall, if Worcester needs to advance, I think every part of Worcester needs to play a role in that. Due to my passion for the city to advance, I have this passion to make sure that

everyone else within it is civically engaged so that, as a result, the city can move forward.

Part of my work in the past has been to make sure that folks who move here to the city, particularly African immigrants, have a strong voice in the community and are more civically engaged than they usually are so that their voices aren't left out and they can become part of some of the decisions that are being made.

Over the past few years, there's been a lot of talk about this so-called "renaissance" that Worcester is experiencing. In your professional and personal

> roles, how do you work to ensure everyone takes part in this advancement and no one gets left behind?

> In my personal role, what I choose to do is make sure I participate and sort of build or create forums in which people can become civically engaged and become aware of opportunities to become civically engaged. Similar to what I cited with The African Council [of Massachusetts] that

I helped found, the idea was to make sure that new immigrants from Africa had a chance to get an education as to who their government — specifically their local government — is and understand how that works, and find ways to become more involved in their local government.

In my professional role, I work to make sure that higher ed institutions are part of the conversation when it comes to the economic development of the city and when it comes to the advancement of the city as a whole, too. We are a major component of the city's advancement, so we want to make sure that we have a voice in some of the conversations being had around pushing the city forward.



PART OF MY WORK IN THE PAST HAS BEEN TO MAKE SURE THAT FOLKS WHO MOVE HERE TO THE CITY, PARTICULARLY AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS, HAVE A STRONG VOICE IN THE COMMUNITY..." AUBURN | BLACKSTONE VALLEY | CENTRAL MASS SOUTH | WACHUSETT AREA | WEBSTER DUDLEY OXFOR

Former National Guard Armory in Webster Transformed into Samuel Slater Experience

by BARBARA VAN REED,

MARKETING DIRECTOR AT SAMUEL SLATER EXPERIENCE

his summer will mark the completion and opening of the Samuel Slater Experience, a historic museum featuring state-of-the-art, 4-D digital technology to tell the story of Samuel Slater, the American Industrial Revolution, and the founding of Webster, which would become a booming mill town in the early 19th century.

Five years ago, Webster business owner and philanthropist Christopher Robert embarked on a mission to augment the Webster school system's social sciences curriculum with a museum dedicated to the life of Samuel Slater, known historically as the Father of the American Industrial Revolution. His vision was to create "an interactive, dynamic, 'Disney-like' experience" that would specifically engage students.

Samuel Slater came to America from England in 1789, the year the U.S. Constitution was ratified, secretly carrying the plans for water-powered cotton spinning jennies with him in his head, as Britain considered the transfer of textile technology a traitorous act.

He initially settled in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and established the country's first successful cotton spinning mill there.

In 1811, Slater moved to Massachusetts and built new cotton mills as well as one of the first woolen mills in America, all powered by the French River and Lake Chaubunagungamaug, in what was then called Oxford and later renamed Webster after Senator Daniel Webster.

Slater brought technological innovation to textile manufacturing and introduced a novel, if paternalistic, management approach with his "factory system" that attracted workers to the region and established the infrastructure that made Webster a thriving "boomtown." Slater died in Webster in 1835 and is buried in Mount Zion cemetery. Much of that history has been lost.



 $\label{lem:Above: Above: Exterior pictures of the former National Guard Armory, now with Samuel Slater depicted along one side. Photo courtesy of the Samuel Slater Experience.$

Mr. Robert began a search of the old Slater buildings in Webster to construct the museum, but none were suitable.

With the help of town officials, he finally identified a viable building: the 17,000-square-foot former National Guard Armory on Ray Street, constructed in 1935 on land originally owned by Mr. Slater and given to the state in 1923.

The state had deeded the building to the Town of Webster in 2005, stipulating that it be used as a youth facility. However, the Webster Dudley Boys & Girls Club moved to Dudley instead, and the Town used the empty building to store vehicles and surplus goods.

In 2017, the Town asked the Commonwealth to release the restriction, and subsequently leased the building to Mr. Robert for \$1 a year for 30 years.

He established Webster Museums, Inc. as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, enlisted local historians to make local connections, hired a curator to research the industrial era, and engaged a nationally renowned museum designer to plan and execute the project.

Doug Mund's Georgia-based firm dmdg2 has planned and designed museums for 40 years, including projects at the Museum of Science in Boston and the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. His goal was "to make a tour through the Samuel Slater Experience a completely different museum experience, historically correct, but immersive and visually exciting with 'Disney-like' aspects that would appeal to all generations."

Digital production for the museum is headed by Bob Noll's Norwood-based Boston Productions, Inc. which has provided audiovisual design and production

NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO REINVEST YOUR FOCUS ON SELF-CARE

by JEANNIE HEBERT,

BLACKSTONE VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT & CEO

aily life has been upended by the coronavirus pandemic. The uncertainty of when "normal" will return is a source of stress and even anger for some. Your family is living in lockdown, adjusting to unfamiliar routines, coping with new restrictions, and trying to make the most of inconveniences. The world is really scary right now. We're all afraid for the health of ourselves and our loved ones. People all over the world are watching their dollars to make ends meet. Parents are forced to choose between work and caring for children at home, sometimes being both teacher and caregiver, 24/7.

More than half of U.S. adults say worry and stress about COVID-19 negatively impacts their mental health, reports a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll.

As many of us face indefinite time frames on home-based school and work, and ongoing limits on the activities and social interactions we enjoy, mental health issues are likely to increase. The steps we take to stop the spread of the virus — social distancing, work and school closures, etc. — increase isolation, potential job loss, and financial distress. This can create anxiety. Moms, who are traditionally more likely to shoulder parenting as well as household and at-home e-learning duties, can find it difficult to take time for themselves as the pandemic continues.

Women have a hard time caring for themselves. As primary caregivers, they confuse self-care with self-indulgence. Many put others first, including their children, spouse, parents, and pets. Putting themselves first creates feelings of guilt and discomfort for many women. But by not practicing self-care, the caregiver may find herself unable to care for others.

Chronic stress is a major cause of health issues. It can weaken the immune system, cause weight gain, sleep issues, stomach problems, depression, and more.

Self-care means identifying your needs. What do you need to be comfortable, happy, and to just positively cope with your "new normal"? Take a pause and focus on activities that create your inner peace. Unwind from the stress and get in touch with your needs. All you need is 10 to 15 minutes a day to recharge. Slow down, breathe deep, and listen to what your body is telling you.

Here are a few tips you can use to take care of yourself:

- Fuel your body by eating a healthy, well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water.
- · Aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Exercise every day.
- Take deep breaths and stretch often.
- · Avoid risky or destructive behaviors
- Spend time outside, such as going for a walk in the park while following social distancing guidelines.

As you continue to cope with the many challenges of living through these unprecedented times both at work and at home, you realize more and more the strength you have. You are probably wearing many hats and doing so successfully. However, please don't forget your own physical and emotional well-being. Go the extra mile to take care of yourself. Self-care is the process of nurturing yourself.

The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women's Success Network (WSN) unites women to achieve their vision of success by creating a community of support and inspiration in their personal and professional lives. The WSN can be an important resource to you in these times. To receive our newsletter or find out more about the WSN, send an email to administration@blackstonevalley.org.

MASSACHUSETTS PIRATES SET SAIL ONCE AGAIN

by VIRGINIA MURPHY, MEMBERSHIP & AFFILIATE SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE

e are fortunate in Central Massachusetts to live in an area with three professional sports teams. In order of their arrival: The Worcester Railers in October of 2017, the Massachusetts Pirates in April of 2018, and now the Worcester Red Sox in May of 2021. All three Chamber members are a result of the renaissance momentum the city has been experiencing in recent years. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and more people get vaccinated, folks will not have trouble finding things to do, especially if they like live sports entertainment. While many think of baseball as spring arrives, they may be surprised to learn that catching a football game is also an option as we head into the warmer months.

The Massachusetts Pirates are a local, homegrown team who call downtown Worcester's DCU Center "home." The Pirates franchise was formed in 2017 and is co-owned by Hassan Yatim and his son Jawad Yatim. The Pirates started off in the National Arena League (NAL), a league that is mostly made up of East Coast teams, with one team from California. The NAL was initially formed to help develop football players in a setting where other professional football league scouts, like the National Football League (NFL), could look to recruit players. Players are also able to stay in football shape and play this game they are passionate about. In their first couple of years in the NAL, the Pirates made it to the postseason in 2018 and 2019.

The NAL typically has a faster-scoring game than the NFL. It is not uncommon to see 10 points go on the board in only three minutes of play. One of the major differences between the two leagues one can see right off the bat is the field. In the NAL, the field is half the size of that in the NFL at only 50-yards long.

Another visual difference is the goal posts; they're hung from the arena's ceiling. This is to prevent players from running into the goal post while going for a touchdown since the endzones are only eight yards in the league. The game has only 16 players on the field at once, versus 22 players in the NFL. Another difference that fans can expect is to be right up close to the action and the players. Some fans are only inches away from the plays happening. The season is typically 10 weeks between the months of May and July.

Like most sports teams in the area, The Pirates took a hard hit when their season was canceled in 2020 due to COVID. However, this did not keep the organization from working on their playbook. In 2020, the Mass Pirates announced the team was joining the Indoor Football League (IFL). The IFL is a minor professional league, with teams spread out across the country. Just like the NAL, the IFL also has a 50-yard field, but the rules are slightly different.

In April of 2021, the Pirates announced they had signed Martavis Bryant, a former wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Bryant joined the Pirates in preparation for his debut in the Canadian Football League, which he signed onto in January 2021. The Pirates also grabbed Terrance Williams in April of 2021, a former wide receiver for the Dallas Cowboys. With this offensive caliber in play, fans can count on seeing some incredible running plays and offensive catches.

Other times the Pirates made news during the offseason was when they announced their partnership with Chamber member Resinate, a Worcester-based medical and recreational marijuana dispensary. The company will be the presenting sponsor of the Massachusetts Pirates for their 2021 season. In a press conference hosted at their Millbury Street shop on April 15, Resinate CEO Peter DeCaro said, "We are very excited about our partnership with the Mass Pirates. Cannabis may provide these athletes with a natural alternative to the use of opioids for pain relief." According to Resinate, they're believed to be the first cannabis company to sponsor a professional sports team. In a recent interview with Worcester Chamber President and CEO Tim Murray on *Chamber Exchange: The TV Show*, Mass Pirates Director of Marketing Adrian Figueroa said, "The partnership makes perfect sense [in terms of] giving the option for our players to have alternative methods for pain relief. We are very open-minded here and want to make sure the guys have choices in terms of how they heal themselves mentally and physically."

The Mass Pirates started the 2021 season off April 24 with a win against the Louisville Xtreme. Now, Worcester is welcoming them home on May 22 against the Spokane Shock. Pirates Co-Owner and President Jawad Yatim said ahead of the home opener, "We've been waiting a long time to be able to play in front of Pirate Nation again, and on the 22nd, we look forward to feeding off their energy and competing on Phoenix Field for the first time ever. It should be a great game against a great opponent and you won't want to miss it."

The Massachusetts Pirates are representing Worcester all over the country for the first time in their franchise. Let's wish them the best of luck this year and hope they can bring back another kind of football championship to Massachusetts!

Looking to score some tickets? Head to their website at masspirates football.com. \blacktriangledown



Above: The Massachusetts Pirates in action against the Green Bay Blizzard. Photo courtesy of the Massachusetts Pirates. *Below:* Mass Pirates Co-Owner Jawad Yatim cuts a cake with a sword-like knife at a press conference announcing the partnership between the Pirates and Resinate on April 12. Photo by Dominique Goyette-Connerty.





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SPORTS STREET

by TIMOTHY P. MURRAY, PRESIDENT & CEO

The opening of Polar Park and the inaugural homestand of the Worcester Red Sox still has many on Sports Street buzzing with excitement. Worcester and Central Massachusetts' storied baseball history dates back to Lee Richmond's pitching of the first "perfect game," the legendary Blackstone Valley Industrial League, and countless players from local baseball diamonds making it to the big leagues. Now, the region starts its next baseball chapter with a return of the professional sport to Worcester. A tip of the cap to the many men and women in the building trades who worked through the elements and a global pandemic to construct this beautiful ballpark where many memories will be made and hundreds of thousands of new people will visit annually.

In addition to the Worcester Red Sox, the area's other professional teams have had some good news as of late. The Worcester Railers Hockey Club announced their home opener at the DCU Center is slated for Saturday, October 23. The Massachusetts Pirates, now a team of the Indoor Football League (IFL), plays their home opener at the DCU Center Saturday, May 22. A recent notable signing for the Pirates was former NFL wide receiver and Pittsburgh Steelers standout Martavis Bryant. The six-foot-four receiver is playing here to tune up his game before playing for the Canadian Football League. Who knows? Former New England Patriots player and current Pirates Head Coach Patrick Pass might get on the phone with Foxboro if he likes what he sees, as Bryant has demonstrated he can play at a high level in the NFL when focused. Count this columnist as among those who thinks Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick is getting a bum rap by the loud chorus of commentators saying he drafts poorly. While one can take issue with his selection of wide receivers over the years, Belichick's overall draft record and signings of undrafted players have resulted in the discovery of countless diamonds in the rough, including a sixth-round draft pick named Tom Brady.

It's hard not to like Boston Celtics Coach Brad Stevens and young players like Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum, but something seems off with this team. Perhaps it's the impact of COVID, but a lack of consistency and tough defense has led to an up-and-down season. It will be interesting to see if they can straighten the ship for the playoffs. They've never replaced the energy and excitement with the team since Isaiah Thomas was traded.

As for the Boston Bruins Head Coach Bruce Cassidy, he must be thrilled that General Manager Don Sweeney found the elusive missing piece for second line - center David Krejci who is now paired with former first round draft pick Taylor Hall. Let's hope this leads to a deep run by the Bruins in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Good luck to Worcester's collegiate baseball team the Bravehearts as they open their season at Fitton Field May 26.

Lastly, a big tip of the cap to all the area coaches that were able to put together a modified "fall" sports season for the area's high school athletes. Over the past few months, the feedback from many student athletes seemed to be one of genuine gratitude to be able to have some type of season out on the fields with their teammates.



Woostapreneurs Forum Connects Greater Worcester to Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

by KAREN PELLETIER, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

On May 7, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Massachusetts U.S. Small Business Administration Office held the sixth annual Woostapreneurs Forum. Seventy-five attendees and 25 representatives from local businesses and business-serving organizations logged on to hear from two panels and experience two networking breakout sessions.

Each year, the Chamber and SBA host this free, half-day conference in an effort to connect greater Worcester to the entrepreneurship ecosystem and business resource providers in Central Massachusetts. The conference is designed for existing business owners, budding entrepreneurs, veteran entrepreneurs, millennial entrepreneurs, women-owned businesses, and other underserved entrepreneurs in search of business help. Our region's banks and credit unions participate as well, including TD Bank, Digital Federal Credit Union, Workers Credit Union, bankHometown, City of Worcester, Country Bank, People's United Bank, and Webster Five.

"TD Bank was proud to be the presenting supporter of the 2021 Woostapreneurs Forum, designed to help local businesses learn more about crucial topics related to starting and growing their business," said Jennifer McKay, business development officer of TD Bank's SBA Division. "As the number one SBA lender in our Maine-to-Florida footprint, TD Bank understands the unique challenges small business owners and entrepreneurs face and is committed to helping Worcester businesses thrive through the products and services we offer, as well as our support of important community initiatives like this conference."

This year, attendees represented all different phases of business from all different industries including startups, contractors, commercial photographers, restaurants, laundromats, marketing consultants, and more. Participants networked via the chat function on Zoom and shared questions and advice in the networking rooms. The program was formatted around two main panels: a "Success Story" panel featuring Lynn Cheney of Maker to Main, Rick Porter of CinchIT, and Charles D. B. King II of FASTSIGNS; and an "Area Resources" panel featuring Karen Cappetelli of Acorn Business Advisors, Breanna DiBella of Studio DiBella, and Jennifer McKay of TD Bank.

When asked where to start when opening a business, Mr. Porter recommended starting with your website. "It can actually inform your business and help you understand what you need to do — from your logo and brand, to your mission statement and more."

Several questions to the panelists centered around doing business in the pandemic. Karen Cappetelli pointed out while there were certainly challenges, there were also opportunities. "I have gained clients virtually that I had never met before. It's easier to engage virtually for many of my clients who are busy entrepreneurs and business owners."

Another speaker, Ms. DiBella, reflected upon attending this event in the past. "My first year in business I attended Woostapreneurs Forum and gained valuable insight from the panelists. I remember feeling inspired by entrepreneurs who spoke about their experience. This was the first Chamber event I attended, and it certainly wasn't the last. I'd recommend the forum to any new business owner and especially aspiring entrepreneurs who are curious to learn how the local business community can support their dream to build a business."

In addition to the speakers who shared their own struggles and achievements, attendees also had the opportunity to network with resource partners and supporters to learn more about their services. Representatives from WorcLab, the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) at Clark University, SCORE, the Center for Women and Enterprise, and other representatives from the Worcester Business Resource Alliance (WBRA) were on hand to share what they offer and answer questions in small groups.

"This was very helpful and it helped to get me out of my shell," said attendee EvaMarie Young of Jovea Divine Health Transformations.

A recording of this sixth annual Woostapreneurs Forum can be found on the Chamber's YouTube channel - but if you missed out this time, consider joining us next year! \heartsuit



hose longing for the return of live, high-quality theater to Worcester won't have to wait much longer, thanks to The Hanover Theatre Repertory (THT Rep). Through a partnership with the City of Worcester and with support from the Worcester Business Improvement District, they're putting on William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on the steps of city hall and the Worcester Common this August.

The performances, which will be free and open to the public, are part of The Hanover Theatre's way of giving back to the community and keeping theatergoers engaged while the organization's main stage remains closed due to the pandemic. They won't be able to reopen until mid-September, marking an 18-month absence.

Until then, President and CEO of The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts Troy Siebels says this string of outdoor shows is one way for them to stay involved in the community and vice versa. "This

is another thing we can do to keep audiences engaged during this time, and frankly, just to be doing something for the city at this time — we're such collaborative players, we really value being a part of the city and contributing to the city. And this gives us a way to do that right now."

Selecting the Shakespearean classic was no accident. Considered a tragedy by many Shakespeare scholars, *Julius Caesar* is truly a political drama about democracy crumbling — a topic Olivia Scanlon, managing director of Worcester BrickBox Theater at the Jean McDonough Arts Center and artistic director at THT Rep, calls "timely."

"It feels resonant in many ways with what we're facing in our own democracy—that there's a bit of an unraveling happening at all levels of society, from the very top all the way down to the people, or 'the commoners' as Shakespeare called them," Ms. Scanlon said. "It also works really perfectly with this outdoor setting that we happen to have available to us right down the street from The Hanover Theatre and right across the way from the BrickBox."

Between the timeliness of the subject matter, the need to be outdoors to practice social distancing, and the fitting matchup between this particular play and the architecture of city hall and the common as a venue, everything came together favorably

A SHAKESPEAREAN SUMMER

The Hanover Theatre Repertory to Present Julius Caesar on the Worcester Common

by DOMINIQUE GOYETTE-CONNERTY,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

for what can only be described as the perfect storm to make this production a reality.

Those with hesitations about the content can rest assured this won't be a show just for those well-versed in Shakespeare. "Even though it's set in Ancient Rome, there's this really recognizable struggle for power that's been told and retold in countless other political dramas," Ms. Scanlon said, depicting it as "suspenseful," "active," and "engaging." She also says it's one of Shakespeare's more accessible plays, and that THT Rep has updated archaic language and significantly cut down the play's runtime in an effort to make the show as accessible and understandable to a wider audience as possible.

All tickets are free thanks to the generous sponsorships of several local companies and organizations, many of which are Worcester Chamber members including Assumption University, Bay State Savings Bank, WinnDevelopment, Bartholomew & Company, Bowditch & Dewey, Country Bank, and Fallon Health.

Seating is on a first-come-first-serve basis with the ability to reserve online beforehand, though anyone is welcome to snag a bench or bring lawn chairs to watch.

THT Rep is waiting to see what city and state guidance allows for as August nears, but they expect their capacity for each show to be between 220 to 300 people. "We're hearing that people are ready to come back, that they're hungry for something to come together [...] So I think there's going to be a real demand for this." Mr. Siebels said. "I think people are going to patronize the restaurants and they're going to spend some time and some money downtown."

Previews of the show will take place on August 4, 5, and 6, with opening night slated for Saturday, August 7. THT Rep is scheduled for a minimum of 12 performances, though according to Ms. Scanlon, they anticipate extending to 16 performances total. The play will be approximately 90-minutes with intermission and is labeled as appropriate for all ages, but some violence may be included.

There are still opportunities to donate to this initiative as an individual or a sponsor, as well as advertising opportunities in the program. Those interested in contributing should contact The Hanover Theatre directly by emailing info@ thehanovertheatre.org or calling 877-571-7469. ♥



SAMUEL SLATER, CONTINUED

for the American Heritage Museum, the Smithsonian, and Hershey's Chocolate World. The firm created media "that does not look like traditional videos, but more like living tableaus and hands-on interactive experiences that put visitors dramatically into the times and provide some 'WOW' moments."

In addition, a host of local contractors have been building out the exhibits and many local people have donated their "artifacts" to the museum.

While unassuming, the Armory building was structurally sound. The interior, though, required a complete gutting for reconstruction as a museum with more than 20 live, interactive exhibits; faithfully recreated 19th century settings; educational facilities; and public meeting spaces.

The first part of the restoration involved repairing of internal walls, dismantling of the rifle range, and removal of asbestos floors and walls. All the electrical systems, plumbing, HVAC, and water systems were replaced and upgraded to current codes. That work alone took more than a year.

The museum is divided into two parts. The first section tells the story of Samuel Slater, his immigration to America, his success as an industrial revolutionist, and his impact on the geographic area. The second part takes place a century later, recreating downtown Webster in the early 1900s, which had become a hub of commerce and industry.

The fundamental purpose of the Samuel Slater Experience is to educate, and with that, the exhibits are designed in coordination with curriculum directors from the local school districts, aligned with approved curriculum standards in both social studies and STEM fields.

For example, the early textile manufacturers used hole punched cards to program their looms, the predecessor to what would become binary code for the modern-day computer.

"We hope the museum will be a popular destination for middle-school and high-school student groups from all over the state and New England to have a historical, educational, and fun experience," said Mr. Robert, who has provided \$4 million in funding for the project.

The Samuel Slater Experience will also be a draw for tourists, historians, family outings, and meeting planners. Clubs, corporations, and organizations will be invited to host their events at the museum.

For more information, visit samuels later experience.org. There you'll also find a visual introduction to the museum and an overview of the exhibits.

For their renovations, the Samuel Slater Experience received a Silver Hammer Award from the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce at our Business After Hours Annual Business Awards on May 20, 2021.





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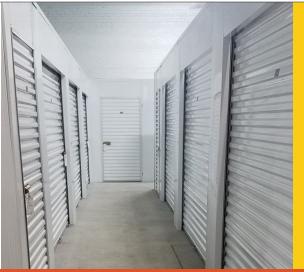












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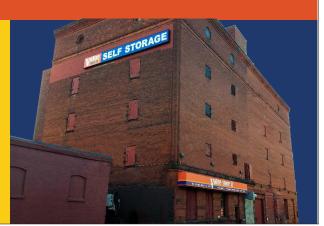


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