

# October celebrates manufacturing, women in business and STEM



Heather Boulger, executive director of the Berkshire Regional Employment Board.

Fall is by far my favorite time of year in the Berkshires! The air is crisp, leaves are falling, bonfires glow and there are lots of football games and outdoor activities to enjoy ... to mention the yummy apple cider doughnuts that our farm stands boast. It's also the season in which we celebrate myriad workforce activities in the Berkshires.

## MANUFACTURING IN THE BERKSHIRES

Did you know that there are 152 manufacturing establishments in Berkshire County that employ 4,548 people? Manufacturing in the Berkshires is one of the strongest economic clusters driving our local economy, representing 7.4 percent of the workforce. Manufacturing hasn't gone away, but it has changed. Once dominated by a handful of large industries, the economic landscape of the region is now made up of smaller, diverse manufactures that specialize in areas including paper, plastics, medical devices and aeronautics.

For every \$1 spent in manufacturing, another \$1.89 is added to the economy, and every manufacturing job creates another 3.8 jobs in the Berkshires! Today's manufacturing is driven by technology — things like advanced computer hardware, enterprisewide system software,

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electronics and robotic automation, and the average skilled technician can make between \$45,000 and \$55,000 annually, while a technical professional can make more than \$65,000.

The first Friday of October celebrated Manufacturing Day, which is part of a monthlong series of statewide events taking place in October that are designed to raise the profile of manufacturing in Massachusetts. This year's theme is "Create It" to help inspire the next generation 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, TOG Machine, Specialty Minerals, Boyd Technologies, General Dynamics and many others.

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Did you know that there are education and training options available to help train people in advanced manufacturing? The Berkshire Workforce Board can help you access a variety of certificate and degree programs through Berkshire Community College, McCann Tech, Pittsfield Public Schools and the Berkshire Innovation Center.

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. Visit [MassHireBerkshire.com](http://MassHireBerkshire.com) for more information. Advanced manufacturing is alive and well in Berkshire County and will play a key role in our economy for years to come.

## SECOND STATEWIDE STEM WEEK

Did you know that six of the top 10 jobs in the nation are related to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)? In Massachusetts more than 40 percent of all employment revolves around innovation industries such as clean energy, information technology, defense and advanced manufacturing.

In an effort to boost interest and awareness of STEM education, the Baker-Polito administration declared a statewide STEM week from Oct. 21 through 25 and asked educators at all grade levels to participate by planning lessons, hands-on learning activities and events focused on science, technology, engineering and math throughout the week.

The theme for the STEM week was "See yourself in STEM." Women, people of color, first-generation students, low-income individuals, English language learners and people with disabilities are underrepresented in STEM industries and make up an increasing portion of the overall workforce, but the demographics of STEM fields have remained largely the

same. We need more young people to see themselves in STEM.

The Berkshire STEM Network (with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts serving as the backbone) kicked off in 2004 and 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.

As part of STEM week, numerous activities were scheduled, including site tours and speaking opportunities throughout the region.

## WOMEN'S SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

October is National Women's Small Business Month and is a time to recognize and applaud the talented, dedicated and driven women whose entrepreneurial spirit helps drive our economy forward.

According to the U.S. census in 2018, women own 38 percent of businesses in the U.S., which support nearly 9 million jobs and generate annual revenues of \$1.6 trillion.

In Berkshire County, women own 31 percent of businesses. Health care and social services (64.6 percent), educational services (56.9 percent), other services (personal care/pet, 52 percent), administrative support (47.1 percent), and retail (41.8 percent) are the top woman-owned industries.

Join us in honoring female business owners, and the numerous female executives and managers throughout the Berkshires 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 MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board.