**Heather Boulger | Inside the Job market: A month of celebrations**



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**By Heather Boulger**

**PITTSFIELD —**This October has been a month for milestones and celebrations on several fronts in both the local and statewide workforce community.

Earlier this month, state officials traveled to Pittsfield to formerly launch the new MassHire brand in the Berkshires, a statewide initiative that will eventually link the state's 29 career centers and 16 workforce boards under the same name.

Meanwhile, celebrations for STEM education, manufacturing and women in business have been or will be taking place.

For the record, the move to MassHire means the BerkshireWorks Career Center is now known as the MassHire Berkshire Career Center, while the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board is now called the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board.

Rebranding everything under the MassHire name is intended to help companies and job seekers, career changers and youth connect or reconnect to the myriad of workforce programs in the Berkshires and throughout the state. It's also intended to streamline and enhance communications between Massachusetts' vast network of employment services.

Here's a look at some of the other activities that are taking place this month:

**STEM WEEK**

The first statewide STEM Week will take place this week between Monday and Friday. The Baker-Polito Administration scheduled the event this year to boost interest and awareness in STEM education, and is asking educators at all grade levels to participate by planning lessons, hands-on learning activities and events focused on the four STEM subjects, science, technology, engineering and mathematics, throughout the week.

STEM is an acronym for those four educational disciplines, which now account for jobs in six of the country's top 10 job sectors.

The Berkshire STEM Network kicked off in 2004. It serves as a hub for connecting educators, community leaders and industry partners to excite and energize students about opportunities in STEM subjects. This network plays a key role in cultivating interest and engagement in activities in the region.

Locally, numerous activities are scheduled for STEM week. They include site tours and speaking opportunities at Boyd Technologies in Lee; STEM tours at Mass MoCA in North Adams; and a STEM forum and MassTeach/STEM Starter Academy Open House at Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield.

General Dynamics Mission Systems is holding interactive engineering activities at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams. A flashlight scavenger hunt will take place at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, while site tours are scheduled at Sabic Innovative Plastics in Pittsfield and the Mursion Lab open house at MCLA. Various activities at Hancock Shaker Village are also being held, while STEM book displays will be prevalent in libraries throughout the region. Information: MassSTEMweek.org.

**MANUFACTURING DAY**

Manufacturing Day took place on the first Friday in October as a lead-in to a month-long series of state-wide events that are designed to raise the profile of manufacturing in Massachusetts. This year's theme, "Open Doors, Open Minds", was chosen to bring awareness to the next generations of manufacturers.

Many Berkshire manufacturing companies are hosting events for students, showcasing their products, hosting open houses, and highlighting employees, partnerships and training programs. Participating companies include Interprint Inc.; Apex Technologies; Boyd Technologies; General Dynamics Mission Systems and many others. For local highlights and information, visit the MassHireBerkshireWorkforce social media page.

Manufacturing is woven into the historical fabric of Berkshire County — the region currently employs 4,458 people at 165 manufacturing establishments. This industry sector represents 7.4 percent of the county's total workforce. Every dollar spent on manufacturing in the Berkshires adds $1.89 to the local economy.

Today's manufacturing is driven by technology — things like advanced computer hardware, enterprise-wide system software, electronics and robotic automation. The average skilled technician can make between $35,000 to $50,000 annually while a technical professional can make more than $65,000.

BCC and McCann Technical School provide a variety of certificate and degree programs in advanced manufacturing. The MassHire Berkshire Career Center can also provide on-the-job training opportunities and/or apprenticeships for qualified job seekers. These educational opportunities can lead to careers that are creative, highly skilled and well-paying.

**WOMEN IN BUSINESS MONTH**

October is national women in business month. Locally, 1Berkshire will recognize that distinction Wednesday when it holds its annual Women In Business event at Seven Hills Inn in Lenox.

Women are certainly making a difference in the modern workplace. They currently own 38 percent of all businesses in the U.S., and those more than 11 million woman-owned businesses support nearly 9 million jobs and generate annual revenues of $1.6 trillion. Healthcare and social services; professional/scientific/technical services; education; and other services like personal care and pet businesses are the top woman-owned industries.

Join us in honoring women business owners this month by making a commitment to #BuyWomenOwned or write a review or give a recommendation to a friend which is the best form of compliment for a business owner. Let's help them succeed well into the future.

*Heather Boulger is the executive director of the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board in Pittsfield.*