

HEATHER BOULGER | INSIDE THE JOB MARKET
October celebrates manufacturing, women in business and STEM

- By Heather Boulger Oct 23, 2024



In this 2016 file photo, Dan Horn treats a glass panel being manufactured at LTI Smart Glass in Pittsfield, just one of the many companies that make up the Berkshires' manufacturing industry. GILLIAN HECK -- THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

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 — not to mention the yummy apple cider doughnuts that our farm stands boast.

It's also the season which we celebrate a myriad of workforce activities in the Berkshires. October celebrates manufacturing, women in business, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) awareness.

Manufacturing #MadeInTheBerkshires #BerkshireManufacturing

Manufacturing is one of the strongest industry sector in the Berkshires! October is Manufacturing Month and an opportunity for us to celebrate our many manufacturers and the diversity of products that are produced in Berkshire County.

Manufacturers have a long history in the Berkshires dating back to the 1800's. The numerous rivers and streams in the region supported many mills over the years. Berkshire manufacturers continue to be an important contributor to our local economy.

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Did you know that there are over 60 manufacturers in Berkshire County? It is the fifth largest employment sector, employing over 4,500 Berkshire County residents. For every \$1 spent on 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 and the average skilled technician can make between \$45,000 and \$55,000 annually.

While the term manufacturing conjures images of Lucille Ball on the assembly line wrapping chocolates in a futile effort to keep up, manufacturing has changed. Modern technology has transformed industry in exciting ways and replaced the old assembly line labor style with highly technical careers.

Today's diverse world of manufacturing utilizes entrepreneurship and creativity. Our Berkshire manufacturers have local, national and international product footprints. Some of the diverse products built in the Berkshires include: armored cars; specialty paper and laminates; turbines for submarines; specialty glass used for privacy and ballistic design; specialty plastic for medical devices; models used in surgical training; high-end pet food; violins; veterinary ventilator support equipment; and national defense equipment. The list goes on and on.

Join us in celebrating Manufacturing Month and the diversity of this important employment sector. Visit the #BerkshireWorkforceBoard social media pages for highlights of manufacturing month activities!

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.

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 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 annual statewide STEM Week

Did you know that 6 of the top 10 jobs in the nation are related to Science, Technology, Engineering & 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 Healey-Driscoll Administration declared this past week a statewide STEM week, asking 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 is “STEM Starts Now”. 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 MCLA 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.

October also celebrates 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 US Census in 2022, women own 38 percent of businesses in the U.S., supporting nearly 9 million jobs and generating 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 women 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! #BerkshireWomenInBusiness

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