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 THE NEWSPAPER

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OF THE WORCESTER REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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StartUp Worcester
alum celebrates
grand opening. **6**

Solvus Global: Bringing International Innovation in Manufacturing to Central Massachusetts

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

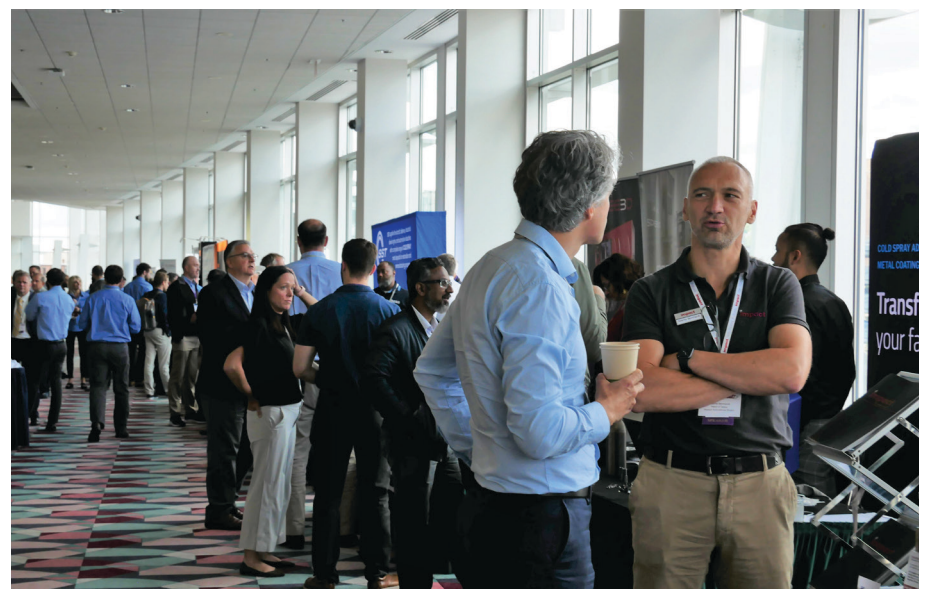
Manufacturing has always been the backbone of the Central Massachusetts economy. Ever since the Blackstone River Valley and Worcester became the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, the region has always played a role as an international leader in manufacturing innovation.

Solvus Global, a Worcester-based advanced manufacturer founded by WPI researchers Aaron Birt, Sean Kelly, and Diran Apelian continues that tradition today.

The company has pioneered additive manufacturing which is more widely known as 3D printing. Instead of using traditional manufacturing which subtracts parts to create the final product - think cutting, sawing - additive manufacturing adds material from the 'bottom up' to produce parts. It reduces waste and is more efficient and environmentally friendly.

One of Solvus's methods of additive manufacturing is called "cold spray technology", which involves using supersonic metal powders which stick to a target surface when sprayed on at high velocities. The method has significant applications for sectors such as defense, aerospace, biomedical, automotive, marine, clean energy, and oil and gas.

Solvus co-founder Aaron Birt is a graduate of WPI, receiving his PhD in materials science in 2017 and publishing papers about his innovative approach to additive manufacturing. Birt was also a participant in the Chamber's StartUp Worcester entrepreneur program.



Above: The CSAT/LSAAT conference hosted at the DCU Center, June 20-22, 2023
Submitted photo: Solvus Global

"Diran, Sean, and I all really enjoyed working together and solving problems," said Birt. "So early on, we started out as a consulting gig. But we quickly found that we didn't want to try and convince others to solve their problems; instead, we wanted to be the ones actually responsible for implementing solutions that could impact entire markets."

Birt and fellow WPI PhD Sean Kelly and former WPI provost Dr. Diran Apelian founded Solvus Global in 2017, and since then the growth has been exponential. Birt was named to the 2018 class of Forbes 30 Under 30, and in 2022, Solvus was ranked as a top-300 company on the annual Inc. 5,000 list, a list of the fastest-growing private companies in the country. The company's revenue exploded from zero to \$5 million in just three years.

At the same time, Birt started a spinoff startup called Kinetic Batteries, which has received government contracts for researching how additive manufacturing can improve the efficiency of producing the lithium-ion batteries needed in electric vehicles.

In 2021, Solvus had outgrown its lab space in Worcester and needed a second location. The firm found a 32,000 square-foot manufacturing facility in Leominster and received funding from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative for their startup spinoff model, where Solvus invests resources into new in-house startups like Powders on Demand (www.powdersondemand.com), Kinetic Batteries (www.kinetic-batteries.com) or VALIS (www.valisinsights.com), an AI-powered solution to inefficiencies in the recycling industry who recently closed their seed-series investment.

"Pivoting to more of a venture studio business model at Solvus Global came as a realization from our team that we wanted to solve bigger and bigger problems and we wanted to be the ones who were responsible for delivering the solution," said Birt. "We wanted to focus on a combination of not only the technology, but also the business and the team of people behind it."

Solvus has created a name for itself as a leader in advanced manufacturing not just in the region, but worldwide. And they bring the industry to Worcester every year. Solvus hosts two concurrent conferences, called the Cold Spray Action Team (CSAT, www.coldsprayteam.com) and Large Scale Additive Action Team (LSAAT,

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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

Seminar Series: Cybersecurity: Is your business on the nice list? Presented by Cinch I.T. | Chamber Offices

Wednesday November 29, 2023

12:00pm - 1:00pm

148th Annual Meeting | DCU Center

Friday, December 1, 2023

11:30am-2:00pm

Presenting Sponsors: UMass Memorial Health, Unibank, Worcester Railers HC

Power of Women (POW) | Mechanics Hall

Tuesday December 5, 2023

11:30am-1:30pm

Sponsor: Country Bank

Manufacturing Roundtable: The Other Side of Automation | Chamber Offices

Wednesday, December 4, 2023

12:00pm-1:00pm

Sponsors: AIS, FLEXcon Company, Inc. Masshire Central Region Workforce Board & Career Centers

The Breakfast Club | Assumption University

Thursday, December 7, 2023

7:00am-9:00am

Sponsors: Fidelity Bank, Point32Health

Human Resource Roundtable: 19 Compliance | Zoom

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

2:30pm-3:45pm

Sponsors: Aetna, Nichols College GPS

Business After Hours | Bay State Brewing

Thursday, December 14, 2023

5:00pm-7:30pm

Sponsors: Rockland Trust, Worcester State University

Seminar Series: JP Van Steerteghem Certified Focal Point Business & Executive Coach | Chamber Offices

Wednesday January 17, 2024

9:00am-10:00am

Arts A PILLAR IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

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



I was asked recently to attend and speak at a conference this past October in Fall River, Massachusetts, hosted by the Creative Arts Network, Inc., (CAN) an organization in the greater Fall River area. CAN has been in existence for approximately 10 years and is focused on building a stronger arts and cultural community in the South Coast region of Massachusetts. I was asked to speak about the role that the arts play in building local and regional economies. I was pleased to be joined by colleagues from the One South Coast Chamber, President/CEO Mike O'Sullivan and COO Rick Kidder.

In this conversation I reflected on how during my time on the Worcester City Council back in 1999, City Hall leadership came together with a broad array of arts and cultural organizations of various sizes and areas of artistic focus to establish the Worcester Cultural Coalition (WCC). The mission as stated on the WCC's website is "to draw on Worcester's rich and diverse cultural assets to foster economic revitalization, support active, creative engagement for all and promote a strong cultural identity for greater Worcester." The process in establishing the WCC took time and multiple conversations to make sure that both the well-established arts and cultural institutions, as well as smaller and/or start-ups had a seat and voice with the WCC. The city and the organizations all contributed to the funding model and the first Cultural Development Officer, Christine Proffitt was hired. Christine would be followed by Erin Williams and now more recently Fabian Barracks. The WCC has played a key role in making sure that in almost every conversation concerning economic and neighborhood development, there is consideration around arts and culture. This could mean public art, performance venues, annual festivals or events, etc. I shared with the attendees at the CAN conference that the WCC and their members have played an instrumental role in the economic resurgence of Worcester over the past decade-plus and shared some data points and examples in this regard.

A week or so after the Fall River event I read in The Worcester Guardian, a story by reporter Steve Smith on the WCC's recent annual meeting. I was excited to read that the WCC exceeds 80 members and collectively draws 2.7 million visitors annually to Worcester. This is proof positive that the collaboration and commitment that began 24 years ago was well worth the effort and motivation to do more.

THE WORCESTER GUARDIAN

Lastly, the chamber recently helped launch Worcester's newest local news organization, the Worcester Guardian. The Guardian is a free, nonprofit, independent news organization, which is part of a growing national movement where communities have come together to fill news voids that have been created throughout the United States because of dramatic cuts and consolidations in the newspaper industry. We have seen how this trend has negatively impacted Worcester and Central Massachusetts over the past decade. The Guardian's mission 'is to produce everyday stories that bind a community, build trust and accountability in institutions and government, celebrate diversity, identify challenges and opportunities, and harness the communities ability to address them.' The Guardian has established a founding board chaired by Tim Loew.

ARTS, PG12

Young Professionals Night Out | TBD

Tuesday January 23, 2024

5:00pm-7:00pm

Seminar Series: SBA 504 Loan | Chamber Offices

Tuesday February 13, 2024

9:00am-10:00am

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

Stay up to date on all of the
2024 Chamber Events!



Worcester Needs to Continue to be Competitive



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

Since January of this year, when the Healy-Driscoll administration took over the reins in the State House as the first female Governor and Lt. Governor ticket; the word that has continually been used by the administration is “competitiveness”. Competitiveness has been a consistent

theme throughout Healey's first year on the job as she tours the Commonwealth. It has dominated the conversations with leaders not only in government but with leaders in business, development, and workforce. While much of the conversation at the state level has been centered around being competitive across New England and the country, competitiveness hits home right here at the municipal level in Worcester with neighboring cities and towns as well.

In Worcester, competitiveness is the combination of the cost of doing business and the continuous hardships and restrictive policies placed on companies that want to invest in housing and workforce here in the city. Instead of making it harder to do business in Worcester, the city administration and City Council should be focused on recruiting, retaining, developing, and diversifying our talent pool and pipeline to meet the needs of our current and future economy.

In Worcester, we are fortunate to have a diverse economy in that we do not wholly rely on just one sector to be our economic engine. We have some of the best hospitals and physicians in the country, we have a robust set of financial institutions that can meet the varying needs of businesses and residents, we have eight higher education institutions that employ thousands of people in Worcester proper alone, and manufacturing continues to play a vital role in the workforce in traditional manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, and biomanufacturing.

While the groundwork has been laid to make Worcester the most competitive gateway city in the Commonwealth; unfortunately, recent city council votes and the implementation of restrictive policies threaten the future of Worcester's business community and its economic well-being.

WORCESTER DUAL TAX RATE

The discussion of moving to narrow the dual tax rates is nothing new. It has been discussed since the early 2000s. In fact, for a moment in time when Worcester began its “renaissance”, city councilors continually voted to narrow the tax rate between the businesses and the residents in order to attract new businesses into the area creating new jobs and career ladders for residents.

Unfortunately, over the past seven years, the Worcester City Council has voted to widen the tax gap, shifting more of the financial burden onto the commercial property owners causing a lot of concern amongst the business community. Worcester continues to have one of the highest commercial tax rates in the Commonwealth coming in at the 7th highest commercial/industrial tax rate in Massachusetts.

What needs to be communicated to our decision-makers is that commercial property owners, including businesses, bear a greater share of the local tax burden due to the higher tax rate. This can lead to increased operating costs, making it more challenging for businesses to remain competitive and profitable. Higher tax rates on commercial properties can deter businesses from investing in or expanding their operations within the city and slow economic growth and development. High commercial property taxes make Worcester less attractive to potential new businesses and industries looking to establish themselves in the city.

Small businesses in particular may find it challenging to absorb the additional tax burden, as they often operate with smaller profit margins. This can lead to financial strain or reduced competitiveness. The majority of these small businesses have triple net leases which makes it very difficult to be successful in a high commercial tax city like Worcester. The triple net lease is a lease agreement structure where the tenant pays, on top of their monthly rent, all of the operating expenses for the property. Therefore, they handle building insurance, property insurance, and real estate taxes and deal with the maintenance costs for the property. In essence, businesses located in areas with dual tax rates may be at a disadvantage when competing with companies in neighboring areas with more favorable tax structures.

While the chamber in conjunction with the Worcester Business Development Corporation, Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives, and the City of Worcester continuously try to recruit new businesses while retaining and incubating our current businesses; having the 7th highest commercial tax rate is clearly a deterrent for companies who want to do business in Worcester. We hear

from some city councilors that it is not fair to compare Worcester to neighboring towns because Worcester is a “gateway city” and towns like Shrewsbury are not. Well, if we want to compare apples to apples, let's use the other two “gateway cities” in central Massachusetts: Leominster and Fitchburg. Both of those cities have single tax rates and in fact, Fitchburg, recently a dual tax community, aggressively voted to narrow the tax gap in five years rather than the original 10-year plan. That leaves Worcester as one of three communities in Central Massachusetts with a dual tax rate along with Auburn who continually votes to narrow the tax gap and Clinton who also is aggressively moving to a single tax rate.

A few months ago, the CVS located downtown on Front Street announced that they would be closing that location on November 1. There is no clear reason why CVS decided to close this location that serviced the thousands of residents that live in the core downtown area other than stating: “Maintaining access to pharmacy services in the communities we serve is an important factor we consider when making store closure decisions...Other factors include local market dynamics, population shifts, a community's store density, and ensuring there are other geographic access points to meet the needs of the community.”

Since that time, residents as well as candidates for local offices have voiced their displeasure about not having a market or store downtown aiding consumers who work and live near city hall. While the chamber believes downtown needs a market, attracting potential suitors has been difficult mainly due to the dual tax system that burdens businesses in Worcester. Just observing from the timeline of when this CVS was opened until when it closed seems to mirror the increase in commercial taxes through the City Council's tax classification vote.

In 2005 when the CVS opened downtown, the commercial tax rate was \$27.60 per \$1000 of the assessed value. Now in 2023, the commercial tax rate

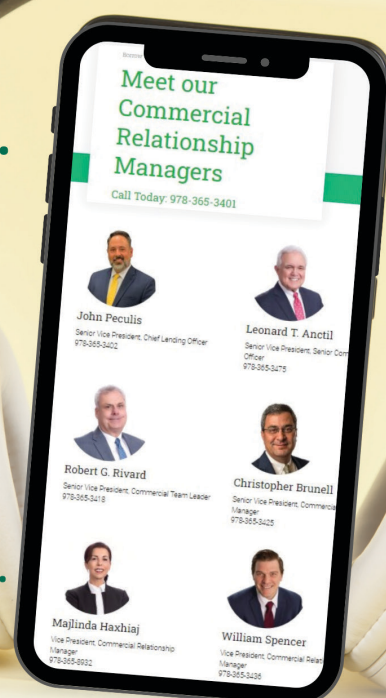
WORCESTER, P.12

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Augmented Reality in the Mythic Realm: Worcester Based Petricore is on the Cutting-edge of Gaming

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CHAMBER CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER – Christina Andriano smacked her pickaxe to dislodge minerals on a rock cluster when suddenly she was attacked.

“I’m fighting skeletons,” she said as she swung her arms with plastic controllers in her hand and a head set over her eyes. She is the lead graphic artist and project manager for Petricore, a Worcester-based gaming development company and StartUp Worcester Alum. Andriano was testing new virtual reality (VR) equipment from Meta called the Quest 3. “I’m making sure our game works on the new hardware,” she said.

Petricore’s new Mixed Reality (MR) game is called Mythic Realm. The company was preparing the game for a demo launch. “The game does work on the Quest 2 and Quest Pro. We just want to make sure it’s running efficiently on the Quest 3,” she said.

Petricore’s Mythic Realms is an action Role Player Game (RPG) that transforms a player’s room into a dungeon. In order to rebuild their fallen kingdom, players must gather materials and battle enemies as the venture through the game. Ryan Canuel, Petricore’s chief executive officer, said the presentation of the game last month was successful. “We’re really happy with the demo launch,” he said. “We’ve had a pretty smooth release so far. We’re not seeing any crashes coming in and those are really the worst ones you want to avoid, so, we’re happy about that.”

Mythic Realm on the Quest 3 also received positive reviews from gaming critics. Charlie Fink from Forbes.com gave it a glowing writeup. “I’m impressed by the pass through and other upgrades like room scanning,” he said on the Forbes website following the demo. “The interface is much better, too. The first thing you see when you boot it up is the physical room you are in, enabled by the color pass-through cameras. Your spawn point is anywhere in the physical world, wherever you are. The digital display sits on top of reality just like it sat on top of the cartoon surroundings that were the spawn point for the Quest 2. The color pass through cameras are so good I could read email on my iPhone wearing the headset. This feels much more natural.”

Henry Stockdale from Uploadvr.com said “Mythic Realms offers a blended experience that switches between MR and VR gameplay. After encountering a mysterious object that causes a transformation, you’re soon transported to a parallel world that turns your rooms into dungeons with mixed reality and monster fights.”

Canuel said Mythic Realm continues to be in active development with the full game set for release in late 2024. “We’re still reviewing the data coming in from our analytics, but we’re able to get a better focus on what parts of the game we need to improve,” he said following the demo. “It’s mainly focused around the F-T-U-E or First Time User Experience, which is basically how seamless it is for a player when they first open your game to start having fun. We see a few small drop-off points we want to improve and launching this demo helped us see that.”

Petricore is on the cutting-edge of MR technology. “Mixed reality is not really well known, yet,” Adriano said. “It’s a proven concept in a lot of ways. Usually, you have VR where you’re fully submerged in the digital space or just console games or mobile games ... Not everyone gets it, yet. So, we’re kind of the first ones just touching our toes in that pool and we’re like, ok, we want to try it. It’s a little spooky, but we’re excited to actually get it out because we just want to see what it does.”

After starting Petricore in 2015 as Becker College students, the company’s success has been on an upward trajectory ever since. Along with Meta, Petricore has worked with many high-profile clients, such as Ellen DeGeneres, Burger King, Animal Planet, Bose, Mitsubishi, Star Trek, and Snap Inc.

Canuel credits StartUp Worcester, sponsored by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, as a major catalyst to the company’s initial success. The goal of StartUp Worcester is to help nurture new businesses by Worcester area college graduates by encouraging them to grow their business within the city where they have access to everything they need to succeed. “Access to a well-educated and trained workforce always ranks near the top of the list when companies are deciding where to locate and grow,” Timothy Murray, president and CEO of the Chamber, said about the program at its inception. “We want to retain these bright young entrepreneurs and encourage them to grow their business here – where they have access to everything they need to succeed.”



Above: Petricore CEO Ryan Canuel at his new office at the Worcester Business Center on Millbrook Street. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba

During Petricore’s first six years, they were involved with programming several successful games, including Play to Win Casino, Cyberchase Fractions Quest, a math game based on the hit PBS show of the same name where players travel across worlds featured in the television show by solving various math problems; and an interactive Star Trek Interactive Tribble toy, where users can name the tribble, change its moods and sounds, and interact with other tribbles.

Since 2021, Petricore has found its niche with augmented reality (AR) which has allowed the company to continue to grow. “The technology itself has been around for a long time, but its applications in gaming have been pretty limited,” Canuel said. “The thing that brought it to the forefront was Pokémon Go, which you could see the Pokémon in the real world. This got people interested in AR gaming. Since we were doing it for client projects, we started looking at it for our own games, as well.”

Canuel said they had to figure how to bring this AR technology to more people in their games. “Not a lot of people were doing it yet, but it has a lot of potential,” he said “We had to ask ourselves, could we do games in this space? We started doing an AR game with Snap Chat called Lens Detective, an augmented reality detective game where we would map out your room and place the crime scene elements within your room. You walk around the room with your phone to try to find clues in order to solve the case in a certain amount of time.”

The success of Lens Detective was immediate with about 200,000 people playing the game. “While doing that kind of work, we just found the niche of doing augmented reality development was something that allowed us to grow,” Canuel said. This work led to connections with Xerox and Meta, as well as other companies in that space.

Petricore also went from employing five people in a small workspace at an old Becker College building in Worcester six years ago to ten employees and a large office space in the Worcester Business Center on Millbrook Street now. “AR has allowed us to grow the team further,” Canuel said. It’s when we started to focus on that (AR) niche. There wasn’t as much competition. There was interesting excitement from projects like that. We just focused in on that more.”

Canuel also offered advice for any new StartUp Worcester cohorts. “Take advantage of everything offered,” he said. “Show up to things, and follow-up with the people you meet during it (and) add them on LinkedIn.”

Development of AR technology is still quite early which does create some obstacles for Petricore, Canuel said. “Honestly, the biggest challenge is that there is a limited number of partners that will fund efforts in that space right now,” he said.

However, that won’t deter the progress of Petricore as they continue to expand their footprint in the AR space. Sadly, success with the company does not necessarily translate into defeating oncoming skeletons. Adriano quickly switched from holding a pickaxe to wielding a sword. Her controllers continued to shutter and shake as she waved her arms, but it was too late. “The skeletons shot me,” she said with a smile. “I died. I have a bunch of arrows sticking out of me. But the game looks good, though.”

To learn more about Petricore and their games, visit their website at petri-coregames.com, or their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PetricoreInc.

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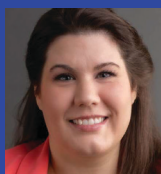
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Introducing the Worcester Guardian

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has a history of spinning off very successful stand-alone entities – the United Way of Central Massachusetts, Worcester Business Development Corporation and Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives to name a few.

You can soon add the Worcester Guardian to that list.

In September, the chamber announced that it had committed \$50,000 to establish the Worcester Guardian, an independent, free, nonprofit digital news organization.

A white paper accompanying the press release detailed the decline in local news and Timothy P. Murray, the chamber's president and CEO, voiced his concern over corporate cutbacks at the Telegram & Gazette.

Since the announcement, Murray and the chamber have turned the Worcester Guardian over to Dave Nordman, the former Telegram & Gazette executive editor and a media consultant, and a founding board of directors.

In addition to Murray, the board includes Timothy M. Loew, John W. Rodriguez, Giovanni S. Blue, Christina M. Andreoli, Joseph W. Kahora, Carl A. Herrin, Mary Beth Burke and Emily P. Trevallion.

Loew, co-founder and executive director of the Massachusetts Digital Games Institute, was named the board chair.

The board will oversee the Guardian's operations by providing financial oversight, ensuring adequate resources, enhancing the organization's public standing, and recruiting new board members.

The news will be overseen by Nordman and Charlene Arsenault, an award-winning journalist with nearly 30 years of experience, who was brought on board as the first editor.

Arsenault was previously the arts and entertainment editor at Worcester Magazine for 15 years. She was also a writer and editor for AOL/Patch Media, and a freelance social media manager and writer for several area newspapers, magazines and websites.

Under the leadership of Nordman and Arsenault, the Guardian has quickly

gone from an idea to a place where the city turns for timely, high-quality journalism.

Here are some early highlights:

The Guardian applied for membership in the Institute for Nonprofit News and adopted the INN's independence, conflict of interest and donor transparency policies.

There have been over 45,000 visits to the Guardian's website and more than 7,000 subscribers are receiving free daily email newsletters. Stories are also being posted to the Guardian's social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram and LinkedIn) accounts where they are being shared by readers.

Kiernan Dunlop joined the Guardian from Mass Live's Worcester newsroom and has produced several exclusive stories, including a one-on-one with Paul Saucier, the city's interim police chief.

Dunlop's interview with Jennifer Gaskin, organizer of the Worcester Caribbean American Carnival is also a must-read. Gaskin is worried people will lump her event with violence and told Dunlop that the real issue is gun violence in America.

Dunlop has also been a regular at municipal meetings, press conferences and cultural events.

Bill Doyle and Bill Ballou, longtime T&G sports writers, are also contributing regular content to the Guardian, as well as former T&G staffers Kim Ring and Sandy Quadros Bowles..

Doyle talked to Holy Cross and Celtics legend Bob Cousy. At age 95, Cousy is still a quick wit 60 years after his retirement. Ballou has contributed regular pro sports coverage, while also authoring a profile of Doherty High football coach Sean Mulcahy.

Other familiar bylines in the Guardian have included Rod Lee, Christine Quirk and Steve Smith to name a few. Lee's coverage of the municipal election debates complimented Arsenault's candidate profiles.

2nd Annual Paragus Firehouse Cook Off Raises \$20K For The WFD6K Charities

On Thursday, September 21, Polar Park hosted the 2nd Annual Paragus Firehouse Cook Off, a fundraiser event that generated \$20,000 for the WFD6K—a \$7,000 increase over last year's donation.

Firehouses from around the city created dishes that were judged by Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President Tim Murray, Niche Hospitality President Mike Covino, Melanie Bonsu of Saint-Gobain, and 100.1 The Pike host Mike Hsu. The event was hosted by Mike Hsu and Radio Worcester's Hank Stolz.

It was a big night for tacos. The Judge's Prize went to the fish tacos, created by the Franklin St. Firehouse Group 3. Grove St. Firehouse Group 4 took home the People's Choice Prize with their chicken tacos with pineapple salsa. Other firehouse dishes in the competition included loaded tostones, lobster rolls, lobster mac and cheese, pulled pork, eggplant parmesan, and rescue roast.

Event creator and host Paragus I.T. is an employee-owned company and one of the fastest-growing I.T. firms in the region. In 2021, they expanded into Worcester from their base in western Massachusetts and created the Firehouse Cook Off as a unique way to introduce themselves to the local community and support a great cause that is near and dear to everyone in Worcester.

"As we hoped, this year's Cook Off was even bigger and better," says Paragus CEO Delcie Bean. "A big thank you to the sponsors and judges, the Polar Park staff, and especially to the firefighters and their families and all the attendees who came out to support them. It was a great feeling to give that check to the WFD6k."

In addition to Paragus, several prominent businesses came aboard as sponsors, including Datto, Keches Law Group, SentinelOne, Fontaine Brothers,

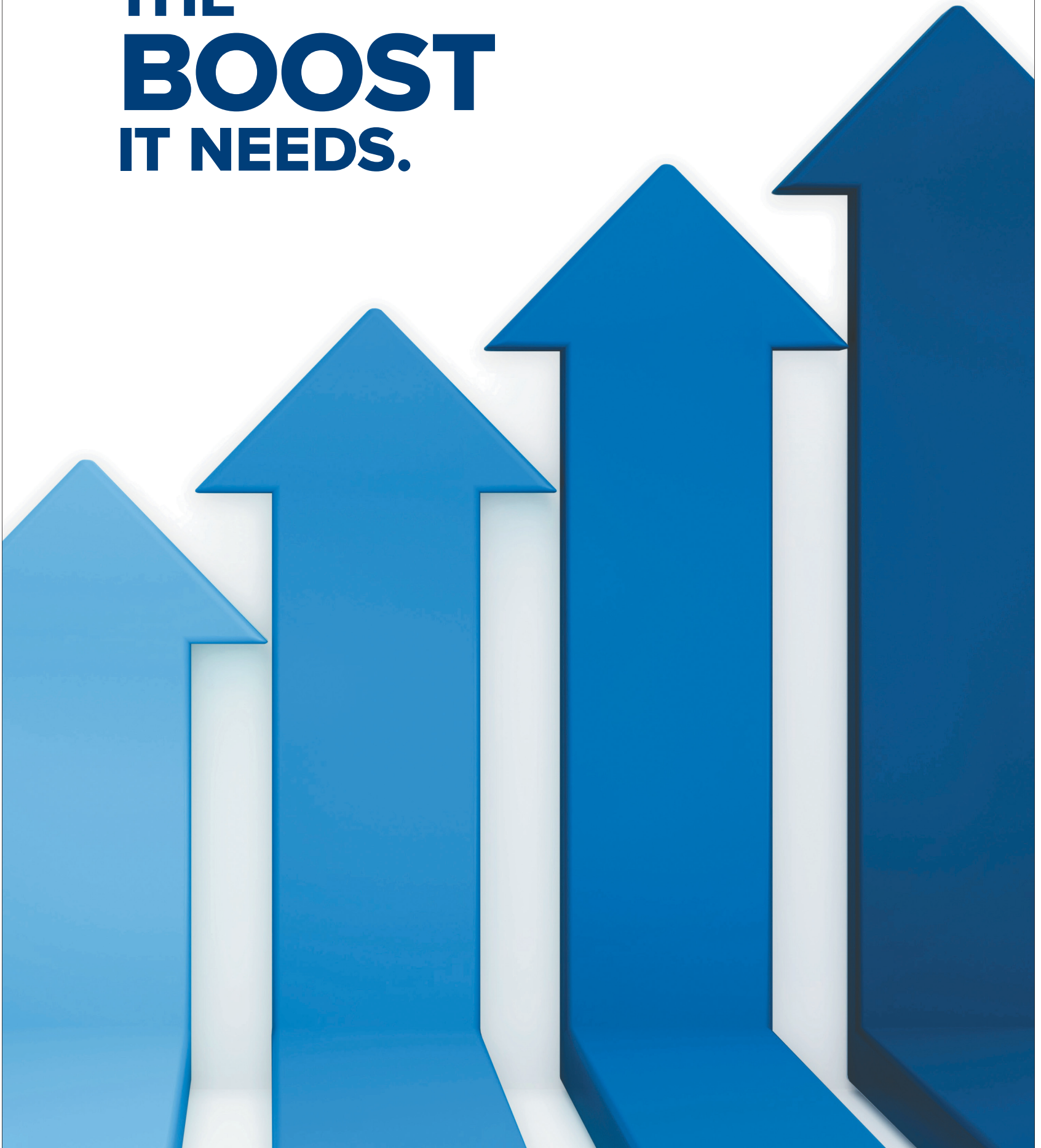
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Niche Hospitality Group, LEI, Coghlin Companies, Country Bank, Fidelity Bank, Synergy Corp, Mirick O'Connell, UMass Memorial, O'Connor Maloney, Wolf & Company, Anna Maria College, and Webster Five. Harpoon Brewery and Polar Beverages provided complimentary tastings and Table Talk donated pies for all attendees.



Photo and Article Courtesy of Paragus I.T.

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SOLVUS, CONTINUED

www.largescaleadditiveteam.com), at the DCU Center in Worcester. Researchers and additive manufacturers from more than 10 countries attend to discuss and demonstrate innovations in additive manufacturing. Because of Solvus, Worcester has become a hub for the international exchange of ideas in advanced and additive manufacturing.

Solvus Global truly lives up to the “Global” in its name. They are focused on fostering a strong

local ecosystem for advanced manufacturing, while working with international organizations and companies to improve the overall sustainability of manufacturing worldwide.

“Assembling a team of over 75 employees composed of local talent right here in Central Massachusetts coupled with folks from around the country has been an achievement in itself,” noted Birt. “Surviving and even thriving through COVID-19 wasn’t easy, but as we look to the next chapter of growth for Solvus and its model, we’re incredibly excited to continue partnering with our collaborators in industry, academia, and government to focus on helping people, innovating technology, and supporting growth of our communities to impact the world around us for the better.”

*Below: Left to right:
Aaron Birt, Diran Apelian,
Sean Kelly
Submitted photo, Solvus
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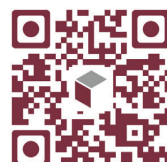
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WORCESTER , CONTINUED

WORCESTER	\$ 14.34	\$ 31.26					
Town	Residential per \$1000	Commercial per \$1000	Property	Assessment	Taxes	Taxes if in Worcester	Cost Savings per year
Oxford	\$13.64	\$13.64	Market Basket 95 Sutton Ave	\$12,261,700.00	\$167,249.59	\$383,300.74	\$216,051.15
Shrewsbury	\$13.12	\$13.12	Market Basket 200 Hartford Turnpike	\$12,503,900.00	\$164,051.17	\$390,871.91	\$226,820.75
Northborough	\$14.79	\$14.79	Wegmans 9102 Shops Way	\$19,552,200.00	\$289,177.04	\$611,201.77	\$322,024.73

is \$31.26 per \$1000 of the assessed value. While there were strides to narrow the gap, over the last seven years the city council voted to raise the commercial tax rate. While some city councilors state that they are pro-business and more specifically pro-small business, their votes clearly state otherwise. Last year in particular the majority of the city council voted for the lowest residential rate giving the businesses the highest available commercial rate. Moreover, this year being an election year, candidates for city council ran on the lowest residential rate platform for their campaign making it clear that the business community is not a priority for them.

In the best interest of the business community, the residents who live in downtown Worcester and the folks who work in the downtown area; finding a market that meets the needs will be a priority of the Chamber as we have been doing so for the past decade. Unfortunately, the commercial tax rate is a real hindrance as we see neighboring communities continuously attracting companies such as Market Basket, Wegmans and Whole Foods to their cities or towns. The most glaring reason is the difference in the amount of taxes they spend there compared to what they would spend in Worcester.

OTHER RESTRICTIVE POLICIES

While the city’s dual tax rate remains a critical problem in attracting and retaining businesses in the City, the City of Worcester has also adopted new policies that will make it difficult to do business in Worcester.

On November 8, 2022, the voters of the City of Worcester approved the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Residence voted to adopt a 1.5% surcharge on both our residential and commercial properties. While the Chamber agreed with the initiatives that the proposed ballot question would potentially help, this was not the time to add new property taxes to our residents and business owners. Since July of this year, residents and businesses are now paying an additional tax on their property because of the CPA.

On April 11, 2023, the Worcester City Council voted to implement Inclusionary zoning requiring that a minimum percentage of new housing units within private development projects be affordable for low- to moderate-income households. That means that any new housing development in the city will be required to have a percentage of affordable housing attached to it. While the Chamber agrees that we need more affordable housing, such a restrictive policy may deter developers from building any more housing in Worcester. In fact, since its implementation, the city has only had one application for housing through the planning board. That one application was the Worcester Housing Authority (Public Housing) to redevelop the apartments at Lakeside. Again, this affects our workforce in the trades, dollars in tax revenue and continued growth of the city.

On September 26, 2023, the Worcester City Council voted to adopt the new Specialized Stretch Code for building construction. While the Chamber supports going green and reducing our carbon footprint, we had hoped that the city council would have waited to implement it on January 1, 2025 to give the city administration, developers, property owners, and residents the time necessary to prepare. In fact, the Department of Energy Resources already advises that communities take 6-11 months after a vote of approval by a city council to work with the state on the process and prepare for the effective date.

Unfortunately, the City Council voted the more restrictive timeline of July 2024 making it very difficult for developers to prepare. Couple these three new restrictive policies with the 7th highest commercial tax rate and we may be in jeopardy of losing developers and companies to other towns or gateway cities.

I will leave you with this final thought: In 1984 when the dual tax rate was implemented in Worcester, 35.42% of the tax base came from the commercial/ industrial business community. As of the end of 2022, only 22.33% of the taxes came from the commercial/industrial business community; meaning we have less businesses now than we did in 1984. While businesses may not make big spectacles about leaving the city for a neighboring community, they are certainly voting with their feet. It doesn’t feel like we are trying to be competitive.

ARTS , CONTINUED

To date, The Guardian has generated over 100 news articles that are free online or via email to the public, on local issues written by a team of local correspondents guided by editor Charlene Arsenault and consultant David Nordman, the former executive editor of the Worcester Telegram. The Chamber’s role has been to provide initial organizational support and financial seed money to help launch The Guardian. Paperwork has been filed to establish The Guardian as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and founding Board members have been named. Also, a membership application has been submitted to the Institute for Non-Profit News. Throughout its nearly 150-year history, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has helped partner with businesses and organizations to launch organizations or initiatives to help meet community needs. This tradition began with the launch of the United Way over 100 years ago. To learn more or sign up by email go to TheWorcesterGuardian.org.



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



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Jennifer Adams, Director of Marketing & BD
Email: jennifer@dasullivan.com



Food Hub Profile: Food Hub Now Providing Food Service at QCC

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

The Worcester Regional Food Hub is now the official food services provider of Quinsigamond Community College.

In a new and exciting partnership, the Food Hub's vendors are now serving meals out of QCC's cafeteria. Entrepreneurs like Bogocado, Pinch of Africa, Joey D's Wings and Things, and Big Belly BBQ who operate out of the Food Hub's shared kitchen are now selling their meals to students, faculty, and administrators. Many of the entrepreneurs also have a connection to QCC, either as students, alumni, or family of students.

"This gives us a chance to introduce the students to more cultural meals and local foods that some of them are more familiar with," said Rob Morris, Food Entrepreneurship Manager at the Food Hub. "It's a win-win where we are giving our entrepreneurs experience with food service and giving them revenue, while also providing a needed service to the community college."

Morris also runs the salad bar during lunch, offering healthy alternatives for students using locally-sourced food like Little Leaf lettuce, berries from Ward's Berry Farm, and cheese from Smith's Country Cheese. For the entrepreneurs' part, they are getting creative with meals that students will like. Pinch of Africa, whose founder is also a current QCC student, is a West African cuisine caterer

FOOD HUB , P15

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QUESTIONS with

Jon Weaver,

President and CEO, Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives (MBI)

1. Can you explain in a nutshell what is the mission of Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives and why you needed to expand your headquarters at 17 Briden Street with your new Pilot Biomanufacturing Center?

MBI's mission is to be a partner for fostering innovation in the life sciences. We achieve this by incubating early-stage biotech companies from concept to clinical trials, growing the life sciences workforce, and expanding the biocluster in Central Massachusetts with a particular focus on growing biomanufacturing. In 2020, we believed in the strength of the biocluster and more than doubled the size of our incubator with our StartUp & ScaleUp projects at our 17 Briden Street location. This included the creation of 28 new lab spaces which were fully occupied within 10 months and have already served over 30 companies that have raised over \$280 million and created more than 130 jobs. The expansion allowed us to extend how long we supported early-stage startups because it allowed us to create space that grows incrementally in the same way companies do. Our StartUp Centers are smaller lab spaces where companies are born. Our ScaleUp Center is a slightly larger space where companies can grow. With our focus on positioning Worcester as a global hub for biomanufacturing, we decided to extend the life cycle of early-stage companies with our Pilot Scale Biomanufacturing Center. This space allows companies to begin the transition to manufacturing and clinical trials and completes our goal of supporting companies from "Concept to Clinical Trials".

2. What are the most important factors in whether a life sciences startup decides to stay in the Worcester area after graduating MBI?

A key factor to our success has been the incredible talent pool in Central Massachusetts. Worcester County was recently ranked as a top 15 life sciences talent cluster independent of Boston/ Cambridge (who ranked #1). Talent is the jet fuel that the bio industry runs on and with this concentration of talent, a vibrant urban environment, proximity to partners in Boston/ Cambridge, and strong local academic partners, Worcester has a clear value proposition for the industry. These factors have enabled us to support over 30 companies at our new facility that employ over 130 local residents and have raised over \$280M in private financing. The only missing ingredient is space for these companies to graduate and stay here. Based on our collective efforts, 100% of the available biotech space in the City is currently full and we desperately need more space for the industry to continue to expand.

3. What key strengths does Worcester and Central Massachusetts have when it comes to recruiting new life sciences companies like WuXi Biologics, and retaining existing companies like AbbVie?

Talent is key. As the R&D companies from Worcester to Cambridge enter clinical trials, they need to start producing their products in larger quantities on their pathway to patients. These manufacturing companies and contract manufacturers need access to talent, but at a lower price point than what they get in Boston/Cambridge while still maintaining proximity to their R&D operations in Boston.

The CBRE study that named Worcester a top 15 life sciences talent cluster also indicated that Worcester had "some of the strongest concentrations of life sciences researchers in the US" so we are perfectly positioned to complement the R&D side of the industry by attracting the biomanufacturing industry. Biomanufacturing is the economy of the next century and we're focused on making the region globally competitive.

Worcester also has available, pad-ready sites like the Reactory and a group of dedicated economic development and academic partners focused on supporting their success. Worcester, and all of Central Massachusetts, offers these companies the components they need to successfully bring their products to patients.

4. How does MBI play a role in economic development in the region beyond incubating companies?

MBI's role in economic development is about thought leadership and partnership. An example of this was the development of the Reactory, Worcester's Biomanufacturing Park. The project was inspired by a white paper MBI presented at



Below: MBI Ribbon Cutting

a biomanufacturing summit it hosted in 2015. That thought leadership led to co-chairing a 25-member stakeholder group called the Worcester Biomanufacturing Initiative and ultimately the transfer of the land to our partners at the WBDC. After their incredible efforts, and the support of our partners on the Economic Development Coordinating Council, the Reactory is open for business. WuXi Biologics has started construction and doubled the size of their project and Galaxy Life Sciences recently went to Planning Board to expand their first project. To advance this initiative further, MBI is now partnering with MassHIRE on the Biomanufacturing Workforce Initiative. This group brings together industry and academic partners to identify workforce gaps and then informs our Workforce Challenge grants that support new certificate programs that connect new populations into the industry. One example is an incredible biomanufacturing technician apprenticeship program at MassBIOEd. This program trains non-scientists for transformational careers in biomanufacturing. We've been thrilled to support the program's Worcester cohort run out of the Biomanufacturing Education Training Center at WPI.

5. What is your vision for MBI and the Central Massachusetts life sciences cluster in the coming 5-10 years?

Our vision is for Central Massachusetts to be a global leader in biomanufacturing. We have a unique value proposition for securing this industry and a group of partners dedicated to making it happen. This goal is especially important because the future of manufacturing is through biology, not just therapeutics. As natural resources become more limited, biology offers a sustainable and scalable option for manufacturing familiar products such as bio-foods, bio-plastics, cellular agriculture, and other bio-materials. One of the companies in our incubator, SpadXTech, is developing lab grown leathers and other materials. As this transition occurs, we believe Worcester is already well-positioned to be globally competitive to lead this industry for the next century.

FOOD HUB , CONTINUED

that is testing out "jollof-ritos" or burritos made with jollof rice, a staple in Ghana. Bobocada, a Venezuelan caterer, is testing out breakfast "arepas", or cornmeal pockets typically filled with meats and cheese.

Quinsigamond Community College President Luis Pedraja has been highly supportive of the food service arrangement with the Food Hub. "The purpose of community colleges is to provide access to affordable and high-quality higher education to the communities that it serves," he said. "In addition, we provide students with support services, many resulting from community partnerships. Partnering with the Worcester Regional Food Hub not only supports local entrepreneurs - many of whom are QCC alumni - but also provides our students with culturally-rich food options."

Food service is being provided Monday through Thursday, serving between 90 and 100 students daily. At QCC's downtown campus for nursing students, the Food Hub is also working with food trucks like Caribbean Press to have them there during lunch once or twice a week.

"The Food Hub continues to expand its presence in the region through managed shared kitchens just like this one, and we hope that this is just the beginning of a fruitful partnership with QCC," said Shon Rainford, Director of the Food Hub. "We are all about creating opportunity for local people, and so is QCC. There is a lot we can work together on."

Worcester Red Sox Mourn the Death of Tim Wakefield

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER – Red Sox nation lost a legend last month. The death of revered knuckleballer Tim Wakefield was felt throughout professional baseball, including at Polar Park.

Larry Lucchino, the Chairman and Principal Owner of the Worcester Red Sox, said the passing of Wakefield is a tremendous loss to both baseball and the entire community. He also said Wakefield's death conjures deep emotional pain.

"My sentiments are of sadness, for this great and good man was taken far too soon, but they are also of anger, as they are whenever an innocent person is struck by a form of cancer," Lucchino said. "We have come so very far in the treatment of cancers, and this crushing news brings into stark relief—yet again—that we have miles to go."

Wakefield made his knuckleball dance and dive at Major League batters for 19 years, seventeen in a Red Sox uniform, on his way to 200 career wins. He is ranked third on the Red Sox all time wins list with 186, behind only Roger Clemens and Cy Young who are tied for first (192). He is ranked second on the team's all-time strikeout list with 2,046 behind Clemens (2,590) and ahead of hall of famer Pedro Martinez (1,683). He also helped the Red Sox win two World Series rings and he was selected to the 2009 All-Star team.

As good as he played on the field, Wakefield's impact off the field was greater. He was deeply involved in philanthropy, earning eight Roberto Clemente Award nominations and winning the award in 2010. This honor is given annually to the Major League player who best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and the individual's contribution to his team as voted by fans and members of the media. He worked with the Franciscan Hospital for Children in Boston, New England's Pitching in for Kids organization, the Space Coast Early Intervention Center, the Touch 'Em All Foundation founded by Garth Brooks, and served as the Red Sox's first Jimmy Fund co-captain, spending numerous hours supporting cancer patients.

"The Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute have truly lost a champion,"



Above: Bobby Dalbec tied for the International League lead with 33 home runs. Photo Courtesy of the WooSox.



Lucchino said. "Tim's relentless dedication to our pediatric and adult patients and their families was immeasurable. He was an advocate for the mission to defy cancer on and off the field through fundraising, visiting patients, and bringing awareness to this horrific disease. He was a hero ... The entire Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund community mourn his loss ... His visits to Dana-Farber touched so many lives—patients, parents, nurses, physicians, technicians. He turned so many daunting days into bright ones with fond memories."

Wakefield's road to Red Sox glory as a knuckleball pitcher actually began as an infielder. In college, he played first base for the Florida Tech Panthers where he set a team record for home runs and was named

team MVP. The Pittsburgh Pirates drafted him as a position player. However, after struggling to hit consistently in the minors, he practiced throwing the knuckleball as a way to stay on the field. He eventually mastered the pitch to become a full-time pitcher. He made his major league debut in 1992 going 8-1 in 13 starts and posted a 2.15 ERA. He also went 2-0 in the NLCS against the Atlanta Braves during his rookie year. However, after struggling with a 6-11 record and 5.61 ERA the following season, he was released by the Pirates on April 20, 1995. Boston picked him up six days later and the rest is Red Sox history.

"Tim's contributions to the Red Sox ... are well-documented," Lucchino said. "He was the ultimate humble man and gentle man. His integral role in our World Championships of 2004 and 2007 were exceeded by his contributions to the community in New England and his hometown of Melbourne, Florida. Who knows what future contributions he could have continued to make had we not been robbed of his generosity, and had he not been robbed of the opportunity. For surely, he would have continued to do so. He was a remarkable man ... Our hearts go out to his wife, Stacy, and to his children, Trevor and Brianna. Our community stands ready to embrace them, just as Tim embraced this community."

The Worcester Red Sox held their inaugural Brain Cancer Awareness Day during the 2023 season. Next season, the team will pay tribute to Tim Wakefield on that day and for years to come. "Tim, we will fight for you," said Lucchino.

WooSox Wilyer Abreu Named to 2023 International League All-Star Team

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER – Red Sox outfielder Wilyer Abreu was selected to the Triple-A All-Star team this season as voted by International League managers. The team consists of ten players, four starting pitchers, and two relievers. Abreu, 24, becomes the first WooSox player to be selected to the IL All-Star team.



Abreu played in 86 games for the WooSox this season batting .274 with 22 home runs and 65 RBIs. He finished second on the team in home runs and third in RBIs. He also scored 67 runs, had 59 walks, good for an OPS of .929, and had eight stolen bases in nine attempts. He split time at all three outfield positions playing 35 games in left field, 27 in right, and 15 in center while making only two errors with ten outfield assists. The lefty batter finished the season on a 12-game hit streak from August 8-20 at a .488 clip (20-for-41) with eight homers and 23 RBIs.

Abreu was promoted from Worcester to Boston on August 22 and had two hits in his debut with Boston. He spent the remainder of the season in Boston playing in 28 games batting .316 with six doubles, two homers, 14 RBIs, and three steals.

A native of Maracaibo, Venezuela, Abreu was acquired by Boston from Houston on August 1, 2022 along with infielder Enmanuel Valdez in exchange for catcher Christian Vázquez.

WOOSOX STILL HONOR PAWTUCKET ROOTS

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER – The Woo Sox continued a Rhode Island tradition that dates back 73 years. The team sent two children from the Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket to Games 1 and 2 of the 2023 World Series at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas last month.

Twelve-year-old Leah Torres of Pawtucket and nine-year-old Ayden Carroll of East Providence were the lucky kids sponsored by the WooSox to attend the first two games of the World Series with their chaperones.

"These kids are going to remember this experience for the rest of their lives," said Jim Hoyt, the CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket. "Two lucky kids from our baseball leagues have had this opportunity to attend the World Series every year since 1950. We're grateful that the Worcester Red Sox have continued this tradition, as it is one of our favorites."

"It's hard to believe that this is the 73rd year this World Series trip has taken place," said WooSox Vice Chairman Mike Tamburro, the longtime President of the PawSox. "We had the great pleasure of building on this tradition for decades in Pawtucket, and we're thrilled to be continuing it for the third season in a row here with the WooSox."

The two children were randomly chosen during a Boys and Girls Club outing at Polar Park in September. This year's trip marks the 33rd year that the Red Sox Triple-A franchise has sent two children to the Fall Classic. It all began in 1950 when the New York Football Giants' longtime running back, Hank Soar, became an American League baseball umpire. Soar, who grew up in Pawtucket and graduated from what is now Tolman High School, had

RECORD SETTING SEASON FOR THE WOOSOX

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER - The Woo Sox set multiple records in 2023 at Polar Park. They posted a winning season for the third time in as many years.

While the team won a franchise-high 79 games in 2023, they also set the club record for stolen bases (197), shattering the old mark of 148 set by the PawSox in 1983. David Hamilton also set the record by swiping his 52nd base on September 3, breaking Lee Graham's record of 51 steals in 1983. He finished with 57 thefts prior to his late season call up to Boston. Hamilton also led the International League (IL) in steals while Bobby Dalbec tied for the International League lead with 33 homeruns despite being promoted to Boston for the final week of the season. In addition, WooSox closer A.J. Politi led the IL with 15 Saves. The team also set the team home run record with 215 home runs for the season breaking the 209-mark set in 1996 by the Pawtucket Red Sox.

Second year WooSox manager Chad Tracy was voted "Best Managerial Prospect" by his peers in Baseball America's annual survey. Tracy and the entire coaching staff were involved in a record-breaking 271 player moves this season - the most of any Boston Red Sox Triple-A affiliate ever. The team used 79 different players (33 position players and 46 pitchers) to set a new Red Sox record for players employed in a season. Further, a total of 24 (non-rehabbers) were promoted from Worcester to Boston during the season.

The WooSox finished the summer with 545,231 tickets sold, exceeding the previous totals the last two seasons. "Gratitude is the word of the day," said WooSox President Dr. Charles Steinberg. "We recognize, appreciate, and thank the thousands of moms and dads and children who go out of their way to come from so many neighborhoods in Worcester, and from more than 100 towns in the region. We're keeping track.

Thousands of people from a broad region are coming to Worcester, visiting the Canal District, and discovering the amenities, history, and architecture that our downtown offers. And as we look ahead to next year, even more people will be living in our neighborhood, right across the street, enjoying the surrounding development resulting from this catalyst for redevelopment. It's a good time to live in Worcester."

"We have set the bar high, to be sure," Lucchino said, "And that inspires us to do 'Even More in '24.' We look forward to rising to the challenge."



Above: Bobby Dalbec tied for the International League lead with 33 home runs. Photo Courtesy of the WooSox.

Worcester Railers Name Anthony Repaci Team Captain for the 2023-2024 Season

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER - The Worcester Railers General Manager and Head Coach Jordan Lavallee-Smotherman announced last month that Anthony Repaci will serve as the sixth captain in Worcester Railers history during the 2023-2024 season.

Repaci replaces Bobby Butler, who was captain last season, while Repaci was an alternate captain. Blade Jenkins and Jake Schultz will fill the alternate captains' roles this season. Former Railers captains include Ashton Rome, Mike Cornell, Barry Almeida, Lavallee-Smotherman, and Butler.

During the off-season, Repaci, 28, re-signed with the Railers to play in his third season in Worcester. He was under contract with the American Hockey League's Springfield Thunderbirds for the 2022-23 season and suited up in one game for them, before returning to the Railers to play in 58 games. Repaci led the Railers with 27 goals and was second in assists with 27 for a total of 54 points. At the year-end Worcester Railers Booster Club Awards Banquet, he was recognized as the fan-favorite for the second straight season, team MVP, and recognized as their best offensive player.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to see number eighty-one on the bench again this season," Lavallee-Smotherman said. "He brings offense, a high compete level and a presence on the power play that will play a huge role in our success this upcoming season ... As a third-year player, we expect Anthony to be a supportive teammate, helping to create the best environment for team success."

Repaci played for the Orlando Solar Bears his rookie year in 2020-21 before coming to Worcester for the 2021-22 season. Repaci has played in 120 games for the Railers, scoring 50 goals and 53 assists for 103 points. He is the franchise leader in career power play goals with 15.

"It was a no-brainer for me," Repaci said. "I feel like we've got a lot of unfinished business here in Worcester. We fell short the past couple of years, but we're not going to let that happen again. We want to prove to everybody that we're going to be a contender. It's not going to be easy to come in here and play against us this year. We're going to make a run for it."



Pirates Leaving Worcester

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

PLAINVILLE - The Massachusetts Pirates have decided to leave Worcester and not renew their contract with the DCU Center after months of speculation.

"We know we have been tight lipped on the direction of the organization up to this point, and we wanted to take this time to provide some insight into the future of the Pirates," said Pirates owner and general manager Jawad Yatim during a press conference at Plainridge Park Casino in Plainville, MA last month.

"We have decided to not come to terms on a new agreement with the DCU Center and are relocating the organization," he said. "In saying that I would like to thank the DCU Center, and the city of Worcester for everything they've done for us over the last 6 years. Sandy Dunn and Mayor Petty were great to work with, and Worcester will always have a special place in our hearts."

The Pirates were very successful during their six seasons in Worcester, making the playoffs five times with the United Bowl Championship in 2021 standing as the organization's major highlights.

"We take pride in saying we are from Massachusetts and we are going to continue to work tirelessly to bring another championship home, support our neighbors, and provide family affordable football to the area," he said.

Yatim said the Pirates will be moving closer to the Greater Boston area. "With respect to our future partner, we will keep the name of the venue confidential, however, we are 95 percent complete with the process and the move is imminent."

ROOTS , CONTINUED

discovered umpiring by Central Mass native Connie Mack, the legendary owner and manager of the Philadelphia Athletics. After Soar established the annual ritual of providing tickets to a pair of children, the City of Pawtucket assumed the responsibility before passing the torch to the Pawtucket Red Sox in 1990. Umps Care Charities will also be providing goodie bags for the kids in Soar's name.

"The City of Pawtucket commends the WooSox for keeping this longstanding tradition," said Pawtucket Mayor Donald R. Grebien. "Sending our Pawtucket Boys and Girls Club children to the World Series year after year has proven to be a positive and fulfilling experience."



Above: From left to right: Harris Nachbar of the Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket, Juan Torres, Leah Torres, Ayden Carroll, Ronald Carroll, and Matt Bergeron of the Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket. Photo Courtesy of the WooSox.

My Leadership Worcester Experience

by **JOEL WALLEN**, ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PERNET FAMILY HEALTH SERVICE



After living in Chicago for 15 years, my wife Jackie and I made the decision to move to Worcester “sight unseen.” We joke that the only time we had been to Worcester prior to moving here was a quick stop at the Starbucks over by St. Vincent’s. In large part, we made the decision to move so that we could raise our boys closer to extended family. June 2021, I started work at Pernet Family Health Service as the Associate Executive Director. In order to get a “lay of the land”

I intentionally spent the first few months meeting with our Board of Directors and other Worcester area, non-profit and community leaders. A repeated theme I heard in these one-on-one meetings was “you got to apply for Leadership Worcester” and when the application opened, I did so immediately.

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.

I distinctly remember my excitement when I received the acceptance email. When our cohort met for the first time, I immediately noticed the diversity (race,

gender identity, professional background, etc.) of the class. But as we began talking about our professional and personal background, it quickly became evident that we all shared a passion for the City of Worcester and were eager to see it continue to become a thriving and equitable city for all. Over the next year, we gathered monthly for “deep dives” into a variety of community topics.

In October, as part of the public health theme, we started early morning at SMOC on Queen Street to better understand the challenges of the unhoused, meet with members of the City’s Quality of Life Team, and hear from individuals staying at SMOC about their lived experience. Following that, we spent the day with the City of Worcester Commissioner of Public Health, Mattie Castile, discussing various public health issues. We also toured the Worcester County House of Corrections and heard from the founder of LIFT (Living in Freedom Together).

Each month we saw the City through a different focal lens including public health, education, and politics. One month, we spent the afternoon learning about economic development and were able to participate in a behind-the-scenes tour of the new Table Talk Pies’ facility. I got some “cool dad points” with my 8 and 10 year old sons for bringing home a pie for them fresh off the baking racks. During another session we focused on green space and water ways, we toured various parks and lakes in the City and learned about the efforts underway to preserve green space, ensure clean drinking water, and continue to invest in improving public parks. We also went on a tour of the municipal solar farm and we learned the backstory of how it was built on top of the old landfill. During

LEADERSHIP, P20

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Upcoming Affiliate Chamber Events

Auburn

auburnchamberma.org

Annual Chamber Jingle and Mingle

December 6 @ 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Chuck's Steak House
10 Prospect St., Auburn, MA, United

Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce

blackstonevalley.org

Jingle, Mingle, and Stroll

December 6 @ 5:30pm-7:30pm
Vaillancourt Folk Art
Manchaug Mills, 9 Main Street, Sutton, MA

2024 Home and Community Expo

March 16 @ 10:00am-2:00pm
Northbridge High School
427 Linwood Ave., Northbridge, MA

Chamber of Central MA South

cmschamber.org

Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce

clintonareachamber.org

Clinton Area Chamber Business After Hours

December 5 @ 5:00pm-7:30pm
Berlin Country Club
25 Carr Road, Berlin, MA

LABO

labous.org

Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce

wachusettareachamber.org

December 5 @ 6:00pm-9:00pm
Tatnuck Country Club
1222 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA

Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce

wdochamberma.org

Jingle All The Way- Holiday Party

December 5 @ 5:30pm-7:30pm
Firebrands
8 Airport Road, Dudley, MA

LEADERSHIP , CONTINUED

the month that focused on education, we toured Worcester Technical High School, met with students, and participated in a budgeting exercise in which we navigated the challenges of balancing the nearly half-billion dollar annual Worcester Public School budget.

In addition to learning more about Worcester, we spent considerable time focusing on our own personal development as leaders. We examined our individual backgrounds and collectively dreamed about our vision for Worcester. In a conversation with City Manager, Eric Batista, (also a Leadership Worcester alumnus) we all laughed that part of our vision included more public trash cans. Another activity included creating a short personal mantra. Much of the discussion and reflection time included a near-constant reframing. We looked at ourselves, reflected on our group, and thought about the broader City of Worcester. We often left sessions exhausted but inspired.

Many of the sessions and discussions revolved around deep topics and challenging issues. We wrestled through difficult topics such as affordable housing, food insecurity, and youth violence. We discussed the marginalization the arts community faces and lack of resources available to those leaving jail. But it wasn't all serious. We laughed a lot! At the end of one session, we all climbed onto the kids' train at the EcoTarium for its first ride of the Spring season (more cool dad points!). We all screamed and yelled as the train passed through the tunnel.

Most of all though, the single biggest reward from my time in Leadership Worcester has been the relationships I have been able to build with other classmates. Now, I occasionally play pick-up basketball with Peter Munene; two of my classmates, Jen Delany and John Daniels, have joined the Board of Directors at Pernet Family Health Service; Billie Kenyon recently came as a guest speaker to a class I teach at Dean College. Sometimes the interactions are planned: a few weeks back, Victor and I grabbed coffee and caught up on life. Other times, we run into each other by accident at a community meeting or a Chamber of Commerce networking event. We always make it a point to connect and catch up.

At the end of the program, we held a graduation ceremony at which each participant gave a one-minute declaration. Listening to my classmates share about the lessons learned and their ongoing dedication to the City of Worcester was incredibly inspiring. I ended my speech by saying this, "My wife and I named our oldest son Justus and our youngest son, Deacon, which means helper. And those two words are my leadership commitment to the City of Worcester for as long as I am here. I hope that you join me as we all work towards justice, in service and help to others."

BUSINESS after HOURS

December 5, 2023
5:00pm-7:30pm

Berlin Country Club
25 Carr Road
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Tickets:
\$20
Pre-registration required

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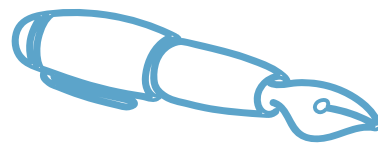
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DIRECT PRIMARY CARE: Worcester's Future of Healthcare



from

THE
EXPERTS

by DR. TATIANA HAMAWI, ALPHA-OMEGA DIRECT PRIMARY CARE, LLC

Are you fed up with not being able to get a timely appointment with your doctor? Do you wait forever in the waiting room, end up seeing anyone but your own doctor, and finally only get a few minutes of impersonal time, and then you are out the door? Did you forget to ask something and now can't get in touch with the provider to get clarity? Direct Primary Care (DPC) may be the innovative solution you've been searching for. DPC is a game-changer in healthcare that focuses on providing personalized, accessible, and comprehensive care to patients. Worcester residents are fortunate now to have several DPC practices in the area.

WHAT IS DIRECT PRIMARY CARE?

Simply put, it's a membership-based model that allows individuals and families timely and direct access to their primary care provider for a low monthly fee. You pay a small payment directly to your doctor, who now works for you, not the insurance plan. This fee covers many services, including office visits, preventive care, and certain procedures. With a DPC membership, there are no insurance hassles or co-pays, making it a convenient and cost-effective option when it comes to covering primary care services.

BENEFITS OF DIRECT PRIMARY CARE

Direct Primary Care enhances the doctor-patient relationship. DPC providers are free to spend more time with you, getting to know you on a deeper level. The extra time allows for more comprehensive care, as the provider can better understand you and create a personalized care plan accordingly. The membership model encourages you to stay in touch instead of trying to avoid a co-pay or a deductible, further strengthening the bond between doctor and patient.

Direct Primary Care increases accessibility to health care. You can access your provider whenever needed, whether through same-day or next-day in-person visits, phone calls, virtual consultations, or even direct texting. The convenient and easy access to your doctor means minor health concerns can be addressed quickly and efficiently, preventing them from becoming more serious. The ability to connect remotely, in a timely fashion, might also sidestep the need to take a day off from work.

Direct Primary Care can help you save your healthcare dollars. DPC providers can offer reduced prices, making access to concierge-style services more affordable. Pricing is transparent. Anything outside the monthly fee is competitively priced and disclosed upfront. There are no surprise bills or hidden expenses. You can avoid the cost of emergency room visits and hospitalizations by focusing on preventive care and early intervention. You also benefit through arrangements DPC providers have with other local providers for low-cost lab work, imaging, and prescriptions, often providing access to services like getting that MRI or medication that your insurance plan might have denied.

WHAT TYPES OF SERVICES DOES DIRECT PRIMARY CARE PROVIDE?

- **Wellness and Preventive Care:** DPC practices prioritize preventive services such as well visits, school physicals, routine check-ups, vaccinations, and screenings to manage health and catch potential issues early on proactively.
- **Chronic Disease Management:** DPC providers specialize in managing chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism, asthma, and heart disease, to name a few, sparing the need to see a specialist.
- **Acute Care:** DPC practices offer same-day or next-day appointments for acute illnesses and minor injuries. This immediate access to care ensures patients receive timely treatment without long waits or visits to urgent care facilities.
- **Procedures:** Many DPC providers train to perform minor procedures in the office, such as ear wax removal, draining abscesses, or removing skin lesions, among others. Performing these procedures on-site eliminates the need for referrals to specialists or visits to emergency rooms for non-life-threatening conditions.

- **Health Coaching and Counseling:** DPC providers often offer health coaching and counseling services

FINDING A DIRECT PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER

Identifying a quality DPC provider can seem daunting. Today's technology offers online tools for discovery. However, nothing can replace the personal touch and human connection from a face-to-face visit.

During a meet-and-greet visit, typically offered at no charge, you have the opportunity to get to know your healthcare provider and for them to get to know you. It's a chance to ask questions, delve a bit into your medical history, set goals, and discuss any concerns you may have. Beyond information sharing, a meet-and-greet visit allows you to assess the accessibility and convenience of the healthcare practice. You can evaluate office location, parking availability, and wait times, ensuring the healthcare experience fits seamlessly into your lifestyle. Additionally, meeting your provider in person lets you understand their communication style, empathy, and overall bedside manner.

THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

Worcester's future of healthcare is changing, and Direct Primary Care is leading the way. With its focus on personalized, accessible care, DPC is revolutionizing the patient experience. By taking the time to understand your needs and provide convenient access to care, DPC providers can deliver the high-quality, patient-centered healthcare you deserve.

If you're tired of the impersonal and rushed healthcare experience, consider Direct Primary Care. Say goodbye to long wait times and hello to a healthcare model that puts you and your health first. Experience the benefits of Direct Primary Care by finding a provider in your area and scheduling a consultation today. Your health is too important to wait.

Dr. Hamawi of Alpha-Omega Direct Primary Care, LLC, is Board Certified in Internal Medicine (for adults) and Pediatrics (for children) and has been serving families in Worcester for over 21 years. She understands the importance of personalized and accessible primary care. She believes in building strong doctor-patient relationships and providing a high level of care tailored to each individual's needs. Whether you're an individual or a family, Dr. Hamawi is here to help. Call 508-753-7700 to book a free meet and greet.

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Action-Packed Venues for Fun in Cold Weather Months

by MONIQUE MESSIER-JOSEPH, PRESIDENT, DISCOVER CENTRAL MA



Central Massachusetts is a hub of action-packed venues for the fun-loving and challenge seekers in your life. With the winter season approaching, keep these destinations in mind for your next company outing, holiday party or family reunion. With ideas for both outdoor and indoor activities, get inspired to gather and connect with your colleagues, friends and loved ones.

Embrace the Outdoors

CORNERSTONE RANCH

Enjoy sleigh rides and winter horseback riding at Cornerstone Ranch, a family-owned and operated business spanning 55 acres in Princeton and Rutland. Best of all, trail rides are for people that have never ridden before and for experienced riders, so it's a great place to learn. Leverage Cornerstone's gorgeous new pavilion heated by a wood stove during colder-weather months. Owner Susan Connell takes great pride in being able to drive the connective bond between people and horses, and your group will certain strengthen their bond during the experience too!

SKI WARD

Minutes from Worcester, Ski Ward offers skiing, snowboarding and tubing. This is also an activity and venue where novices are welcome! With a rental shop and a snow school, your group can take advantage of learning on very accessible trails. While there, plan to dine at Slopeside Bar & Grill which serves lunch, dinner, beer, wine and ice cream both indoors and outdoors on a patio.

WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN

For a full day of skiing with a group, you'll want to know about the Slope SkyBoxes at Wachusett. Located on the second floor above their large, 600-guests capacity event space, the Granite Room, SkyBoxes offer ultimate comfort and privacy with special benefits for you and your guests. The Ash, Maple & Beech rooms feature commanding views of the mountain with outdoor decks overlooking all the action on the slopes. Individual suites comfortably cater to groups of 15 to 100 people, and session rates start at \$250.

WORCESTER COMMON OVAL

Take advantage of this winter-season treat that pops up annually in the heart of the city! Whether you're just stopping by with friends during their operating hours, or you'd like to plan a special event for your group, ice skating on the Worcester Common Oval is a local tradition you'll want to take part in. To rent the Oval Ice Skating Rink for a private event, call 508-929-0100.

Stay Entertained Indoors

ECOTARIUM

If your group outing is family-friendly, treating everyone to an afternoon at EcoTarium plus there are creatures to visit, like the endangered turtle hatchlings they're currently nurturing as part of a new initiative that strengthens their ongoing commitment to wildlife conservation. With advance reservations, the EcoTarium offers discounted admission for most groups of 10 or more individuals. You'll want to look into what's playing at the Alden Planetarium, too!

DCU CENTER

The biggest venue in the city offers many options for group outings, and one of the most action-packed is a Worcester Railers Hockey game. Group tickets start at just 10 people, and you'll want to take advantage of the All-Inclusive Railyard Experience, which gives you a VIP area with a private bartender, restrooms, and space to mingle throughout the game, for just \$40 per ticket.

Other high-impact events coming to the DCU this winter include Harlem Globetrotters, Monster Jam, and Professional Bull Riders Pendleton Whisky Velocity Tour.

THE HANOVER THEATRE FOR PERFORMING ARTS

Dazzle your group with action on the stage at The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts. You'll save at least 10% off single ticket prices when you book a group of 10 or more. If you're considering dinner before the show, you'll want to look into their Restaurant Partners program for extra savings.

X-GOLF

No matter the local forecast, X-Golf Worcester is the year-round spot for new and experienced golfers, and with nine simulators it makes for a great venue for groups of up to 100 people. Featuring over 50 world renowned courses, individuals or groups can also book lessons with their PGA Professional Instructor.

This is just a taste of the fun you can have here in Central MA, there are even more fantastic destinations to visit this winter. I encourage you to explore our website guides and Events Calendar for more ideas at discovercentralma.org.

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



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