

McCann Technical School celebrates launch of its HVAC program facility — the first of its kind in Berkshire County

- By Sten Spinella, The Berkshire Eagle
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Massachusetts Education Secretary Patrick Tutwiler greets students working in the workshops during a tour of the new HVAC learning building at McCann Technical School in North Adams on Wednesday.

GILLIAN HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

NORTH ADAMS — HVAC professionals in the Berkshires have been "waiting for a long time" for a space and program to feed their trade with qualified, skilled workers.

McCann Technical School now officially has what they say the profession so desperately needs — an HVAC training program and state-of-the-art building to house it. It's the first of its kind in Berkshire County.



Darin Almeida, owner of Almeida Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, gives a tour of the new HVAC learning building. “Today is the dawn of a new generation to fulfill a desperate need in our industry that has adversely affected Berkshire County for many years,” he said of the program.
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“Today is the dawn of a new generation to fulfill a desperate need in our industry that has adversely affected Berkshire County for many years,” consultant Darin Almeida of Laureyns United in Dalton said to the more than 60 people gathered at the official opening of the technical school's new HVAC training program.

Almeida, who provided business and industry support to the school on creating the program and its confines, underscored the optimism of Wednesday’s ribbon-cutting event during his remarks.



The new HVAC learning building at McCann Technical School in North Adams houses the equipment, materials and classrooms needed of the new program.

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“As industry professionals, we stand here today immeasurably grateful that McCann Tech as well as our local and state officials, have listened to and responded to our pleas for help in providing young men and women in our community with education and training in HVAC so that we can bolster our workforces," he said.

The North Adams vocational school was awarded, under former Gov. Charlie Baker’s administration, a \$3.1 million state Skills Capital Grant in 2022 to provide HVAC training to students. The school also built a 5,580-square-foot building to house the new program.

The new building’s recent completion and opening merited a visit from state Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, along with other city and local officials, including state Rep. John Barrett III, D-North Adams, North Adams Mayor Jennifer Macksey and City Council and local select board members. North Adams Public Schools Superintendent Barbara Malkas and Hoosac Valley Regional Schools Superintendent Aaron Dean also were in attendance for the opening celebration.



Massachusetts Education Secretary Patrick Tutwiler chats with students at McCann Technical School in North Adams on Wednesday. Tutwiler is on a statewide tour this week highlighting the state's STEM offerings.

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Tutwiler is on a statewide tour this week highlighting the state's STEM offerings, specifically those supported from the same pool of grant money that paid for McCann's HVAC building. He described the "beautiful facility" as an "HVAC lab that will provide technical education and training to 100 students each year who attend McCann Tech."

"The [Berkshire County Workforce Blueprint](#) identified HVAC technicians as a critical workforce need," Tutwiler said. "Prior to this funding, there was no HVAC technician program in the county. This lab, this incredible building right behind me, creates a workforce pipeline so that students can find meaningful careers while also allowing our economy to grow."



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There have been high-profile HVAC failures and issues throughout Berkshire County, from [mold issues](#) at Brayton Elementary School in North Adams requiring upgrades, to a cooling-system [meltdown](#) in Pittsfield Public Schools last year. Students at McCann will learn the tools of the trade, including installation and maintenance of ventilation, heating, air conditioning and more.

McCann Technical School Superintendent James J. Brosnan thanked Barrett for securing a \$50,000 grant that allowed the school to hire an instructor and build its curriculum, as well as the School Committee for \$500,000-plus toward developing the program.

Photos: McCann Technical School's new HVAC building is under construction



Part of the grant to build the 5,580-square-foot building also went toward equipment. A tour inside the building showed the state-of-the-art workshops and classrooms. Rooms were outfitted with equipment that students will become proficient in handling. Unattached air conditioners lay waiting for students to train by moving, installing and then moving the units back.

Students will become adept with water heaters, furnaces and boilers of all kinds. Tutwiler said he was impressed with the up-to-date equipment and programming.



Superintendent James Brosnan gives a tour of one of the classrooms in the new 5,580-square-foot building HVAC building at McCann Technical School.

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Camryn Moran, a senior at McCann, spoke to her positive experiences at the vocational school, and acknowledged that attending was “one of the most significant” decisions she’s made regarding her education.

“When applying to McCann, I was forewarned by many that if I opted to enroll in a technical school, I would gain a different level of education that would qualify me for a career in a trade rather than for college,” Moran said. “All my previous teachers ingrained this idea in me that if I decided to go to this school it may reduce my chances of getting into a highly selective institution.”

“However, I didn’t see this unique style of education as a disadvantage,” Moran added. “I saw it as a way to broaden my horizons inside and outside of the classroom.”

Heather Boulger: A new year brings new job training opportunities

Columnist Heather Boulger describes why now is a good time for employees to sharpen and update their job skills.



Taconic High School received \$1 million from the state to update equipment for metal fabrication and horticulture tracks



Taconic High School was one of 18 schools in the state to receive a Skills Capital Lab Modernization grant this year, awarding \$1 million for updating and purchasing equipment for its metal fabrication and horticulture programs.