



StartUp Worcester
Profile: Munq 16



Polar Park Field

Polar Park: A Home Run Investment for Worcester

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by WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

Lately, there has been much discussion about the investment the city made in Polar Park, and whether that is paying off for Worcester.

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

A lot of this discussion in the media has focused on a narrative that the ballpark will not yield the economic benefits needed to pay off its construction costs. Yet, the facts continue to show that the ballpark is indeed paying for itself, and that it is a major success for the city.

At a recent City Council Finance Committee meeting, the City Manager and the City's Chief Financial Officer delivered a detailed report and pro forma to the City Council on the ballpark's District Improvement Financing (DIF) district. The DIF is a special financing district that covers the park and its abutting properties, where revenues collected by the city pay for the debt incurred by building Polar Park. During this presentation, it was clearly demonstrated that the revenues from the DIF - taxes, parking, permits, and the team's rent - are more than covering the expenses related to the park, just as they have done every year, without taking from the municipal general fund. Despite COVID-associated delays with many of the surrounding developments, the bottom line is that revenue is covering expenses.

The city's pro forma over 30 years showed a net gain of over \$50 million for the city as a result of Polar Park and the new development it has caused in the Canal District. This does not directly account for development occurring in other parts of the city as a result of the positive momentum around the park.

THE PRO FORMA AND THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE PARK

Polar Park has helped catalyze over 1,800 units of new housing and \$700 million in private investment in the city through new developments that are being built around it. This housing is essential in addressing the city's shortage of supply.

Not to mention the creation of 250 new jobs in the park alone.

The Madison Properties campus, the Cove, and the three housing developments on the former Table Talk Pies site would not be happening right now without Polar Park. Each of these developments will have amenities that rely on the ballpark - whether it's the Cove's upper-floor patios overlooking centerfield or the public street lined with retail that will bisect the Table Talk site and connect the front gate of Polar Park to the front door of the Worcester Public Market.

Just these developments around the park are creating 1,000 units of housing on underutilized lots. Madison Properties is expected to complete its first 228-unit building this year, Boston Capital's 83 units of affordable housing at the Table Talk Lofts is going vertical, and 171 units at the Cove behind centerfield is well underway. Another 375 units by Quarterra Multifamily on half of the Table Talk site received site approval this year, along with Rossi Development's 58 units of housing and ground-floor retail along Green Street.

Other developments within a square mile of the park include the new 364 units of housing with 10% affordable units proposed on Franklin Street, another 100 units of housing proposed where Fairway Beef used to stand, and Wood Partners' 371 units of housing nearing completion along Shrewsbury Street.

In addition to housing, a new hotel and 200,000 square-foot lab building by Madison Properties will go up across from Polar Park, along with their left field office and lab building that will rise above left field within the park.

Also, the redesign of Kelley Square, the addition of a public park, and lighting improvements added to the Green and Franklin Street tunnels all would not have happened if not for the park.

A recent sports economists' report uses an outdated DIF pro forma from the city from 2018 to base their entire projection and argument that the park is an economic liability to the city. However, that pro forma did not account for nearly all of this aforementioned development in the DIF. In 2018, only Madison's development on a smaller scale was announced at the time. That means that pro forma is missing tens of millions of dollars in expected property tax revenue from developments yielding nearly a thousand new housing units, not to mention increased business activity in the Canal District.

A MISLEADING APPLICATION OF THE "CROWDING OUT" EFFECT

The recent report that called the park a net loss to the city leaned heavily on the outdated pro forma and the application of an academic notion called a "crowding out effect", which essentially states that stadiums crowd out existing spending for businesses in the area since people have limited entertainment budgets and tend to choose one activity over the other.

The vast majority of academic literature analyzing the crowding out effect uses case studies of massive projects that host major league events like SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, Truist Park in Cobb County, Georgia, or when cities construct stadiums to host the Olympics or World Cup. These are not the same conditions that apply to Worcester.

Polar Park is built into an existing urban area on an underutilized property

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A Tale of Three Polls

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



In August, I had the opportunity to attend the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah with several members of our Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce team. The ACCE Annual Meeting consists of meetings and presentations that share best practices and discussions on a variety of topics that chambers are grappling with across the country. Some of these topics included economic

development, workforce development, diversity, equity and inclusion models, legislative policy, data utilization, and discussions on the issues of housing and homelessness as well as public safety. These sessions reinforce that many of the challenges we face here in Worcester and Central Massachusetts are not unique.

Several of the sessions that I attended shared polling and survey data that were interesting to compare to the findings of a poll The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce conducted this past April.

The first poll results that were shared came from the 2023 Edelman's Trust Barometer which gauges people's trust and credibility in various institutions such as government, business, media, as well as others. Not surprisingly, in an increasingly polarized environment trust in government is down with only 42% in the United States having confidence in information received from government entities. Conversely, trust in business has been growing over the past several years in the U.S. with 55% trusting businesses as a source of accurate information. However, what was most interesting and reassuring was that respondents felt that the best societal outcomes result when government and the business sector work together on an issue. 41% of the respondents stated that it is more likely to yield optimal results from partnerships between business or government than either acting alone. The results of the 2023 Edelman's Trust Barometer can be found at [Edelman.com](https://www.edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer) and then typing in Edelman Trust Barometer on the website query site or at this link <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer>.

The second poll was conducted by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce in April 2023. The poll asked questions of San Francisco voters. 77% of those that responded said San Francisco was on the wrong track with only 17% saying it was on the right track. 75% stated there had been a decline in the cleanliness

of their streets. 60% said crime was a major issue which was up significantly from 26% in 2022. 77% agreed that more housing was needed in San Francisco's downtown. 64% stated they felt safe going into the downtown during the day while only 30% felt safe going into the downtown in the evening. These polling numbers are not necessarily surprising given the political divide and acrimony within the political and governmental leadership in San Francisco that has been reported by multiple news sources. Moreover, a number of policy decisions made with little or no consideration given to local neighborhood and business concerns has contributed to these results and negative economic and public safety impacts.

In April, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce released results of a poll of 500 Worcester residents using data from the 2020 U.S. census. The poll was conducted by Anne Danehy, President of Strategic Opinion Research, Inc., and all 500 respondents were conducted over the telephone from zip codes across the city.

Some of these results are as follows:

- The poll asked all respondents whether Worcester was headed in the right

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

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

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

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

Worcester Regional Chamber CALENDAR of EVENTS

Power of Women (POW) Featuring Nadine James | Nuestra

Thursday August 24, 2023
12:00pm - 1:30pm
Sponsor: Countrybank

Manufacturing Roundtable: Workforce Training Programs | Chamber Offices

Tuesday August 29, 2023
12:00pm - 1:00pm
Sponsors: AIS and FLEXcon

StartUp Worcester Orientation

Friday, September 1, 2023
Sponsor: Berkshire Bank

The Breakfast Club | College of the Holy Cross

Thursday September 14, 2023
7:00am - 9:00am
Sponsors: Berkshire Bank and Mass General Brigham

**All events are subject to time and location change, for the most accurate list of events visit [worcesterchamber.org](https://www.worcesterchamber.org).*

Worcester Chamber Informational Session | Cyprian Keys Golf Course

Wednesday September 20, 2023
4:00pm - 5:00pm

Business After Hours MEGA with Corridor 9/495 Chamber | Cyprian Keys Golf Course

Wednesday September 20, 2023
5:00pm - 7:30pm
Sponsor: Rockland Trust Bank

Ghana & Massachusetts: Special Business & Government Forum | Mechanics Hall

Friday September 22, 2023
8:00am - 2:00pm
Sponsors: UniCare and WuXi Biologics

Human Resources Roundtable: Respect and Civility in Your Workplace | Virtual

Tuesday September 26, 2023
10:00am - 11:30am
Sponsor: Aetna

Seminar Series: The Evolving Workplace | Chamber Offices

Wednesday October 4, 2023
9:00am - 10:00am
Sponsor: SCORE Worcester

2023 GAME Changers Business Conference | Mechanics Hall

Friday October 13, 2023
7:30am - 1:30pm
Presenting Sponsor: M&T Bank

Construction & Real Estate Roundtable with National Grid | Chamber Offices

Thursday November 9, 2023
11:00am - 12:00pm
Sponsor: Bowditch Attorneys

Worcester Goes to Washington | Washington D.C.

Tuesday Nov 14, 2023

The Future of Worcester's Transportation

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



Worcester is currently in a unique position when it comes to transportation in Massachusetts and in the northeast. As the heart of the Commonwealth, we have three major highways, I-190, I-290 and I-90, as well as two very popular state roads in routes 9 and 20 that run through the city. We have a commuter rail that currently has 20 round trips from Worcester to South Station. We have an airport with three airlines

servicing it, and a regional transit system that currently offers fare-free service. While there is great optimism about the future of Worcester's transportation there are some concerns that we must continue to address with our elected officials on all three levels: municipal, state, and federal.

WORCESTER REGIONAL AIRPORT

This past April, JetBlue Airlines and Massport made an announcement that many Worcester area residents had been hoping to hear since the pandemic: two new Florida destinations from Worcester. These two destinations are the very popular daily non-stop flights to Orlando International Airport and a winter seasonal service to Southwest Florida International Airport in Fort Myers launching this winter.

The announcement that was made at the Worcester Regional Airport was a sign that the pandemic was over, and it was time to continue the momentum we have been seeing over the past 10-15 years which includes adding more flights and growing the Worcester Airport. At that announcement, the who's who of elected officials and leaders were there including newly elected Governor Healy and CEO of Massport Lisa Wieland, Congressman Jim McGovern, Chair of the Massport Board Sherriff Lew Evangelidis, Dr. Charles Steinberg of the WooSox, President and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce Tim Murray, and members of the City Council and Worcester State Delegation.

What most did not know while they were popping the proverbial champagne about the announcement of the newly added flights is that JetBlue would no longer be booking direct flights from Worcester Regional Airport to JFK International Airport in New York City after June 14th. This ironically was announced just days after the press conference at the Worcester Airport leaving a feeling of a bait-and-switch move by JetBlue. While you can still fly into JFK using American Airlines, the price points and times are very different. The American Airlines flight leaves Worcester at 1:00PM compared to the 6:30AM flight that was offered by JetBlue. The JetBlue flight allowed folks to find more connecting flights to get you almost anywhere in the world. Further, a roundtrip ticket that would have cost about \$150 on JetBlue is now approximately \$260 on American Airlines.

To further some of the anxiety that has been caused due to the airline reshuffling, Massport CEO Lisa Wieland disclosed in a state ethics filing in June, that she had entered talks with National Grid about leaving her current post to take a job with the energy company. In early August Wieland confirmed that she will be leaving MassPort to take over National Grid's New England operations. This move could have significant repercussions for the Worcester Regional Airport as Massport continues to negotiate to obtain more flights to and from it as well as new airlines.

If JetBlue is successful in acquiring Frontier Airlines as anticipated, having instability at the helm of Massport could delay those negotiations and Worcester could possibly miss out on being on a short list of medium-sized airports to have new destinations like Chicago, Las Vegas, Raleigh/Durham or New Orleans to name a few. Massport has done a good job since taking over the airport. Obviously, COVID-19 put a halt to some of the progress that was made but we must remain optimistic that the Governor and her team are truly committed to making Worcester a competitive airport to fly in and out of. For anyone who has used the airport, they know how much more convenient it is than having to drive into Boston, pay those high parking prices and probably sit in traffic getting there and back. Folks from all over the state continue to talk about the congestion in and around Boston. Adding more flights that allow folks to travel at more convenient times will help alleviate some of that congestion and probably save them money and the stress of traffic.

MBTA COMMUTER RAIL

Speaking about traffic congestion in Massachusetts, Boston and its 40-mile radius is ranked as the worst city for traffic in the United States and the fourth worst in the world. On average, 164 hours are spent in traffic annually, costing drivers

\$2,291 according to INRIX, the leading international mobility and transportation analytics company. Worcester and MetroWest commuters are no strangers to heavy traffic during peak hours. Add the headache of the worst traffic in the nation to the costs of tolls and parking and the commuter rail becomes the best alternative for getting in and out of the Capital.

As previously mentioned, Worcester currently has 20 round trips to South Station during the week and 10 during the weekend. While there certainly is an appetite for more, the scheduling for these trips has gotten drastically better. In previous years, the schedule was very confusing to grasp as the times were not in any succinct order. Now, the inbound trains from Worcester's Union Station are every hour on the hour and the same for the roundtrip ride from South Station.

Further, Worcester Union Station is undergoing significant platform, track, and accessibility improvements. Although it's a key transportation hub for the Worcester area and the terminus of the Framingham/Worcester Line, it's currently the only station on the route that can serve only one train at a time. The upgrades now underway will improve the station's function, capacity, level of service, and safety, and make it fully accessible. This four-year project (two design, two construction) is set to be completed in the winter of this year.

What does this mean for commuters? Once the center platform is completed, MBTA will have the ability to dock two trains at Union Station at the same time; meaning that one train can be loaded with travelers while the other train is coming into Union Station. This will cut 6-8 minutes from the commute time for passengers furthering the concept of easy access in and out of the train station.

This project is crucial for Worcester and MetroWest residents as our population continues to grow. Continuing to get vehicles off the road not only helps with our traffic congestion but also helps reduce our greenhouse gas emissions,

TRANSPORTATION, P14



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



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POLLS , CONTINUED

direction or wrong direction. 60% indicated that Worcester was moving in the right direction with 21% saying it was headed in the wrong direction. 19% had no opinion.

- Respondents, when asked about the number one issue facing Worcester that they worry or think about most often, the cost of living and crime were the two issues in which they are the most concerned.
- When respondents were asked what type of news they were most interested in 63% answered that local news was their preference.
- 63% of the respondents said a primary focus of the Worcester City Council should be creating more jobs for Worcester residents with 30% disagreeing and 7% with no opinion.
- 53% said taxing businesses disproportionately risks driving businesses out of Worcester with 36% disagreeing and 12% with no opinion.
- 71% of the respondents were in favor of Worcester building more apartments with 23% in opposition and 6% with no opinion.
- Respondents by over an 80% margin said the commuter rail and the Worcester Regional Airport have been a benefit to the city.
- 82% believed workforce training was critical in attracting businesses and jobs to Worcester.
- Lastly, 55% of the respondents felt the Worcester Public Schools provided a great education with 30% disagreeing and 7% undecided.
- The margin of error in this polling was 4.5%

My takeaway from these three polls is that Worcester residents and businesses are best served by the elected and appointed leadership in government, as well as business and institutional leaders and others in addressing the myriad of complex and challenging issues facing it by continuing to engage in the culture of collaboration and respect. Worcester has been able to grow and make progress on multiple fronts over the past 20 years with this collaborative approach on multiple fronts. Debate and disagreement can and should happen and serves the community well, but leaders have an obligation to get results. Debate and dialogue followed by compromise and consensus are our best way forward and the most likely way to achieve results.

Creating The Perfect Story: Munq, A Creative Agency in Worcester

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

PROVIDENCE, RI – In the back corner of the Highlander Charter School cafeteria, Tashal Brown sat fidgeting under a boom mic and warm camera lights. She is an assistant professor for urban education at the University of Rhode Island. She waited patiently with her hands clasped on her lap as videographer George Capalbo adjusted his cameras to make sure Brown was perfectly framed in the shot.

Capalbo was contracted by StartUp Worcester alum and creative media company, Munq, to help produce a series of promotional videos about a joint program between the Highlander School and URI to engage students of color to become educators. This particular shoot involved interviews with students, teachers, and program administrators like Brown.

Munq is a creative agency that provides three core services: brand strategy and identity, videography, and web development. Munq co-founders Timothy Hally and Justin Matsen have been making professional branding videos, photographs, and graphic designs for people and businesses from the Worcester area and throughout New England for the last three years. Hally said telling impactful stories about something that matters is the goal of every production.

“Here, we’re trying to create this story about how teaching is not only a desirable career, but also a transferable skill,” he said. “This school is launching a program to help convince Gen-Zers to become teachers. The whole angle is ‘why is teaching so important for the next generation?’ With us telling these stories, hopefully we can reach younger people so they can become teachers ... I think it’s a great angle and we can potentially change lives ... We want to pull on their heart strings. Some kids, when they are young, look up to a certain teacher. For some people, a teacher was the biggest role model in their life and we’re trying to capture that story ... The true magic is the storytelling and pulling those big ideas out of people. That’s really the crux of what we do.”

Hally and Matsen take a compassionate approach to telling stories about people and organizations. Retelling these tales through an empathetic lens is Munq’s mission and it comes from personal experience.

“We talk about empathy,” Hally said. “The things I’ve been through personally has been the foundation of who I am and what Munq is today.”

When Hally was 16, his mother was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm. She was severely paralyzed, placed on a feeding tube, and could hardly speak. “Within three days, the inflammation should have killed her,” Hally said with a sense of determination in his voice. “But my family fought through hell to get her to come home ... She had to point to letters on a board to communicate ... For the last 10 years we fought for her health care ... we fought for her to finally get home and she is the foundation to why I do everything.”

Hally said his mother is a “living miracle” and used her struggle to survive as motivation when starting Munq. “I was told I can’t start a business or I can’t run a successful business, but when I see my mother, I tell them they’re crazy ... running a business is easy. Fighting for your life and doing what she did, that’s hard. Those are the real-life challenges, so I have a really good example set by my family. Without that, I don’t think any of Munq would be possible.”

Munq’s website states “we’re the human agency. The bridges we build go beyond the bottom line.” Hally said by building stories that connect with people



Above: Munq video shoot at the Highlander School in Providence, RI. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba

they are able to fulfill all branding and marketing needs for their clients. “These core principles are rooted in our backstories,” Hally said. “And the pandemic made it ever clearer that we needed a new voice and a new angle that the world can’t afford to do the things the way they’ve been done before. And that’s why Munq is here. Not to just be another agency, but to be an alternative perspective and an example of an alternative lifestyle, hence reflective in the name. Doctors said my mother had probably three to five years max and it’s been ten and she’s still around and that’s a beautiful thing. I’m very grateful to be able to build this business and build it while she’s still here.”

Hally and Matsen’s partnership has roots in the sixth grade within the Shrewsbury school system. That is when they became childhood friends. After high school, they drifted apart as Hally went on to earn a business degree at Clark University. However, Matsen struggled after high school. He dropped out of Quinnipiac after one month. He bounced around to various retail jobs and even attempted to publish his novel with no success. “At that time, it was clearly not going right for me,” Matsen said.

Unbeknownst to Matsen, his old friend needed help.

“I had this massive calling,” Hally said. “I didn’t know what it was but I felt like I needed to use what I have to serve other people. Not just make money, but change the world in a small or big way. I just had to apply myself in the service of others.”

“I knew I couldn’t do that by myself. I had a certain set of skills and I couldn’t take this vision to where it needed to be.”

Hally, who is self-taught in video production, was looking for a creative thinker who would complement his entrepreneurial skills and his vision to make a positive mark on people. Then toward the end of 2018, “for whatever reason,” he said, “I just kept running into Justin everywhere. I saw him at the bowling alley. I saw him at the Seven Eleven. I saw him on my social media feed. We kept running into each other and I thought, okay, we should probably hang out.”

Hally also noticed many graphic designs Matsen posted online. “I was so enamored by the cool stuff he was doing, we got to link up.”

“When Tim reached out to me, the timing was perfect,” Matsen said. “I knew I wanted to do something creative. I knew I wanted to do something on my own, but I was at a loss at what that could be or should look like ... It really meant a lot to me to have someone like Tim reach out to me. I can remember I was in a target and I got this message from Tim Hally saying, ‘hey, I been trying to connect with more creative people lately to pick their brains and yours came to mind. And that meant a lot to me, because sure, I was a creative person, but what have I really done. It meant a lot that someone recognized that in me.’”

Their first collaboration came during Hally’s senior year at Clark producing a blog for the school’s lacrosse team. “That’s when we discovered how fulfilling it was to co-create and put our heads together to make something. To discover the power in that and say whatever this is, we need to do more of this and chase this down.”

The duo started freelancing together. They said the creative work “felt right.

We found that our creations, our stories, could impact other people. We realized we could create a real, lasting change.”

They were pushed by the pandemic to chase their dream harder. During a dark time in American history, they wanted to use their newly founded company to be a beacon of light. This led to the creation of their Munq logo,



Above: Munq video production in progress. From left to right: Justin Matsen, George Capalbo, and Tim Hally. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba



Left: Munq co-founder Tim Hally conducting an interview at the Highlander Charter School in Providence, RI. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba

which featured an orange ball with five fingerlike flames. The image was a mix of sunlight and a handprint.

"We were in my apartment trying to find a logo, but nothing was working," Hally said. Tired, they both decided to take a break in the living room, but when Hally was about to sit, "my [butt] barely grazed the couch when I shot up," he shouted. "Wait, I got!" as he ran back to his room. He drew a crude design of the logo on his whiteboard. "Justin then looked at the rough drawing and told me, 'Yes, I see that. I can do that.' And just like that, the logo was finished," said Hally.

"We were so thrilled and ecstatic. That Munq logo is what will become Munq in the future," he said. "It's about friendship and co-creation. It's about the beautiful things in life and the mountains you can move when you come together. Creating that logo together set off an entire series of events."

Their next break came when they were selected as a StartUp Worcester Cohort in 2021. The StartUp Worcester program encourages and nurtures new businesses in the Worcester area. "The friends we made at StartUp Worcester are not only our friends today, but are absolutely critical to our business," Hally said.

Hally credits several friends and business mentors who helped them achieve their dream of a successful and creative business, including David Sullivan, director of economic development and business recruitment for the Worcester

Chamber of Commerce, Zachary Dutton, executive director of The Venture Forum, and fellow 2021 StartUp Worcester cohorts Nazr El-Scari, founder and CEO of Solecit (formerly Snakehead's Paradise), and Dawn LaFontaine, owner of Cat in the Box, LLC.

"We got lucky that some people took a chance on us to help develop our process," Matsen said.

Hally said, "you can't put a price on relationships and that's what StartUp Worcester is all about."

Along with networking, StartUp Worcester gave Munq a firm foundation within Worcester. "It gave us a little bit of credibility," Hally said. "It gave us something to stand on. When we first started out, we were faceless and nameless. We're trying to build a name for ourselves, but StartUp Worcester elevated us and gave us a ton of exposure so people were able to see us for who we are."

They have completed work with companies like Incentivio, Reliant Foundation, Legendary Legacies, South Worcester County Startup Support Coalition, RE/MAX Professional Associates, Meredith Jacobson, and Pillar Prep.

Despite their early success, Matsen said that Munq has no plan to rest on their laurels. "We're still a young business and we're always focused on what we can do better," he said. "In our minds, there's no reason why we shouldn't be growing, learning, and getting better every single day."

Back to the pre-interview with Brown, Hally noticed she was nervous. He smiled at Brown and struck up a small conversation to help calm the nerves of his respondent. Seeing that she was ready, Hally announced, "we're about ready to get started here." Hally then signaled to Capalbo. The videographer glanced through the viewfinder of one of two cameras aimed at Brown. "Okay," he signaled back to Hally as he clicked the "on" switch for camera one and two and declared, "Rolling and ... rolling!"

"Fantastic!" Hally said as the official interview was underway.

For more information about Munq, visit their website at www.munqcreative.com or by email at contact@munqcreative.com.

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

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Worcester Green Corps Enters 3rd Year With Busiest Summer On Record

by MIRANDA HOTHAM, WORCESTER GREEN CORPS COORDINATOR



The summer of 2023 marks the beginning of the third year for Worcester Green Corps and is one of our busiest summers to date!

We are so lucky to collaborate with so many organizations across the city, and to have received such generous sponsorship for a variety of projects.

After our first two years, the WGC has managed to remove over 23,000 pounds of litter from the streets of Worcester. Through the Worcester Com-

munity Action Council's YouthWorks program, we have been able to work with over 100 youth workers throughout our first two years. This year, we welcomed 23 new young adults to our WGC team, and so far, we have had a very active summer! In addition to our regular cleanups, we also host our Career Pathways program at the National Grid Sustainability Hub, with the generous support of the United Way's After School Out of School Program. This year our youth workers have learned about the importance of green spaces, the US waste crisis and landfill diversion, Worcester's water systems, clean energy, social entrepreneurship and innovation, and urban solutions for food insecurity.

This summer our youth workers have had lots of hands-on opportunities to learn about plantings and pollinator gardens. Every week, we tend to our median on Billings Square, which we are able to care for with the kind support of Servpro Worcester. We also have been assisting with the community gardens at Worcester State University, where our youth workers have learned about the importance of pollinators and how we can help them live in healthy habitats.

This year our summer team is also continuing with our Recycling Education Campaign for the second year in a row. Last summer, we teamed up with the City of Worcester and Casella Waste Management to better educate residents in the city about recycling best practices. In the summer of 2022, our 26 youth workers went door-to-door and examined the recycling bins left on the curbs. Our youth workers identified any contaminants and left behind educational materials to help households improve their purity standards. In the fall, we continued the auditing process with Clark University's National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) club, where they continued to distribute educational materials on a weekly basis.

In addition to our recycling audits, the city included recycling information on the side of all new recycling bins, and regularly attended community events to distribute education materials as efficiently as possible. We also worked collaboratively on marketing materials to circulate on social media so that our residents would be able to learn about how to properly recycle.

In October of 2022, the City of Worcester officially placed a ban on plastic bags in our recycling stream. Any bagged recyclables or bins with a high level of contamination were left behind on the curb. After a few weeks, it became evident to our waste haulers that there was a significant reduction in contamination from plastic bags. As a result of these combined efforts, Casella has named the City of Worcester a recipient of their 2023 Sustainability Leadership Award. A recent audit of the Auburn Materials Recovery Facility found that combined contamination dropped from about 20% to less than 10%. This is a reduction of more than 1,000 tons of contaminated material from the City of Worcester's processed recycling, which could result in a savings of over \$100,000 in processing costs. We hope that moving forward, our community members will continue to dedicate themselves to recycling best practices, and we can continue to demonstrate an ideal curbside collection program.

WGC is also thrilled to collaborate with the city's Sewer Division to help eliminate illegal dumping in our city's catch basins. Sponsored by the Worcester



Above: Artist Monica Kwan works on her catch basin mural located on Shore Drive

Arts Council and the WooSox Foundation, we have worked with lead artist Sharinna Travieso to contract with other local artists to create beautiful murals that will help raise awareness about this important issue. Many residents do not realize that the drains on the sidewalk are directly connected to our local bodies of water. We have worked with the Sewer Division to identify 13 of the city's most polluted catch basins, and our eight artists have already begun the process of adding these important murals to our streets. Check out the murals at the Worcester Public Market, Polar Park, Elm Park, Beaver Brook Park, Green Hill Park, and more!

We are looking forward to even more collaborations this fall, including more art installations, community gardening events at the Green Island Community Center, and another recycling event with Green Team Junk. We already have a number of volunteer events in the works, and we hope to get even more scheduled throughout the fall. To get involved in any of our projects, or to launch a new collaborative program, please contact coordinator Miranda Hotham, at mhotham@worcesterchamber.org.

Right: Catch basin mural near Polar Park located in the Canal District



Above, left: Artist @elliell illustrates carefully paints a turtle for her catch basin mural located at Beaver Brook.



WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNOUNCES THE LEADERSHIP WORCESTER CLASS OF 2024

by WORCESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the 28 talented professionals who will make up the class of 2024.

The class was carefully selected by committee and includes a diverse group of individuals who live and/or work in Worcester. The selection committee sought motivated individuals who aspire to take an active leadership role in the city and who want to learn how they can tap in to make the best/biggest impact on the city and surrounding communities. The selected applicants were notified this July.

The 2024 class will get underway on September 7, 2023, with an overnight retreat at, offering participants an opportunity to get to know one another, determine individual leadership strengths, learn more about participants' experiences, and to understand more about the Worcester community and the diversity of our emerging leadership.

Monthly sessions will explore topics that are critical to the City. The daylong sessions will take place one Thursday a month from October through May and culminate in a graduation in June 2024. Session topics include Urban Environment and Sustainability; Education and Youth Development; Economic Development; Public Health; Community Safety; Government; Arts, Culture and Quality of Life; and Food and Housing Security.

"Now more than ever, we need leaders - those who understand the needs of our community and will step up to facilitate change and inclusivity," said Timothy P. Murray, President and CEO, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. "For nine years Leadership Worcester has been cultivating just such individuals. Graduates of the program have gone on to do incredible things in our community and beyond. I know that this new class will do the same to help our great city continue to grow in the fields of science, education, healthcare, technology, and more."

"As a past Leadership Worcester graduate, several years ago, I have since then overlapped with many LW classmates that are now involved in the community and it is incredibly heartening for me to see so many recent grads of Leadership Worcester getting involved with local organizations. It is a fabulous program, and it helps the Worcester area advance as a great place to live and do business! Leadership Worcester grads really make a difference." - Deb Cary, Community Advocacy and Outreach Manager, Mass Audubon, Central Region

The cost to participate in the program is \$3,200. Scholarship assistance from employers and a number of Worcester foundations including: George F. and

Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, George I. Alden Trust, Stoddard Charitable Trust, Hoche-Scofield Foundation, the Fletcher Foundation, and new this year, the Leadership Worcester Alumni Fund which is made up from alumni donations. Applications for the next class will be available online in February 2024. For more information, visit www.leadershipworcester.com.

Members of the Leadership Worcester Class of 2024 are:

- Hunvilla Agyemang, City of Worcester
- Rachel Blessington, Worcester Community Midwifery (self-employed)
- Hannah Butler, Worcester Red Sox Baseball Club
- Carla Delacruz Davila, UMass Chan Medical School
- Darnell Dunn, Rubric Commercial LLC
- Jessica Favreau, Bay State Savings Bank
- Matthew Foster, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Suzanne Graham Anderson, Entrepreneur
- Jason Gurtman, EcoTarium
- Jennifer Hernandez, GEM Marketing Solutions
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- Idaliana Medina, United Way of Central Massachusetts
- Jennifer Melendez-Earielo, College of the Holy Cross - Worcester, MA
- Abigail Abena Mensah, Worcester Academy
- Kelsey Miller, Mechanics Hall
- Matthew Moore, City of Worcester
- Cheryl Mulbah, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Sabrina Peña, Webster Five Cents Savings Bank
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- Samuel Santiago, Town of Shirley
- Eugene Santos-Roesler, Fidelity Bank
- Jody Staruk, Consigli Construction
- Kelly Whalen, Abby's House

My Leadership Worcester Experience

by MARGIE BREault, LEADERSHIP WORCESTER CLASS OF 2023



As I look back on my impactful and enlightening journey through Leadership Worcester, I am filled with immense gratitude for the profound impact it has had on my personal and professional growth. This unique program connected me with a diverse network of thinkers and doers, provided invaluable insights into critical issues facing Greater Worcester, and empowered me to become a more effective advocate and leader within my community.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Leadership Worcester was the opportunity to engage with influential leaders and key stakeholders in the region. Through exclusive behind-the-scenes experiences, I gained a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that shape our community. From Q&A sessions with City Manager Eric Batista, to historical tours with esteemed figures such as William Wallace, the Executive Director of Worcester Historical Museum, I was inspired by the wealth of knowledge shared by these leaders. Their insights and experiences served as a guiding light, fueling my passion for making a unified and balanced shift in our community.

LEADERSHIP, PG 11

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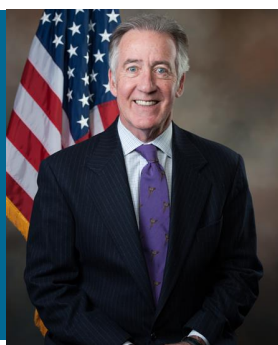
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LEADERSHIP , CONTINUED

The program also offered a comprehensive exploration of various sectors and industries, equipping participants with a holistic view of the region's landscape. From K-12 education and perceptions of safety to government operations and economic development, each module delved into critical topics that shape the vitality of Worcester. Engaging with leaders, policy experts, and community members, I gained invaluable insights into the intricate dynamics and challenges associated with these sectors.

Furthermore, the program highlighted the importance of fostering a vibrant arts and culture scene, as well as promoting sustainable urban development. Immersive experiences, such as tours of artistic spaces like the JMAC theater and soon to be Creative Hub on Ionic Ave, performances from local creatives, and experiencing the profound impact of art on our emotional wellbeing and connection to culture. These experiences not only showcased the richness of our creative community but also shed light on the possibilities for growth and collaboration.

A vital component of Leadership Worcester was the emphasis on personal and professional relationships. Through collaborative workshops, networking opportunities, and shared experiences, I formed lifelong friendships and expanded my personal and professional network. The program fostered an inclusive and supportive environment, where participants were encouraged to share their perspectives, exchange ideas, and support one another. This network of like-minded individuals continues to inspire and motivate me as I pursue my leadership journey.

One of the most valuable aspects of my experience with Leadership Worcester was the further development and fostering of those essential leadership skills, enhancing the qualities that each participant individually possesses; as well as giving us all the actionable ways to elevate those intrinsic superpowers. Through workshops on facilitation, storytelling, and leadership styles, I honed my ability to effectively communicate, inspire, and motivate others. These skills

are instrumental in navigating complex challenges, fostering collaboration, and leading with empathy and integrity. The program equipped me with the tools needed to make a meaningful difference and create sustainable change within organizations and the broader community.

Leadership Worcester also helped to instill the significance of health and wellness for my cohort, and further established my dedication to helping create a healthy and thriving Worcester. Sessions focused on improving access to healthcare and addressing socio-economic determinants of health allowed me to gain insights from esteemed health experts and understand the multifaceted nature of this critical field. Being able to interact with Worcester Housing Authority, LIFT and Legendary Legacies helped shed light on the efforts made to enhance the well-being of our community.

As my journey through Leadership Worcester came to a close, the program provided a space for reflection and celebration. The closing ceremony was a poignant reminder of the growth we had collectively experienced. An inspiring keynote presentation from the incredible and dynamic Senator Robyn Kennedy, encouraged us to continue our leadership journey with passion and dedication. The community reception brought together participants, community leaders, and stakeholders to celebrate our accomplishments and declare our commitment to ongoing leadership development.

My experience with Leadership Worcester has been truly transformative. The program provided me with a comprehensive understanding of critical issues facing Greater Worcester and equipped me with the necessary skills and connections to be a more empowered and effective leader. I am grateful for the opportunity to engage with influential leaders, explore diverse sectors, and develop meaningful relationships with fellow participants. Leadership Worcester has ignited a deeper sense of purpose within me, and I am committed to using my newfound knowledge and skills to contribute to the growth, well-being and prosperity of our community.

POLAR PARK , CONTINUED

that had been vacant for decades. It is not a large stadium with its own economic ecosystem, built on hundreds of acres of land with a sea of parking surrounding it. With the park's interior concourse connecting directly to Green Street, encouraging access to the Canal District, and concessions comprised of mostly locally owned small businesses, Polar Park is explicitly designed to be part of the community. It is an economic development keystone that knits together the Main Street commercial corridor, the Canal District, and nearby neighborhoods.

And Polar Park tickets start at just \$9. The affordability of the ballpark gives visitors an opportunity to spend on the rest of the Canal District.

THE FACTS ABOUT POLAR PARK'S SUCCESS

The facts about the success of the ballpark and the team are clear.

Polar Park was recently voted the best minor league ballpark in the country by over 87,000 voters. In 2022, the park led all 120 minor league teams with 547,000 tickets sold and finished 6th in average per-game attendance. In its inaugural season, the WooSox website led all minor league teams with over 211,000 unique online visitors. The park hosted its one-millionth fan in April after just two seasons of WooSox play. And ticket sales continue to surge over last year's sales at this point in the season, with 15,000 more tickets sold for spring games and 24,000 more tickets sold for summer games.

Additionally, one of the park's strengths is its ability to host community events besides baseball. The park has hosted football games, wine-tasting festivals, craft beer and food truck festivals, business conferences, 5K runs, nonprofit fundraisers, comedy nights, and even wedding receptions. Beyond the 75 home games a year, the park continues to be more than just a ballpark.

The WooSox are already covering many of the construction cost overruns associated with COVID-related delays and other unforeseen factors. Before the park was completed, they agreed to eventually cover all debt service related to the city's additional borrowing - more than \$40 million - and even extended their lease from 30 years to 35 years, as well as their commitment to not relocate from 15 years to 25 years. The team is just as invested in this as the city is. And it is certainly paying off for both sides.

The facts are clear. Polar Park and the Worcester Red Sox are a home run investment for the City of Worcester.

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Small Business Corner

Canal District Wines

by CATHERINE J. DORIAN, CHAMBER EXCHANGE CORRESPONDENT

Livvy enters from the Harding Street door. A pixie cut, white button-up, leather knapsack slung around her shoulders, she's a combination of polished and comfortable. She invites me for a beer, and we saunter to the Wachusett Brewing Company at the other end of the Worcester Public Market, stopping along the way to greet a chihuahua with a snuggle tooth.

At the bar, she orders a Mango Sour IPA. "We recently expanded to offer a small selection of beer, so we sell this in the shop. It's delicious."

Livvy has smiley, crystal eyes that emanate an expectant joviality, and there's a sophistication to her that doesn't sacrifice approachability. She's just come from work at the Jean McDonough Arts Center, where she's the Managing Director.

I ask her what it's like to work a full-time job and be a full-time business owner. How do you do two things at once?

"You know, other people ask me that," she replies. "I always remind them that Rae and I don't have kids. I look at other people who have full-time jobs and who are raising kids, and I'm like, 'Hey, how are you doing that?'"

It's a humble answer that's also genuine. Livvy adds that one of the things she loves about Worcester is how everyone seems to be involved in multiple ventures. Many of Worcester's small business owners have day jobs, side hustles, and passion projects that keep them constantly bouncing about the city.

For Livvy and her wife, Rachel—or Rae, as Livvy calls her—Canal District Wines is both an extension of themselves and a reflection of their environment. They thought of the idea during lockdown.

"We were tired of driving to Shrewsbury to buy wine. So, we thought, why not bring the wine here?"

In November of 2021, they opened Canal District Wines in the Worcester Public Market, which is itself a microcosm of Worcester's innovative use of space and visionary spirit. Less than a year later, they were able to move to a bigger location within the Public Market, where they arranged their store to foster comfortability and kinship. The experience is educational, but unpretentious. Guests are invited to sit at high-top tables where the wine curator, Nick, will speak with erudite but casual elocution about the wine's ingredients, processes, location of origin. Nick's selections of rosés, sauvignon blancs, Bordeauxs, and cabernets line the perimeter of the shop, making for comfortable perusing. Each bottle reflects the natural sunlight in a kaleidoscope of sea glass, strawberry, and ruby. The selection is adventurous, but thoughtful; they prioritize quality, but you won't be pushed to spend a hundred dollars on a rare varietal.

Livvy and Rae need not be bona-fide sommeliers for guests to appreciate what they're offering. Rather, they approach their venture with curiosity.

"It's amazing how many hands touch the bottle of wine that ends up on your table. We're interested in that journey. We care about that journey. So we ask our distributors, who's making the wine? How are they making it? What's the story of the land? What's the story of the label? We're really into the biographies behind the wines, if you will, and we find that our curiosity extends to our customers. They're drawn in by the human component."

Below: Customers enjoying a wine tasting event at Canal District Wines. Photo by Erb/Dufault Photography courtesy of Discover Central MA.



Livvy's passion for learning the origins of different wines pairs well with her professional background in theater. In winemaking, much like any artform, there's a sublimity that leads to truth.

"Theater and wine are two of humanity's oldest art forms. They both bring people together, and they both help people leave their everyday minutia behind and have a heightened experience."

In our renaissance, Worcester craves experiences like these. But even as our city grows, it doesn't lose its geniality. Livvy can bounce between the arts center, her and Rae's apartment, and the wine store on foot. Being in the Worcester Public Market allows them to be a part of the diverse food ecosystem that's growing in Worcester, and they encourage customers to source locally-made snacks to pair with their tastings at the shop. Canal District Wines has its regulars, but there's also a steady stream of customers who have recently relocated to Worcester and are looking for refinement within a sense of home.

"What I love seeing here right now is that everything opening is a small business, and I think that that's such a good sign," Livvy says.

With Polar Park and new apartments going up just around the corner, Livvy predicts that Worcester will only continue to attract young professionals.

Like Worcester, Livvy and Rae lean into opportunities to adapt, taking inspiration from places they admire. Livvy speaks fondly of a wine shop on Westminster Street in Providence called The Eno, where she got the idea to forego price stickers for chalk marker, which you can rub off the wine bottle upon sale. She glows as she reflects on her and Rae's recent pilgrimage to France, where nearly all wine shops double as a tasting room.

"What's it like working with your wife?" I ask her. "If you don't mind me asking, of course."

"Oh, of course not. I feel like you and I are friends at this point."

Livvy and Rae share in their value for structure. "We're both organized," Livvy says. Rae is the principal of a public elementary school which often demands significant amounts of her time, but also gives her the background knowledge to handle the administrative tasks for the shop. Livvy describes herself as the creative organizer. She designed the website and does their social media, for example. Their professions have allowed both of them to come to the business with their skills and talents, to be individually dynamic but collectively full as they invest in their passion and share wine with Worcester.

We close our time together back at the shop, where Livvy introduces me to one of her vendors, a woman named Heather with a kind smile and a soft, confident voice. I purchase Nick's recommended Chardonnay, a crisper variety that's aged in steel rather than oak. Before I leave, I ask Livvy if there's anything else in particular that she wants readers to know about Canal District Wines, like upcoming events or special offers.

She shrugs. "Just come on in and buy wine."

NEW BUILDING ENERGY CODES: WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR WORCESTER?

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

New building energy codes for new commercial and residential construction and renovations may be coming to Worcester. Some new regulations have already arrived.

The new “stretch code”, a building energy code automatically adopted by 300 Massachusetts cities and towns including Worcester, came into effect July 1. However, there is a more energy efficient version with stricter regulations called the “specialized code” which might be proposed for the City of Worcester to adopt.

There is a lot of jargon surrounding these phrases. What do the code changes mean for business owners, residents, the city, and our environment?

DETAILS OF NEW STRETCH CODE CHANGES

There are three levels of building energy codes for municipalities to adopt in Massachusetts – the base code, the stretch code, and the specialized stretch code, the latter of which a municipality must opt into by a vote of their city council or town meeting. Starting from the base, each level becomes more energy efficient, and the regulations become stricter.

The base code is updated every three years, using national recommendations that are the standard for energy codes across the country. Massachusetts was the first state to adopt a stricter version of the base code – called the stretch code – as part the Green Communities Act of 2008. The 300 cities and towns in Massachusetts that opted for a “Green Community” designation under the law automatically adopt the stretch code whenever it is updated. These communities in turn receive funding from the state for energy efficiency initiatives. Worcester is a stretch code community.

One of the most impactful stretch code changes that came into effect July 1 is that the code will apply to not just new construction, but also to home renovation and addition projects of over 1,000 square feet. That means if one part of a house over 1,000 square feet is built or redone, the entire house must be updated for the new code.

The other big changes include all new multifamily buildings being required to have 20% of their parking spaces pre-wired for electric vehicle charging and all roofs being designed to mount solar panels. The EV and solar requirements are only for new construction, though, not renovations. Historic properties are exempt from the stretch renovation requirements.

The 2023 stretch code focuses on heating and cooling efficiency by requiring continuous insulation, high-performance windows and doors, high-efficiency ventilation, and air-tight building enclosures.

While construction to meet the new stretch code may cost more, these required energy efficient upgrades make buildings more sustainable in terms of environmental impact and utility costs. The MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) estimates that a typical single-family home in Worcester might cost 3% of the total building value upfront to upgrade to meet the new code requirements, such as installing heat pumps or insulation, but utility cost savings may cover and exceed these costs. DOER estimates a typical 2,100 square-foot house built for the new stretch code could save the resident \$1,000 annually in utility bills

and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least two tons of CO₂.

THE SPECIALIZED CODE

Beyond the stretch code, there is the specialized code, which, as of the time of publishing, has only been adopted by 16 communities in Eastern Massachusetts, including Boston.

According to the DOER – the agency that updates building energy codes statewide – the specialized code is intended to help the state meet its goal of having net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. With increasing severe weather events and temperatures worldwide, the Commonwealth is looking to be a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from buildings.

As a result, the goal of the specialized code is to fully electrify all buildings affected by the code. Under the specialized code, homes would have to adhere to stricter sustainability ratings called HERS ratings, and new homes over 4,000 square feet would have to be all-electric. For multifamily development, all new buildings over 12,000 square feet would need to achieve Passive House design standards, which would increase building costs by between 1 to 4% but reduce energy usage for heating and cooling by up to 90%, according to Passive House Massachusetts.

There are no new requirements under specialized code that would apply to renovations of existing buildings. The stretch code renovation requirements would apply though.

The City of Worcester has not opted into the specialized code. To opt in, the city manager’s administration will have to make a proposal to the city council, with adequate public notice and city council committee hearings on the topic before taking a majority vote of the council to approve. If adopted, the specialized code regulations would likely take effect in early 2024.

However, there is the possibility that the state may make the current specialized code the next stretch code in the next couple years, without the City Council needing to vote to adopt. Worcester would automatically adopt this stricter code as a designated stretch community.

The city’s administration is currently evaluating the costs and benefits of the specialized code, but it is not yet clear whether they will propose its adoption. They are already looking into ways to help homeowners and developers adjust to the new stretch code by notifying them about available incentives through agencies like Mass Save.

Questions remain, however, about the electric grid’s capacity to handle rapid electrification of the building stock, and whether many small landlords and homeowners can afford the new stretch code requirements. Low-income tenants could end up having to help pay for upgrades through increased rent, while new construction of units becomes more expensive, exacerbating the issues of rising housing costs caused by low housing availability.

The Chamber will continue to work with city hall and update its members on any potential changes to the building energy code, such as the Construction & Real Estate Roundtable that was held for members August 8 with DOER.

For more information, visit DOER’s webpage at www.mass.gov/info-details/building-energy-code.

TRANSPORTATION , CONTINUED

furthering the city and state’s mission to be a much greener state.

This fall the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce will be hosting its annual Game Changers Business Conference on Friday October 13, 2023. The focus of this year’s event is Rail: Connecting Our Economy. It will focus on rail as being a key transportation piece that is imperative to the movement of goods and people by providing critical connections across the New England region and beyond. The discussion will be surrounded around East/West rail, freight, and the environmental benefits of rail utilization.

East/West Rail is an essential part of connecting all parts of the state to not only Boston but all of New England down to New York City. It has been championed on the federal level by Congressmen Jim McGovern and Richard Neal who will both be in attendance to discuss the dollars that have been allocated to it through the federal infrastructure bill.

WRTA

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has been and continues to be an advocate for free fares on all WRTA bus lines. We have worked hard with our community partners free fare concept on a year-to-year basis since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has proven to be a successful initiative as ridership

has increased each year since the implementation of free fare. While it has been great to continually extend the initiative, it is time for our municipal, state and federal leaders to find the dollars and resources to make this a permanent program.

We have heard from both the business community and residents about the benefits of free fare. Employers are reporting lower absenteeism and tardiness with this new program. Residents are able to get to their doctor’s appointments and retail stores without having to worry about the cost of their ride being a deterrent and affecting their monthly bottom line.

If we are serious about the future of transportation in Worcester to be successful, we need to continue to work with our elected officials, key stakeholders, and private partnerships to find ways to ensure that Worcester is a hub as the second largest city in New England in the heart of the Commonwealth. It is crucial to the future of this city and its residents and businesses. We hope that Massport continues to bring new airlines and destinations to the Worcester Regional Airport and the MBTA continues to pursue more options such as a third rail to allow more express trains to Worcester. As the Massachusetts House and Senate have filed their \$56.2 Billion budget, it is unfortunate that East/West Rail was not part of that package. While \$90 million was allocated to RTA’s across the Commonwealth and \$447 million for transportation, including \$205 million for the MBTA, we need to continue to advocate for more to ensure that public transportation continues to grow.



Food Hub Profile: A Touch of Everything With Entrepreneur Jessica Reyes

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

Jessica Reyes always has a plan. She's a social entrepreneur in the truest sense – taking business opportunities as they come and never saying no to something that will better her community.

In Main South, Reyes is widely recognized for her work as a restaurant owner, caterer, and the lead organizer of Worcester Families Feeding Families, a nonprofit dedicated to providing meals to neighbors in need. She most recently operated a restaurant and catering business, Un Toque Borikén, on Stafford Street before she was approached by the owners of Kokoriko's Pizza & Chicken at 819 Main Street to start taking over ownership.

Reyes began managing the location in May, and now runs the restaurant with the help of her husband, two part-time employees, and four Worcester Public School students placed with her through the Worcester Community Action Council's YouthWorks summer job program.

"I'm happy to be back in Main South, that's for sure," said Reyes. "I wanted something right in the middle of the community."

Community means everything to Reyes, who somehow has had time in the past year to cook meals for the winter homeless shelter operated by

Open Sky Community Services, prepare hundreds of culturally appropriate meals for seniors through Elder Services of Worcester Area, and now, prepare dozens of meals for children participating in the city's Recreation Worcester program this summer. All on top of running Worcester Families Feeding Families, running her catering business, and managing a restaurant.

That's not all. Reyes is looking to re-open Un Toque Borikén, which means "A Touch of Borikén", the indigenous Taíno name for Puerto Rico, as a fusion Puerto Rican restaurant and bakery. "There's plans for another location coming soon, like real soon," said Reyes. "And nearby, like really nearby!" she added with a laugh, noting she was working on something that would keep her in Main South.

Reyes was a longtime Food Hub shared kitchen member before finding her own location last year. She was a graduate of the Food Hub's Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs class in 2022, a program funded by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation which allowed her to work with the Food Hub and the Chamber of Commerce to get all the necessary business and food safety certifications and permits to operate a business in the city. Through that program, she went to workshops, received a micro-grant, and did pop-up events that got Un Toque Borikén more publicity.

The next Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs in Worcester program will run next spring. Follow the Worcester Regional Food Hub on social media for updates on when applications are released.

Also keep an eye out for the announcement of Reyes's new location by following Un Toque Borikén on Facebook. Kokoriko's is also on Facebook and has a website with online ordering. Kokoriko's can also be found on GrubHub, but Reyes says the best way to order is to call ahead at 508-459-1550. They are closed on Wednesdays, but open every other day from 11AM to 11PM, and on Sunday 2PM to 11PM.

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Rising Star: Young Woo Sox Pitcher, Shane Drohan, Has a Bright Future in Pro Baseball

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER – Worcester Red Sox pitcher Shane Drohan is a rising star in the Red Sox organization. The baseball world took notice of his potential in June. However, the 6-foot-3, 175-pound southpaw was the last person to know he was on the national radar.

“I had no idea,” said Drohan, who was called up to the Worcester Red Sox back in May after posting a dominant 5-0 record with a minuscule 1.32 earned run average (ERA), and an impressive 36-to-9 strikeouts to walks ratio. “It wasn’t even on my mind.”

About a month after his Triple-A callup, Woo Sox pitching coach Paul Abbott signaled over to Drohan in the Polar Park clubhouse and called the third-year pro to manager Chad Tracy’s office. “I was just in the middle of a workout,” he said. “Abby called me into Trace’s office and (Boston Red Sox director of player development Brian) Abrams was on the phone. He was, ‘hey, you’re going to the Futures Game!’”

The All-Star Futures Game is an annual baseball exhibition contest hosted by Major League Baseball (MLB) in conjunction with the mid-summer MLB All-Star Game. Drohan was selected to be a member of the 2023 team of American League-affiliated prospects to compete against a team of National League-affiliated prospects. Current MLB star players like Mookie Betts, Manny Machado, and Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., were past selections to the Futures Game. Drohan was the only player from the Woo Sox to be selected to this year’s team.

“It was very exciting,” said Drohan as he stood in front of his locker in the clubhouse during a July 25th rain delay. “It’s humbling, especially when you look at that game and see the types of players that played in it. It was just an honor. I was really excited to go and to represent Boston.”

Unfortunately for Drohan, prior to flying off to Seattle for the game, he experienced some calf discomfort during a Worcester game. The Red Sox decided to hold him out of the Futures Game for precautionary reasons. With Drohan skipping the event, Portland Sea Dogs pitcher, Luis Guerrero, filled Drohan’s roster spot. However, Drohan took the bad news in stride. Despite his disappointment on missing the game, he said he was happy for his friend and former Portland teammate to get a chance to play in the game.

“It didn’t work out, but Guerrero got to go,” he said with a genuine smile. “He’s one of our guys down in Portland. He deserved it. He really deserved it.”

Drohan’s calm demeanor has helped him handle adversity throughout his brief professional career that began in 2020. He was selected by the Boston Red Sox in the fifth round of the MLB Draft that year. He had a modest start to his professional career in 2021. He posted a decent 7-4 record with a respectable 3.96 ERA in A-ball with the Salem Red Sox of the Carolina League. He moved onto the South Atlantic League to play for the Greenville Drive in High-A ball, but had mixed results. He finished with an unimpressive 6-7 record and a 4.00 ERA, but his 136-to-40 strikeouts to walks ratio stood out as he was promoted soon after to Double-A Portland in the Eastern League. He was 1-1 with 21 strikeouts and 11 walks in just five games with the Sea Dogs. At this time in his career, his fastball sat at 88-92 miles per hour (mph) as scouts graded his pitch command and control as below average.

Undeterred by the scouting reports, the athletic, but slim Drohan built up his arm strength during the offseason and showed an increase in velocity during spring training. He improved his fastball speed to 92-94, topping out at 96 mph. Along with his fastball, he had major improvement with his changeup, which had increased in velocity from 78-81 mph to 83-86 mph. When he throws it, he displays deceptive arm speed as the ball drops away from right-handed hitters and jams lefties. He has the ability to throw it low in the strike zone to induce



swinging strikes. “I think my pitches are in a good spot,” said Drohan. “Every day you’re trying to constantly improve them.”

Drohan saw immediate results in Portland going undefeated in six games to start the 2023 season while posting a stellar 0.82 WHIP (walks and hits per innings pitch). This stat shows he was able to keep runners off the bases. However, after he was promoted to Triple-A and the Woo Sox in May, he has struggled, posting a 2-4 record and high 5.94 ERA in his first 12 games at this level.

At the same time, while working on new pitches, he continues to try to get Triple-A hitters out. He is focused on improving his curveball and cutter as he builds on his pitching repertoire; however, those pitches are still works in progress. “I have put a little bit more emphasis on the cutter and slider right now. For me, because they’re newer pitches, I want to get a good feel for those pitches and throwing them in the game.”

Drohan admitted that working on these pitches in a game situation has affected his stats in Worcester. “It definitely can affect the outcome,” he said. “We’re trying to develop different pitches and ... you really want to see how it works in a game. You

can throw as many times as you want in the bullpen and in side-sessions throughout the week, but until you’re doing it in a game and getting the movement that you want and the action on it that you want, that’s where it matters.”

Drohan hopes overcoming his initial obstacles in Worcester will lead to long-term success. “It’s just another jump up in level,” he said. “Especially here, you are facing a lot of guys with big league experience. They’ve seen a lot more pitching in their life. They’re just a lot more comfortable in the (batter’s) box. It’s really just making adjustments and consistently making quality pitches. The biggest struggles are that guys have more quality experience. You have to attack them. It’s a little bit different here.”

Tracy said Drohan’s initial struggles are just typical growing pains for a young pitcher. “Coming from Double-A to Triple-A, we see this with everyone ... it’s just a

different level ... It’s harder. The hitters are better. They don’t have an automatic strike zone down there ... It’s an umpire calling it. The (strike) zone is probably bigger. If you come here and pitch on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday and the pitch is a sliver off the plate, it’s a ball. So, that’s an adjustment ... And now, if (you are) behind in the count and there’s seven guys in the lineup who have hit in the big leagues, it’s going to be harder ... It’s another level, plain and simple.”

As a young pitcher, Drohan said he can’t be afraid to throw any particular pitch in certain situations. “I might usually throw a changeup because that’s my best pitch,” he said. “But here, I might throw my cutter or slider instead because we’re trying to develop that pitch into a serious out pitch ... That’s how it is. You have to allow yourself to be a little uncomfortable. Maybe not do what you would usually do on a regular day because you have to keep in mind the overall growth aspect of it.”

Tracy said Drohan works hard to learn his pitches. “He continues to work on his cutter ... his breaking (curve) ball, getting the changeup over the plate more often, his fastball command, all those things ... Combined, he will make the complete package of a pitcher.”

Drohan’s curveball has been scouted at 75-78 mph with a 1-to-7 break and a plus spin rate. At times, he will flash depth and tight rotation when he finishes it. He will also start at-bats throwing it or use it to put hitters away on both sides of the plate. As for his cutter, he has been clocked at 86-90 mph. When thrown well, the pitch has a short, horizontal break that gets on the hands of right-handed hitters.

“He’s got a number of things he’s working on,” said Tracy. “When he’s in the zone, his stuff plays. He’s got the ability, but it’s just a more challenging level and there’s final tweaks you have to make at this level to be ready for the next one ... Command here is everything ... You got to be able to throw strikes. Strike one throughout our entire organization is the thing that is pounded on quite a bit and to win one (ball) and one (strike) counts. We want to win two-of-the-first three



Above: Worcester Red Sox pitcher Shane Drohan’s star is on the rise. Photo by Eddie Monigan/Woo Sox

pitches ... get ahead in the count. When you are ahead in the count, you have more of a chance against the hitters. Hitters get on the defensive. You get more defensive swings, weak outs and things like that. If you are behind in the count, not so much ... Being able to command your fastball or land your breaking ball for strike one is huge.”

Drohan, with his tall, athletic frame, has the physical mechanics to succeed at this level and possibly in the Major Leagues. He throws from a three-quarter arm slot, starting on the third base side of the pitching rubber. He throws exclusively from the stretch with a free and easy delivery, short stride and arm action. He hides the ball well and is able to consistently repeat his delivery.

Along with those positive qualities, Tracy said Drohan’s best attribute is his mental toughness and work ethic. “The one thing about Dro I love is when he’s pitching ... he’s pretty unflappable,” Tracy said. “You really don’t see any change in body language. You don’t see him slapping or kicking at the mound. He doesn’t really get frustrated. I’m sure internally there’s some frustration, but he does not show it on the mound. He doesn’t stop competing ... He knows very well what he has to do and we don’t have to compete with a guy moping around. He just doesn’t do that. He moves on to the next outing and he understands all these things we are talking about ... He’s got a great work ethic. He works his butt off.”

Drohan is ranked as the number one pitching prospect in the Red Sox organization, fifth overall. However, he hated the sport growing up despite being the son of a former professional baseball player. Bill Drohan pitched in the Kansas City Royals organization from 1987 to 1990.

“Baseball was boring. I always wanted to play football,” Shane Drohan said. He quit full-time baseball when he was in the fifth grade to focus on playing football. He played tackle football from first grade through his senior year at Cardinal Newman High School in West Palm Beach, Florida. He was the starting quarterback for the team and was recruited to play in a few small Division 1 colleges.

He was coached by his dad in Little League, but he left baseball “because I was just bored. I didn’t like it,” he said. “With my dad being a professional baseball player, he understood arm care and stuff like that. So, growing up, I never pitched much. I pitched every now and then and when I would, it would be good, but he was very strict with pitch count, not overusing me. So, they would stick me in the outfield. I was fast and a good athlete, but I just got bored with it. Especially when I would come from the end of football season and right into baseball. The intensity switch up was crazy different.”

“I did play outfield and pitched a little bit my freshman year in high school,” he said. “But it was like a handful of batters and then after my freshman year, I was like, ‘yeah, no, I’m good.’”

Then, during Drohan’s junior year, he grew. “I was always the smallest kid, but at that point, I hit my growth spurt. The last time I pitched, I was like 5-foot-8, 115 pounds, but then at this point I was 6-1, 6-2. Still skinny as hell but I grew a little bit.”

His football teammate, junior Joe Yupp, who was a tight end and catcher for his high school teams, took notice of Drohan’s growth spurt and convinced him to give baseball another chance. “He was like, ‘I really think you need to come back and try to pitch. You’ve always had a really good arm and now you’ve grown. I think you could play Division 1 (college baseball).’”

Still reluctant, he decided to throw the ball after school with Yupp. “Alright man, whatever!” Drohan said. “It was after school one day and my dad showed up and saw me. I was just in my sneakers and I was throwing it. But it felt good. It was coming out nice. I was like, ‘yeah, man, let’s try it’ ... I was just rippin’ it!”

Drohan immediately drew the attention of baseball scouts after his return to the sport. The Philadelphia Phillies even drafted him in the 23rd round of the 2017 MLB Draft, but he decided to play baseball for Florida State instead. He was drafted by the Red Sox after his junior season with the Seminoles.

Drohan credits the support of his father for allowing him to decide on his own athletic path. “He never forced me into baseball,” he said. “But I think he saw when I was very young that I had a good arm, even though I was always the smallest kid on the team. But he never really forced me into it. He let me come back to it on my own. I came back probably a little later than he might have liked. He probably got a little nervous as I was getting a little late in high school, but yeah, it all worked out.”

Drohan still relies on his father for pitching advice. “We talk pretty much every day. The other day, I think he sent me a text about my bullpen (session) coming up. So, it’s really nice to have him to fall back on. It’s kind of like a big database for me as a pitcher because he’s seen me on the first day that I touched a ball. It’s a blessing to have him in my corner. I can always go to him for advice. Not everyone has that situation and I don’t take it for granted.”



Above: Shane’s dad, Bill Drohan on a 1990 baseball card with the Royals.

Right: Holy Cross captain Jacob Dobbs and Harvard captain Nate Leskovec at Polar Park. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba

WIDE LEFT: PIRATES MISS LATE GAME FIELD TO END SEASON

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA – The Massachusetts Pirates season came to a heartbreaking end in July.

While trailing the Sioux Falls Storm late in the fourth quarter, 42-39, in the first round of the 2023 IFL playoffs, the Pirates were able to move the ball to the 19-yard-line and into field goal range with :44 seconds left in the game. Pirates’ kicker Josh Gable took the field with a chance to keep the Pirates’ season alive. However, he missed the 27-yard field goal attempt wide left allowing the Storm to regain possession and they essentially ran out the clock.

The loss was their fourth straight (second straight to the Storm) to end what began as a promising season. They started the 2023 campaign 9-3, but on field discipline issues tripped up the Pirates as they end their season 9-7 (7-4 in the conference). They also were not able to win any games away from the Worcester DCU Center.

The Pirates finish the season ranked second in the league in overall offense (4,002 total yards gained) and third in the league in overall defense. Running back Jimmie Robinson also led the league in rushing with 959 yards on 172 attempts. Quarterback Anthony Russo was tied for the league lead with 49 touchdown passes and ranked third in passing with 2243 yards with 183 completions on 298 attempts.

Holy Cross Football Returns to Polar Park: The Crusaders will host in-state rival Harvard University

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER – As Holy Cross head coach Bob Chesney waited for last month’s press conference to announce the Third Annual EBW Football Classic between the Crusaders and the Harvard Crimson this fall, something caught his eye. He noticed a news cameraman wearing a navy-blue Yale baseball cap in the DCU Club on the third floor of Polar Park.

“I like that hat,” Chesney hollered with a wide grin. The coach knows the storied football rivalry of nearly 150 years between Yale and Harvard.

The cameraman responded, “I’m from New Haven,” as he looked up and smiled back at Chesney. Yale is located in New Haven, Conn.

Chesney then joked, “wear that around today. You’ll make them (Harvard) nervous.”

Holy Cross also has a historic football rivalry against Harvard. Both teams have met 73 times since 1904 with the Crimson holding the all-time series lead of 45-26-2. However, last season, the Crusaders knocked off the Crimson on October 1st at Harvard Stadium, 30-21. It was their first win over Harvard since 2016.

The Crusaders have dominated the EBW Classic by winning the first two games with a combined score of 99-10. In the Crusaders’ Polar Park debut on Oct. 23, 2021, they annihilated Colgate University, 42-10, in front of a sold-out crowd of 9,508 fans.

Last year, the Crusaders thrashed Bucknell University, 57-0.

Holy Cross is also coming off their fourth straight Patriots League title. They finished 12-1 (6-0 in the conference). It was the most wins in the program’s history. They also finished the



SPORTS STREET , CONTINUED

season with a NCAA FCS (Football Championship Subdivision) ranking of sixth best in the country. Their lone loss came against the number one ranked and eventual FCS national champion South Dakota State in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs last December.

Chesney was named 2022 Patriots League Coach of the Year for the second straight season and the third time in his career. His team also had 18 players make the first and second All-Patriots League teams, including quarterback Matthew Sluka and receiver Jalen Coker, who earned first team honors. Both players will return for their senior seasons in 2023.

Chesney said he is happy to see his team's increased success coincides with the impact the EBW Football Classic has had within the Worcester community.

"Three years ago, when we first played here, we talked about the birth of the Woo Sox and a rebirth of Holy Cross football," Chesney said. "We were hoping that a few years later ... that we might be standing here as a team recognized on a national stage and certainly that's what we have today."

Since establishing the EBW Classic at Polar Park, Chesney also recognized the strong their strong partnership the last three years. "We had our athletic awards banquet here, (our) incoming freshmen night for fall camp is here, and a few of our guys are employed here over the summer with the Woo Sox," he said. "There's a lot of good things coming out of this relationship."

"This is unbelievable for the community," he said. "Watching everyone be in these boxes and watching everyone be in these stands the past couple years is very impressive and something we're really proud to unite and have this be our home away from home. Ultimately, this will probably be the last time we will talk about this in this setting and we'll just talk about playing a game against an unbelievable opponent, with an unbelievable coach, and an unbelievable history."

Holy Cross linebacker and team captain Jacob Dobbs said he and his teammates relish the opportunity to play in Polar Park against Harvard.

"I was kind of joking with coach Chesney on the way in here," said Dobbs, who will play in his third EBW Classic game. "I was wondering if you can find a way to put more seats in here; put some in the outfield or something. But I really think this is going to be exciting for the community. It's truly a blessing and a pleasure to be a part of this game."

"It's truly fun from a players perspective," he said. "It's been an amazing opportunity to be able to play a game in a stadium as beautiful as Polar Park."

SPORTS STREET, P22



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The Chamber of Central Mass South Announces Move and New Sturbridge Visitor Info Center

by CHAMBER OF CENTRAL MA SOUTH

The Chamber of Central Mass South is excited to announce that their offices have moved to a new location that will allow the Chamber to reopen a Visitor Information Center in Sturbridge immediately off Exit 5 of Route I-84. This free standing building is located at 1A River Road in Sturbridge which is also the site of Paw Plaza, a dog daycare and boarding business and CMS Chamber Member. With a covered porch and exterior display case, The Chamber office and Visitor Center is also equipped with a video monitor in the window running scenes from the area, special event listings, and more. Inside, guests will find brochure racks with area info and maps, and its staff will

continue helping visitors make the most of their stays from this highly visible and easily accessible new location. CMS Chamber made the move from their previous headquarters on Hall Road in Sturbridge on July 17 and is now open for business assisting visitors and serving its Members from this new location.

The Chamber of Central Mass South is extremely grateful to Hadley Zabinski, owner of Paw Plaza, for presenting this opportunity to the Chamber, and to Michael Wales of Michael L. Wales Painting for serving as our general contractor. This move would not have been possible without their contributions.

If you are planning a visit to the Sturbridge area, please drop in and say hello!

CLINTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CELEBRATES ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY, ANNOUNCES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

by CLINTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

On May 25, 2023, the Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated one year of serving the town's business community. The Chamber is marking the occasion by announcing the first members of its board of directors.

The Clinton Chamber was formed in partnership with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, acting as an affiliate organization of the latter. This allows the Clinton Chamber, which is a volunteer-run organization by local business leaders, to tap into the resources of full-time staff at the Worcester Chamber. A member of the Worcester Chamber staff sits on the board and coordinates meetings, while other staff help with membership development and events planning. This partnership was formed with the intention of providing crucial administrative support to help jumpstart the Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce – the first chamber in Clinton since 2012.

Now, the Clinton Chamber has recruited its first round of board members, who will lead the Chamber's efforts in the future. Their first board meeting was held on Friday, May 5.

"Our board is a highly motivated group of leaders in our community, and most of us were already close or knew of the great work each person and organization does, and I'm so glad that we now are all working together to put together meaningful events, programming, and initiatives for the community," said Clinton Area Chamber President Lauren Crossman-Nanof.

Crossman-Nanof is one of three founding board members that now make up the board's executive committee. Bill Spencer of M&T Bank is the board's vice president and treasurer, and Kerrie Salwa of the Central Mas-

sachusetts Regional Planning Commission is the board's secretary. All three are important players in the Clinton community. They were previously working together as Discover Clinton to organize Sidewalk Sales, the Halloween Walk, the George Bailey Awards, and a variety of other community events. They approached the Worcester Chamber in early 2022 to explore a partnership to create a chamber for the town for the first time in a decade.

The Clinton Chamber now has 45 member businesses. The Chamber has put on monthly networking events at locations such as Clintons Bar and Grille, the Simple Man Saloon, and Sterling Street Brewery; organized an annual meeting last October with Congresswoman Lori Trahan; hosted an Economic Development Day last September with state officials from the Mass. Office of Business Development, MassDevelopment, and the offices of Senator Cronin and Representative Kilcoyne; and has put on seminar events on cybersecurity, SBA loan programs, and employment law.

Upcoming Chamber events can be found online at www.clintonareachamber.org. This year's annual meeting will be in the fall, with Clinton Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Stephen Meyer speaking.

"We have really put together the all-star team for the Clinton business community, and the enthusiasm from the board members and their commitment to serving their community is inspiring," said David Sullivan, Director of Economic Development & Business Recruitment at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and the staff liaison for Clinton since last year. "In just one year of working with Clinton, I have come to love this tight-knit community and know that a dedicated chamber run by Clintonians, for Clintonians, will help the town continue to be an excellent place for people to live and work in Central Mass."

THE FIRST COHORT OF BOARD MEMBERS:

- Lauren Crossman-Nanof, Owner, Revive Painting & Finishing (President)
- Bill Spencer, VP Business Banking, M&T Bank (Vice President & Treasurer)
- Kerrie Salwa, Project Manager/Principal Planner, Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (Secretary)
- Jill DeSousa, VP, Commercial Relationship Officer, Avidia Bank
- Dale DiMeco, Owner, DiMeco's Nursery and Landscaping
- Maegan McCaffrey, VP of Marketing & Communications, RCAP Solutions
- Kelly Moran, Realtor and Marketing Assistant, Realty Vision
- Steve O'Neil, Attorney, Philbin & O'Neil LLC
- Tricia Pistone, Senior Director of External Affairs, Marketing, and Development, UMass Memorial HealthAlliance Clinton Hospital
- Andrea Santiago, SVP, Branch Administration, Clinton Savings Bank
- Melanie Trottier, Executive Coordinator, Museum of Russian Icons
- Cindy Wing, COO, RFK Community Alliance



Above: Clinton Board of Directors

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SPORTS STREET , CONTINUED

To have Harvard here, to have it be a game that has happened for three years, it's exciting for both of our programs. We're really looking forward to the opportunity to play here again. It's been fun the times we've played here, but having another premiere program is really exciting for the community."

The Crimson finished their 2022 season with a 6-4 record (4-3 in the Ivy League). Despite last season's loss against Holy Cross, Tim Murphy, the Ivy League's all-time winningest head football coach (192-87), said he looks forward to the challenge of playing a tough Crusaders team at Polar Park.

"As a lifelong Boston Red Sox fan and someone who can literally remember back to '67 listening to the pennant race on a transistor radio, you guys have no idea what that is," he said smiling at several members of both football teams. "This is a really cool thing. We had an opportunity a couple years ago to play the Harvard-Yale game at Fenway Park and it was absolutely electric and I'm sure it will be a similar environment here."

Murphy said his team will be ready to play come the fall. "We're really excited playing arguably the best team on the schedule. Kudos to Coach Chesney and his players and the program. He's done a phenomenal job. It's truly one of the top FCS Division 1 programs in the country. For the opportunity to play a team on the schedule like that is really great. We're excited and very appreciative of this opportunity."

Harvard defensive lineman and captain Nate Leskovec echoes his coaches' sentiments. "I'm super excited and fortunate to have the opportunity to play here," he said. "I heard a lot about what it's like to play in a baseball stadium. I missed out by a year when we played at the Red Sox (in Fenway Park), but I'm really looking forward to engaging and competing with a high-level program such as Holy Cross.

"We have a lot of respect for you guys at our end, but we like our chances. We like our chances against Holy Cross and against every team on our schedule. So, we're looking forward, in the spirit of competition, to competing on Sept. 30th ... We'll be ready to go."

Tickets for the EBW Classic are on sale to the general public at www.polar-park.com. For further details on the game, email the Woo Sox at info@woosox.com or by calling 508-500-1000. For updates, subscribe to the free Woo Sox newsletter at www.woosox.com.

To receive updates on Holy Cross athletics, signup for email alerts at goholycross.com/subscribe or follow the football team on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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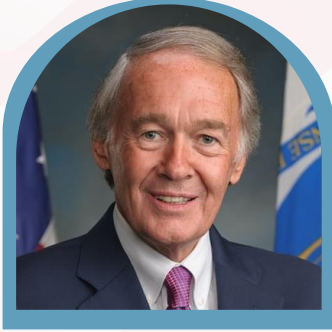
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GUESTS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND A TOUR OF THE U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING ON 11/15/23

REGISTER SOON!

Individual Early Bird Registration by August 31: \$200 | Individual Registration after August 31: \$250

Telling a Vibrant Central MA Story with our Members

by **MONIQUE MESSIER**, PRESIDENT, DISCOVER CENTRAL MA



When you think about tourism, your first thoughts are probably about places. The memorable places you'd like to visit again, the exciting new places you haven't tried yet, and gems that are truly unique to a specific place. Each conjures a story rooted in either lived experiences or what you imagine it will be like when you visit. But at Discover Central MA, we know it's the people who work at and own those

businesses who make each place truly special.

Recently, over lunch at a member restaurant, The Mercantile, with Discover Central MA member, Stephanie Ramey, president of the Worcester Railers, an informal debate about the best Central MA weekend itinerary occurred. As parents to multiple kids of various ages we both agreed: Central Massachusetts is incredibly rich with family-friendly attractions. In our work, we both take part in telling that story. With tourism marketing, Discover Central MA peaks interest and helps convert inspiration into action, but in the end it's our members who provide the stellar experiences and hospitality visitors enjoy.

If you're in the hospitality, retail, restaurant, sports or attraction business, we invite you to join us as a member. Together, we are the backbone of our local tourism industry, a multi-million-dollar driver of economic activity for Central Massachusetts. Tourism employs thousands of people, and those jobs are crucial, because those are the people who ensure visitors have a memorable experience and return again and again.

In partnership with our members, we tell visitors a story about how they can experience our community. And the more our membership grows, the more vibrant and alluring the story becomes.

Here's a sample of new members we're excited to welcome into the fold:

Recently Opened

HITCHCOCK TAVERN

Hitchcock Tavern is a historic tavern in West Brookfield built in 1760. It is said to have served Founding Fathers George Washington and John Adams, as well as Daniel Shays, leader of Shays Rebellion. Renovated in 2022, the tavern is reopened under its original name, serves American cuisine, has a full bar, and is a great space to have a bite to eat or host an event.

TORO LOCO TAQUERIA

Toro Loco Taqueria is a new casual dining establishment located at the DCU Center in Worcester. The family behind this new spot are 1st and 2nd generation natives of Mexico, so rest assured you'll be treated to authentic flavors when you try their tacos, burritos and aguas frescas. With such a convenient location, Toro Loco is sure to be a popular spot, especially for pre- and post-event dining.

Local Distilleries

SPICY WATER DISTILLERY

Spicy Water Distillery, located in Grafton's charming downtown, is a distinctive new craft distillery. Embracing creativity and boldness, they produce unique small-batch spirits infused with exciting flavors. With their artisanal approach and commitment to excellence, Spicy Water offers a memorable experience, enticing spirits enthusiasts from near and far.

DEEP ROOTS DISTILLERY

In Fiskdale you'll find Deep Roots Distillery, a celebrated craft distillery renowned for their premium, small-batch spirits, created with locally sourced ingredients and traditional distillation techniques. With award-winning whiskey, gin, and vodka, and a new axe-throwing attraction next door, this destination is a fun night out for the over 21 crowd.

Family Fun in Whittensville

SPARETIME RECREATION

If you're seeking kid-friendly entertainment, visit Sparetime Recreation to enjoy a bowling alley, arcade, and entertainment center, located in Whitinsville.



Above: Hardwick town center. Photo by Dennis Pariseau, courtesy of Discover Center MA.

The alley has 24 lanes of candlepin bowling, as well as a variety of arcade games and multiple pool tables. You'll find snacks and craft beverages at the alley, or pick up a menu and order from the restaurant next door: The Neighborhood Kitchen.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD KITCHEN

The Neighborhood Kitchen in Whitinsville serves classic American cuisine in an inviting atmosphere. From grinders to flatbread pizzas, wraps and chicken fingers, to entrees such as shepard's pie and turkey dinner, there's something for everyone. The kids menu will please, as will the over-the-top shakes fully loaded with sweet treats - try the Orange Dreamsicle or Smores by the Fire!

Special Events

For years the entire community has leveraged our free online tool, the Discover Central MA Events Calendar, to promote happenings around the region. This year, thanks to our new website update, the calendar is better than ever and will continue to be the premier place to list local events.

In recognition that planners also want to reach our growing audiences on social media and in our weekly newsletter, we're offering a brand new type of membership: Event Membership. This new membership gives organizers an extra boost in the promotion of their event to both locals and visitors of the region.

Here are three upcoming events to put on your calendar:

HARDWICK COMMUNITY FAIR

The Hardwick Community Fair in Hardwick, MA is a traditional Colonial-style country fair and known to be the oldest in the country. In fact, King George of England once gave it his stamp of approval. The fair features a variety of agricultural and creative exhibits, demonstrations, food, live music and dance, children's games, wagon rides, an antique tractor parade, and so much more! Admission and parking are free, making it a great event for the whole family. The fair is open from 9am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday, August 18-19th.

THE ANNUAL VINTAGE FASHION SHOW

The Annual Vintage Fashion Show is a fundraiser for the UMass Memorial Foundation, hosted at Union Station in Worcester. The show features a variety of vintage fashion pieces, from the 1920s to the 1990s. The models are all healthcare professionals, who showcase the most glamorous and trendsetting outfits of each decade. Get your tickets now and attend this event on Friday, September 29th to see amazing fashion, support a good cause, and have a fun night out.

THE HARVEY BALL

On Friday, October 6th don't miss The Harvey Ball, an annual event held in Worcester, hosted by the Worcester Historical Museum. This celebration of the history of the smiley face and its creator, Harvey Ball, features a gala dinner, a silent auction, and a live music performance. The event also includes a presentation of the Harvey Ball Smile Award, which will be given to Gloria D. Hall and Art in The Park, for their significant contribution and impact in bringing culture to the Worcester community and Elm Park for the past 10 years.

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



Workers Credit Union is proud to announce its partnership with the Worcester Red Sox.



This 2023 season, join us at Polar Park as we launch Workers Reality, an augmented reality experience. Be a part of the game like never before — play to win exciting prizes like limited-edition merch and WooSox season tickets!

Let's play!
WORKERS
REALITY

