

news & notes from the region

The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board (BWB) held its annual meeting on June 10 virtually via zoom, where it highlighted several accomplishments including career readiness programming; training in manufacturing, health care and hospitality; employer assistance; rapid reengagement activities; and more collaborative efforts in meeting the demand for highly skilled workers. During FY 2021 the BWB leveraged over \$3.5 million, which assisted 662 employers, 2,600 job seekers, and 3,400 youth with their workforce needs. The board needed the Berkshire Skills Cabinet and implemented training in health care, manufacturing and hospitality as part of its Berkshire Workforce Blueprint. More than 120 organizations received labor market data from the BWB, which helped to generate \$1.6 million in new resources. The following Workforce Impact Awards were presented at the meeting: 2021 Workforce Ambassador – Tony Dobrowolski, *Berkshire Eagle*, for his continued advocacy of workforce items and for demonstrating strong civic value in community journalism; 2021 Youth Ambassador – Sherwood Guernsey, *First Congregational Church of Williamstown*, for igniting and supporting the North County YouthWorks program for the past seven years; 2021 Employer of the Year – **Berkshire Health Care Systems**, Sarah Miller and Susan Choquette, for establishing a new blended hybrid nursing assistant program during a global pandemic to help get people back to work while keeping their residents, staff and students safe; 2021 Employer of the Year – **ITI Smart Glass**, Christopher Kapioloff and John Lalleur, for being strong supporters of the BWB's manufacturing initiatives and for providing on-the-job training opportunities to get people back to work; 2021 Youth Champion – Taylor Gibeau, **Adams Community Bank**, for assistance in planning, igniting and participating in the first Virtual Career Week for area students and engaging employers in submitting videos for the career readiness library. At the meeting it was also noted that the BWB's employees have been working hybrid since April 2020 and will be back in the office four days a week starting June 28. The **MassHire Berkshire Career Center** will be staffed with a staggered staff on July 12, will be open to customers by appointment only beginning Aug. 2, and will fully open to the public on Sept. 7.

The **Rotary Club of Pittsfield** presented the 2021 Service Above Self Award to seven area students at an event held May 13 at **Mazzeo's Ristorante**. The awards are presented annually by the club to students whose volunteer efforts and community commitments have shown that they exhibit the character true to the mission of Rotary. This year's recipients were Calie Champoux, Lena Dupont, Meredith McCandless, Kayla Saunders, Sadie Tierney, Saydia Quetti and Keegan Vittum.

Health Together was named the winner of **Lever's** latest Berkshire Health Technology Challenge (BHTC), which concluded with a virtual pitch competition before a panel of expert judges on June 10. Based in Williamsburg, Health Together is a moderated, online peer health community sold to employers who want to reduce healthcare costs and increase well-being by giving employees and family members a way to find support and coaching. The company, co-founded by Nicolas Boillot and Diedre Tomlinson, will use the \$25,000 award to continue working on its online health platform. This was the third BHTC held by North Adams-based Lever, an economic development nonprofit focused on innovation-driven job creation. These programs have focused specifically on health technology companies with fundable and scalable business models. Finalists spent the past few months working with the Lever team, refining their pitches, learning from Lever's network of mentors, and deepening their entrepreneurship skills through Lever's Challenge program. "Past BHTC winners and finalists have gone on to make their mark on the healthcare industry, not only in the Berkshire region, but worldwide," said Brent Filson, Lever's head of innovation. "This year's finalists were an impressive group with innovations that impact everything from testing to patient quality of life." In addition to Health Together, other BHTC finalists were **CathWear**, developer of a medical underwear designed for patients struggling with wearing leg bags; and **Open Standard Industries**, developer of a reusable, non-valved, elastomeric respirator that provides bidirectional filtration that is made using local supply chains.

Carr Hardware's advertising campaign featuring the DeWitts, the world's worst Do-It-Yourselfers, has won a gold Telly Award for 2021 in the business-to-consumer category. The campaign, created by **Clayson Creative**, follows the Dewitts who are in constant need of help from the experts at Carr Hardware for their various projects. Their latest videos can be seen at: <https://shop.carrhardware.com/the-dewitts>. The Telly Awards are the world's largest honor for video and television content across all screens.

Berkshire Community College (BCC) recently completed a series of five online training sessions called Foundations of Opioid Addiction and Recovery, designed for healthcare and social services professionals working in southern Berkshire County. The training program was made possible with a \$1 million Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant awarded to **Rural Recovery Resources**, a project created by the **South Berkshire Opioid Consortium (SBOC)**. The SBOC consists of four funded partners: BCC, **The Brien Center**, **Fairview Hospital**, and the **Railroad Street Youth Project**. BCC will conduct training sessions twice a year for the next three years. "With this grant funding and our ability to collaborate with Berkshire Community College, we will be able to make great strides in tackling misinformation and stigma head on," said Rural Recovery Resources Project Manager Gary Pratt. "This curriculum will improve the lives of those affected by substance use, reduce compassion fatigue in the workforce, and help us move toward more equitable treatment. The HRSA grant and the resources it provides will save lives." The BCC training curriculum focuses on increasing knowledge and awareness of substance use disorders, reducing stigma, and helping to provide better screening, assessment and referral services in southern Berkshire County. Elena Nuciforo, BCC's director of workforce development, noted that in addition to creating curriculum for healthcare and social services professionals, BCC and Rural Recovery Resources are working together to train frontline healthcare providers. "We strongly believe that maintaining an effective healthcare workforce is not only about acquiring medical and patient care skills, but also about having an understanding of community health and learning about local resources," Nuciforo said. For more information about BCC's Foundations of Opioid Addiction and Recovery training sessions, contact Elena Nuciforo at enuciforo@berkshirecc.edu. For more information about Rural Recovery Resources, contact Gary Pratt at gary@rsyp.org.

Hancock Shaker Village has partnered with restaurant entrepreneurs Ellen Waggett and Christopher Landy to open **Bimi's Cafe** at the living history museum in Pittsfield. Led by chef Joshua Kelly, Bimi's Cafe is owned and operated by the television production and lighting designer husband-and-wife team of Landy and Waggett, whose shared passion for delicious food, authentic experience, and exceptional service brought them to Hancock Shaker Village. Bimi's Cafe is open daily from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., with additional hours on evenings when there are concerts and other public events scheduled. Purchasing a ticket to Hancock Shaker Village is not required to enjoy the cafe.

The **Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Berkshire County (RSVP)** has launched **Wheels for Wellness**, a free ride service for county residents of all ages who need transportation to wellness-related activities, including medical and social services appointments, fitness classes, therapy, as well as transport to vaccine sites. The new service builds upon RSVP's existing van service, which specifically serves Pittsfield. "Over the years, we have learned that there is a countywide gap in transportation, not just for elders, but for others as well," said RSVP Director Jeff Roucoulet. "In our Pittsfield program, at first we only brought seniors to medical appointments, but we now know that this is just a fraction of what's needed for good health. With **Wheels for Wellness**, we've dropped the age requirement and included non-medical health-related transit for our passengers to better assist with the county's needs." Rides are available between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding major holidays. To schedule an appointment, call the **Wheels for Wellness** hotline at 413-395-0109 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Riders must be fully ambulatory and able to get themselves in and out of the vehicle without assistance. The program is a partnership between RSVP and Berkshire Community Action Council, Berkshire Fallon Health Collaborative, Community Health Programs, Berkshire Interfaith Organizing and Berkshire Health Systems. ♦



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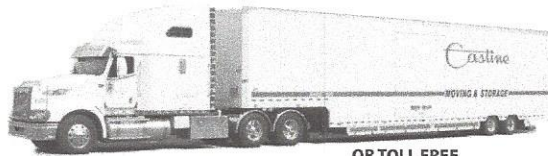


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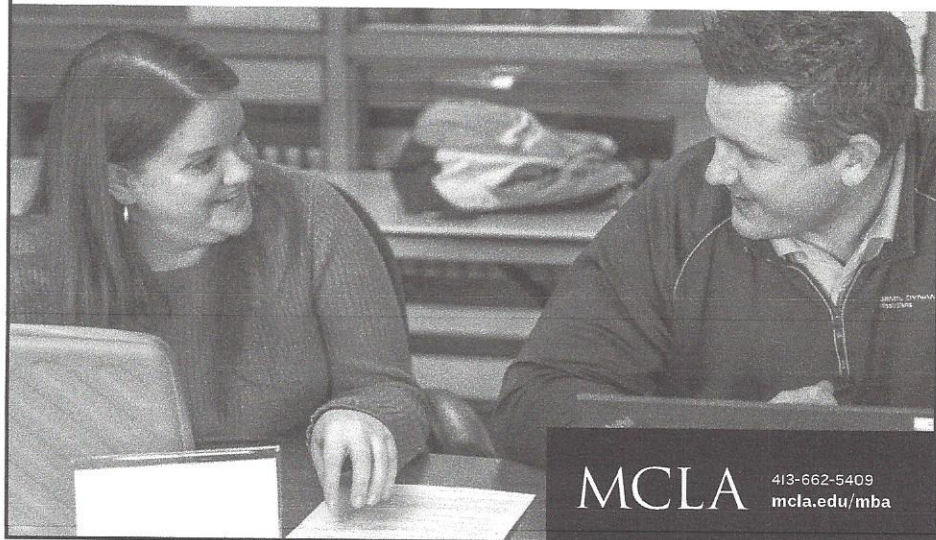


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