



McGovern honored by Food Hub 6

Worcester Chamber Announces 2024/2025 StartUp Worcester Cohort

by WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with Venture Forum and WorcLab, is proud to announce the twelve local companies that have been competitively selected to the 2024-2025 cohort of the entrepreneur pre-accelerator program StartUp Worcester. They will be part of the program from September 5th, 2024, until May 1st 2025.

These twelve companies were selected by a review committee based on the innovative nature and scalability of their business proposal and how relevant the program benefits would be for their needs. Each participant will receive benefits in the form of a free year membership to the Chamber, free space at the downtown coworking space **WorcLab**, and access to possible funding and mentor networks with **Venture Forum**. They are also paired with a mentor from **SCORE** and a mentor who is a **StartUp Worcester alum or local entrepreneur**. This year's program will offer workshops led by experts in topics such as; idea validation & market research, banking & revenue generation, branding, selling, building your network, fundraising, and pitch preparation. There will be seven workshops, taking place once a month. The participants will graduate in May 2025 and will showcase their companies at an event open to the community.

StartUp Worcester is made possible by Presenting Sponsor **Berkshire Bank**, Supporting Sponsor **Iandoli Desai & Cronin P.C.**, and Supporting Sponsor **SCORE**,

This year's StartUp Worcester participants are:

- **ByteMorph.ai** - *Satish Mummadi* - Is a software and technology start-up that helps businesses automate their software to newer versions, through an A.I.-based solution to update legacy software.
- **CROI, Inc.** - *Nicolas Gronda* - Is a financial literary software that empowers high school students to make informed decisions through personalized college data and comprehensive cost-benefit analysis insights.
- **Eastern Standard Insurance Consultants** - *Christopher Jones* - An e-commerce and insurance information start-up that seeks to streamline the insurance process, making it easier for consumers to purchase the right coverage for their needs.
- **Gld Mnd Cllctv** - *Kiron James* - A start-up that educates, innovates, and entertains, through the mediums of art, fashion, and the media, to help local youth who don't have the voice or guidance they need to succeed or truly express themselves.
- **Made from Jewl'ry** - *Teree Thomas Perez* - Is a sustainable art education business that diverts thousands of pounds of jewelry waste away from landfills, to create unique, educational, and sustainable products for fashion, design, and so much more.



Above: StartUp Worcester's Mentor Mixer Event. This year twelve volunteer Mentors were paired up with our StartUp Worcester Entrepreneurs.

- **Oyster Enterprise, LLC** - *Elir Da Silva Melo* - A software and technology solutions startup that has created an app to assist with transportation logistics and distance recording.
- **P.O.P Services** - *Jamal Smith* - A personal training and financial literacy start-up that is developing an app to integrate sports training with financial literacy, personal development, and technology, to make the whole athlete.
- **Project Psyclone Productions** - *Sam Nelson, Zander Day, Connor Schenk* - An entertainment production start-up, that has created a platform for talented small independent entertainment creators to showcase their work and projects, helping them connect to entertainment studios across the world.
- **Real Estate Investing Bot** - *John Pollock* - A real estate investing tool that compiles data on the entire real estate market in an area and provides only the best potential real estate investments to users, quicker than ever before.
- **SlimeWare** - *Alex Supron & Brien Rondeau* - Is an independent game development studio that aims to create and publish a fun and quirky interactive experience for the casual game audience on multiple platforms.
- **Studio Blue Jay** - *Jay Lam, Isabelle Colantuonio, Miss Maness, Cameron Connolly, Tate Donnelly* - A game design and development start-up that seeks to create games with diverse and inclusive characters as well as storylines that showcase often unrepresented groups.
- **The Dope Design Co.** - *Shannon Manassa* - An e-commerce start-up, that focuses on the customization of clothing and marketing materials, by creating exceptional designs while making a positive impact on our community.



Michael Kane, the Economic Development and Public Policy Associate at the Chamber who acts as the StartUp Worcester Coordinator. "The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to partner with Zak Dutton from the Venture Forum and Tyler Ojala at WorcLab for YEAR 10 of StartUp Worcester. We are also passionate about assisting our new cohort of twelve local entrepreneurs with the support they need to grow their businesses from the ground up and become successful entrepreneurs and community members. Also, we are thankful to have twelve volunteer mentors from our community to assist our

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Each quarter, 20,000 copies are mailed to 6,000 members and business professionals and roughly 13,000 City of Worcester registered voters. The remainder are distributed among area businesses.

If you're interested in being a point of distribution, or would like to know more about placing an advertisement in the Chamber Exchange, please contact Kristen Luna at kluna@worcesterchamber.org. To contact the editorial staff, please email Caitlin Lubelczyk at clubelczyk@worcesterchamber.org.

Unless otherwise noted, the editorial content herein is the opinion of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and does not reflect the opinion of any specific member, business, or partner of the Chamber.

Worcester Regional Chamber CALENDAR of EVENTS

DECEMBER 3, 2024

11:30am

**Power of Women Luncheon
"Feedback Up, Down and Across"
Featuring Megan Akatu**

Off the Rails

Sponsored by Country Bank

DECEMBER 6, 2024

11:30am

149th Annual Meeting

DCU Center

Presenting Sponsors: UMass Memorial Health, Unibank, Worcester Railers, HC.

DECEMBER 10, 2024

11:00am

**Nonprofit Roundtable- Lifting
Restrictions on Restricted Funds**

Chamber Offices

Presenting Sponsor: Bowditch

DECEMBER 11, 2024

2:00pm

**HR Roundtable- Employing Work
Authorized New Immigrants:
Incentives & Supports**

Virtual

Sponsored by: Nichols College

DECEMBER 12, 2024

5:00pm

Business After Hours

Polar Park

Presenting Sponsors: Rockland Trust & Worcester State University

DECEMBER 17, 2024

11:00am

**Healthcare Roundtable- A
Conversation About Health
Disparities in Worcester**

Chamber Offices

Presenting Sponsors: Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA and Saint Vincent Hospital

WPI's Hotel Acquisition Undermines City's Growth and Finances

by **TIMOTHY P. MURRAY**, PRESIDENT & CEO,
WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



WPI's decision to acquire two operating hotels in the city of Worcester that were developed as part of the Gateway Park project has serious negative consequences to both the city's finances and economic development agenda. The Gateway Park project has been the beneficiary of tens of millions of dollars in state and federal tax dollars with the intent of creating a new mixed-use district that would house new business ventures, such as

life science and bioengineering research and development companies, complimentary retail uses and space for academic instruction and research. Moreover, the redevelopment of this brownfield site was intended to expand the city's tax base and create jobs.

This project was never at any point, about utilizing public tax dollars and resources to solely facilitate WPI's campus expansion or student housing needs that would take property off of the city's tax rolls to the detriment of Worcester's residential and commercial taxpayers and eliminate private sector jobs. Unfortunately, WPI's unilateral action in acquiring these two hotels and eliminating 25% of the city's hotel inventory without consultation with municipal leaders, business and community partners subverts the vision and mission of the Gateway Park Project, increases property taxes on homeowners and businesses, eliminates approximately 100 private sector jobs and cripples the city's ability to compete for conventions, events and tournaments. Venues like the DCU Center and Polar Park and many other arts, culture and event venues will be severely impacted

WPI, P5

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Reassessing Standards: The Impact and Future of MCAS in Massachusetts Education Reform

by **DARNELL DUNN**, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS RECRUITMENT, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Each year, roughly 1 percent of all prospective high school graduates, approximately 700 students — mostly English learners or students with disabilities — are not awarded a diploma as a result of failing one or more MCAS exams.

This month, Massachusetts voters elected to end the use of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, or MCAS, as a requirement to

receive their diplomas with approximately 59 percent voting in favor of ballot Question 2.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 introduced statewide standardized testing, the creation of charter schools, and an overhaul in schools. Up until that point in time, public school funding was directly tied to property taxes, each school district had its own curriculum, and reliable data to benchmark educational achievement was limited.

The challenges of implementing this legislation were many and the positive impacts were far from uniform with some disparities still present today. However, increased state funding, increased accountability, and higher academic standards lead Massachusetts to be ranked top in the nation academically.

Much of the intellectual framework of education reform was based on a Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education report written in 1991 called Every Child a Winner. The report warned that if Massachusetts didn't improve the quality and equity of its school system, its future workforce and economy would suffer.

Pointing to research showing the correlation of strong MCAS scores and future earnings in the labor market, opposition to Question 2 was made up of a coalition of business interest groups including the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce along with eleven other Massachusetts' chambers, leaders in Education, teachers, parents, notable news organizations such as the Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe and Boston Business Journal, and many elected officials including Governor Healy, Lt. Governor Driscoll and Attorney General Campbell.

Supporters of Question 2, led by the Massachusetts Teachers Association, argued the MCAS graduation requirement caused too much anxiety among students, was potentially discriminatory, and unfairly penalized students with disabilities, poor test takers, and those still learning English.

They went on to state that the high stakes nature of the test forced teachers to focus on test prep, limiting the time for civics, arts, and other subjects the union believe contribute to a more well-rounded education and make students better prepared for college and/or the work force.

I would not presume that the MTA has anything but the best interest of the students in advocating for the removal of the MCAS as a graduating requirement. What I would suggest is that the Union's support and subsequent victory opens the door to a series of consequences that run counter to their stated objectives and intentions:

1. According to the Annenberg Institute at Brown University's The MCAS a Graduation Requirement report published in July of 2024, 85 percent of students who never pass, usually after repeated attempts, are English learners or students with disabilities.

Given the learning setbacks experienced by most high school students during the pandemic, most of whom are native English speakers with traditional learning styles. The report goes on to say, "High school immigrant newcomers represent five percent of those who attempt at least one of the MCAS tests but fully one third of those who never pass." With this, share is likely to increase as the number of newcomers grow, the question ought to be- does eliminating an objective standard used to evaluate academic preparedness help or hurt our most vulnerable students?

The predictive power of the test scores on student outcomes are less vague. According to the report, students with higher MCAS scores in the 10th grade, for instance, are more likely than those with lower scores to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and graduate from college. The students' median annual earnings at the age of 30 were also higher.

2. If student outcomes are the measuring stick that we're using to judge the effectiveness of the MCAS, which stakeholders' feedback should be weighted more heavily, the producer or the consumer?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a framework that seeks to promote fair treatment and full economic and social participation by groups who have traditionally been left behind. Further it is one that is on the lips of many of the stakeholders who are actively participating in this debate. In his working paper titled Education and Economic Growth, Eric Hanushek of Stanford University's Hoover Institution an empirical analysis reaches a simple conclusion: long-run growth as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) is largely determined by the skills of a nation's population. Moreover, the relevant skills can be readily gauged by standardized tests of cognitive achievement. If we are truly committed to creating space of equality of opportunity in Massachusetts for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, we'll replace the MCAS with a new and improved objective standard-our future depends on it.

STARTUP, CONTINUED

entrepreneurs over the next eight months."

Zachary Dutton, Executive Director of Venture Forum, said "Year 10 of the program is going to be the strongest one yet. The support of sponsors, mentors, and Business leaders will help ensure that the participants are well positioned for success."

Tyler Ojala, Community Manager at WorcLab, is excited about this year's program. "We've put a lot of work into making the program more impactful for entrepreneurs, with monthly workshops, consistent mentorship, and regular networking sessions... we think this will be the best year yet for StartUp Worcester."

More information is available at: <https://www.worcesterchamber.org/startup-worcester/>.

ABOUT THE WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is the largest Chamber in New England representing over 2,300 members from all industries and of all sizes located in a service area of over 36 cities and towns in Central Massachusetts and beyond. The organization serves the region's business community through public policy advocacy, educational and networking events, and economic development efforts. Worcester's affiliate chambers are Auburn, Blackstone Valley, Clinton Area, Central Mass. South, Latin American Business Organization, Wachusett Area, and Webster Dudley Oxford. For more info, visit: <https://www.worcesterchamber.org>.

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What's Happening at the Worcester Regional Food Hub?

by **MIKE KANE**, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE

Below: Vendors at the Fitchburg Public Market.

The Worcester Regional Food Hub, continues to be a key organization in Worcester's and the region's collaborative effort to reduce food insecurity, promote food entrepreneurs, and support local farmers to strengthen our regional food system.

FINISHING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR STRONG

Just like students did when finishing their final classes before the start of summer, the Food Hub was able to finish the school year strong, as its aggregation and distribution program was able to assist over 75 school districts throughout Massachusetts with access to fresh, local, and nutritious food. This includes over 2,150 deliveries consisting of a total of 41,573 items distributed to school districts. In return for distributing food, the Food Hub was able to assist 58 farmers and food producers by purchasing their produce and strengthening our local food system.

This current school year, the Food Hub is looking to expand its aggregation and distribution network by onboarding more public school districts as well as assisting more farmers in Central Massachusetts. Currently, the Food Hub has over 100 school districts it partners with.

FITCHBURG PUBLIC MARKET OPENS

In August, the Food Hub started a new chapter in Fitchburg, with the opening of the Fitchburg Public Market. This location, modeled off the Food Hub's operations in Worcester, consists of three shared kitchens, eight marketplace stalls, and a market selling Massachusetts-made products and farm fresh produce. So far, the location has been a success for our food entrepreneurs who regularly sell out of food they make daily.

Vendors include the Candy Lady Confections (Small Batch Candies), Royal Grill (Halal Offerings), La Colombiana Hamburger (Colombian), Evie Cakes (Cakes & Sweet Treats), Arepancito (Venezuelan Bakery & Pastry Shop), Mera's Cakes (Puerto Rican pastries, drinks, coffee), Taco Queen (Birria Tacos), and El Friquitin De Jenny (Puerto Rican)

The Fitchburg Public Market will be open Tuesday through Saturday. They are located at 35 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA

FOOD HUB GATHERING HONORING CONGRESSMAN JIM MCGOVERN

In October, the Food Hub awarded Congressman Jim McGovern with its inaugural Food Security Champion Award, which is awarded to an individual in the Worcester community who has gone above and beyond to promote food security and support farmers.

In coming to a decision on who should be the first award winner, the Director of the Food Hub, Shon Rainford, referenced his trip in 2022 to Washington D.C. for the White House Conference on hunger, nutrition, and health. It was at this Conference, where Rainford discovered that Congressman McGovern was not just Jim, but a true advocate when it came to the issues of hunger, food relief, and farming. Rainford said "It was truly inspiring to see the reaction of the crowd when the Congressman was introduced. It was much more raucous than the introduction of the President of the United States. We are so lucky to have Con-



Above: Congressman Jim McGovern poses with Food Hub Director Shon Rainford, WRCC President and CEO Tim Murray, MA Secretary of Agriculture Ashley Randle, and Chef Ana from Mami's Kitchen.



gressman McGovern in our district and in our nation leading the efforts to end hunger and poverty, and support farmers. That is why we chose Jim."

Further, in recognition of his efforts in Worcester and his district, Rainford mentioned the Food Hub will name the award after Congressman McGovern and will present it to a deserving food security champion each year going forward.

In addition to the award being presented, the Food Hub celebrated with eight of its food entrepreneurs who provided guests at the event with specialty tastings and raised money to support the Food Hub's operations. The Food Hub would like to say thank you again to the sponsors of the event, Amazon, UMass Memorial Healthcare, UMass Chan Medical School, and Rubicon Builders.

LAUNCHING DIVERSE FOOD ENTREPRENEURS IN WORCESTER GRADUATION

In November, the Food Hub will graduate another 24 food entrepreneurs from its Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs program. The Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs program has been around since 2019 and is an initiative designed to support food-based entrepreneurs, especially those from diverse backgrounds, in building a successful food business.

This year's class is unique, in that it is the second class where all the participants were from Worcester. Also, 100% of the participants, are either a woman, a person of color, or an immigrant. Lastly, this year's program was the first time there has been a Spring and Fall Session, which the Food Hub plans on doing again in the Spring.

Overall, more than 100 food entrepreneurs have successfully graduated from the program, and many continue to use the Food Hub's shared kitchen or have opened their own brick-and-mortar restaurant or food truck.

WHAT WILL NEXT YEAR BRING?

Next year the Food Hub will celebrate its 10th year, and it has big plans. The largest being the opening of its highly anticipated new headquarters at Worcester's Union Station, which broke ground in April 2024. This project funded, by local, state, and federal sources, will outfit 6,000 square feet of underutilized space within Union Station, into five shared kitchens, including one large teaching and prep kitchen, increased cold storage space, and a multi-purpose room. Once completed the space will seek to increase the Food Hub's operations in Worcester by reducing food insecurity and promoting food entrepreneurship.

WPI, CONTINUED

by the loss of nearly 250 hotel rooms. Additionally, some of the city's largest employers are deeply concerned as these hotels have been used to host customers, suppliers, vendors and employee meetings and trainings on a year-round basis. Lastly, when these two hotels eventually come off the tax rolls the city will lose \$758,000 annually in property tax revenue and \$850,606 in annual hotel/motel tax revenue. This figure does not include the loss of hotel/motel revenue to the Commonwealth

In my thirty plus years of involvement in the Worcester community I have never seen such an egregious breach of trust and utter disregard of the city's fiscal well-being and economic development agenda by such a large tax-exempt institution like WPI and its current leadership team in the manner in which they

have gone about acquiring these hotels. This is especially so given how lopsided current state law is in allowing large institutional non-profits to unilaterally acquire properties and take them off municipal tax rolls.

What is also concerning to many, locally, is that Mass Development, a quasi-state agency with a self-declared mission "to stimulate business, drive economic growth and help communities thrive" would help finance WPI's acquisition of these tax paying hotels without a proactive due diligence process with Worcester city government officials or business and community partners. Perhaps this lack of due diligence occurred because many state agencies and quasi-agencies continue to work remotely or hybrid well after COVID passed while Worcester municipal government employees and many other municipalities have fully

THE HIGH RISK OF 'SURE' PROFITS SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF LIFE SCIENCE R&D

by **DARNELL DUNN**, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS RECRUITMENT, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

With key employers such as AbbVie, Bristol Myers Squibb, uBriGene, WuXi Biologics, and the more than 30 start-ups that call local life science incubator MBI home, Worcester is an emerging life science and biomanufacturing cluster.

In their 2022 *Life Sciences Research Talent 2022*, leading commercial real estate services and investment firm CBRE ranked Worcester as the 15th best life sciences market for research talent.

Despite the challenges of managing inflation, a higher interest rate environment, and limited access to funding to a sector that served as one of the principal drivers of economic growth during the pandemic, the life science labor force in central mass has continued an upward trajectory.

Worcester County's life science work force expanded by more than 800 jobs over 2021-2023 representing growth in employment of 14%.

Some of that employment growth has been driven by Leal Therapeutics, a Worcester-based life sciences company which recently secured its latest round of funding to the tune of \$45 million dollars.

Launched in 2021, Leal's October funding comes after \$39 million in seed round in 2022.

The proceeds will support the firm's plan to submit investigational drug applications to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its treatments for central nervous conditions schizophrenia, and ALS, more commonly known as "Lou Gehrig's disease".

According to a company press release from Wednesday October 30th, the company expects to submit its application at the end of the year with the intention of beginning clinical trials in early 2025.

Founder and CEO of Leal Dr. Asa Abeliovich is no stranger to these kinds of milestones. Abeliovich had previously launched New York-based gene therapies company Prevail Therapeutics, acquired by Eli Lilly and Co. in 2020, and the California-based biopharma company Alector that began trading on the Nasdaq in 2019.

The process of developing, approving, and commercializing new drugs is a long, arduous, and costly process fraught with risk.

The few drugs that prove safe and commercially viable to generate sufficient revenue to fund salaries, debt obligations, working capital needs, non-cancellable operating leases, and other Research and Development cost. Patents, intellectual property expectations and expectations around the addressable market play are key factors in funding and partnership opportunities available to early-stage, small and even medium sized companies. Although large, publicly traded companies have more tools at their disposal to mitigate risk, similar dynamics apply.

In early September, Cambridge based Alnylam Pharmaceuticals, a pioneer in RNA interference (RNAi)-based medicines, announced detailed results of a phase-3 study on a heart disease drug in development.

Already approved to treat a rare disease brought on by mutations in the gene encoding transthyretin (TTR) that can lead to dysfunction of different organs and tissues, Alnylam seeks to expand the use of the same treatment (Vutrisiran) to help reduce mortality and recurrent events resulting from Cardiomyopathy, a disease of the heart muscle that makes it harder for the heart to pump blood to the rest of the body.

Although patients showed improvement, their results were not significantly different from current available therapeutics. In response to the findings, Alnylam's stock fell nearly 10%.

Global pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca recently fell short with a new form of cancer treatment known as "antibody-drug conjugate back in September. After failing to reach its target of overall survival benefits for patients with non-small-cell lung cancer and performing a trial that failed to help patients live longer than standard chemotherapy who had previously undergone hormonal therapy, Jefferies & Co Pharma & Biotech Research Analyst Peter Welford said the trial result "further dents belief" in Dato-DXd and "complicates regulatory discussions for approval".

Both instances saw the stock fall 1.6% and 5% respectively.

At the heart of the investment thesis of the companies are their intellectual property and the corresponding cash flows the exclusive distribution rights a successful treatment are sure to accrue when all goes according to plan.

As companies grow in market capitalization, companies are better positioned to limit the impact of any one drug or treatment on their earnings, but the fundamental risk is very present.

Some of the biggest risks life sciences companies can face are outside the lab.

Back in June, President and CEO of Danish drug maker Lars Fruergaard Jørgensen Novo Nordisk testified in front of the Senate committee on health, education, labor and pensions at the behest of its chair and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders who opened an investigation on the firm's pricing practices of popular drugs *Ozempic* and *Wegovy*.

During the hearing, Sanders said his recent conversations with generic drugmakers revealed that Novo Nordisk's pricing is "nothing less than excess corporate greed."

He went on to say, "They have studied the math, and they tell me that they can sell a generic version of Ozempic, the exact same drug that Novo Nordisk is manufacturing, to Americans for less than \$100 a month," Sanders said. "Less than 10% of what Americans are currently paying."

Because Nordisk holds an exclusive patent, other companies are barred from producing the drug for up to ten years.

If it were the sole decision of the senator, his comments suggest he might revoke the exclusivity of an instrument like a patent offers.

The constant drive to beat competitors to market with new treatments there are far more failures than success.

Those successes must pay for the cost of the failure and deliver a profit, some of which will inevitably be reinvested to keep the machine going. As the sector continues to grow and mature, it's critical that the regulatory environment continues to support the innovator as their ability to command the assets needed to fund discoveries are underpinned by the promise of sharing in the revenue generated by the treatments and techniques they may help discover, create and/or commercialize.

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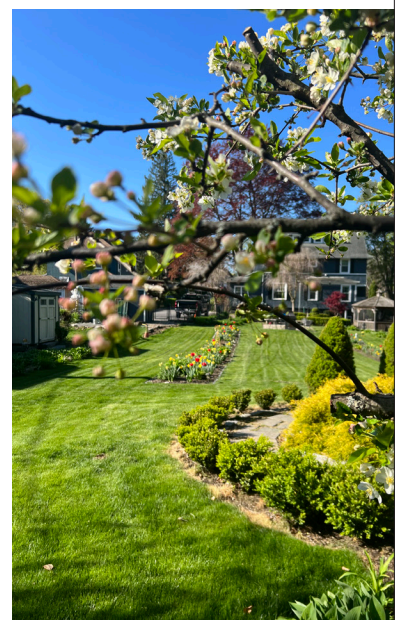
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CLOSING OUT 2024 WITH WORCESTER GREEN CORPS

by AMELIA TIERI, WORCESTER GREEN CORPS COORDINATOR, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



As 2024 draws to a close, the Worcester Green Corps (WGC) reflects on yet another year of impactful community engagement and environmental stewardship. Between hosting our YouthWorks summer program and volunteer events to collaborating with community members on beautification projects, 2024 has proven to be yet another year of action for the Worcester Green Corps.

This past summer, we supervised a total of 20 youth workers, employed through the Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC), who assisted us in our cleaning and greening initiatives. Our Friday Career Pathways sessions were essential to our YouthWorks students, as they were exposed to various local industries contributing to a cleaner, more sustainable Worcester. Through these sessions, our YouthWorks students boosted their employability with practical job training skills and were equipped with valuable environmental advocacy knowledge. Throughout our six weeks together, our crew collected a total of 163 bags of litter weighing 1,188.93 pounds--the equivalent of an adult polar bear!

Additionally, we hosted 9 volunteer events so far, with five more planned before the year's end. Our 174 volunteers came together, made a meaningful impact, and collected a rough total of 174 bags of litter which weighed 2,480.13 pounds! Between both our summer program and our volunteer events, the Worcester Green Corps has collected a whopping 337 bags of litter, weighing 3,669.06 pounds in 2024 alone!

In 2025, the Worcester Green Corps hopes to continue its usual operations cleaning and beautifying Worcester, one neighborhood at a time. Additionally, we are hoping to revive our Catch Basin Mural project which seeks to bring awareness to the effects of illegal dumping in Worcester's storm drains through art. In 2023, we partnered with local artists, including lead artist, Sharinna Travieso, and collaborated with Worcester's Sanitation Department to deter pollution and contamination on our streets and in our waterways. Together, we successfully installed 15 murals around the city's storm drains that both beautify our streets and educate the community on pollution prevention. As the new year approaches, we are eager to expand these efforts throughout the city and further curb this pollution while also adding to the ever-growing canvas that is Worcester.

Our community's support is vital in all these endeavors, and we are grateful to our sponsors, including United Way of Central Massachusetts, National Grid, CSX, the Better Business Bureau of Central New England, Green Team Junk Removal and ServPro of Worcester. Our sponsors are important contributors to our efforts and make our projects, such as our Youth mentoring, garden work, and catch basin murals possible.

As we look forward to 2025, we committed to continually fostering our collaborations and partnerships with sponsors, organizations, and community members alike to create a thriving, inviting environment for all.

Amelia Tieri is the Coordinator for the Worcester Green Corps and a former Green Corps district manager.

Thank You for Voting No on Question 5

DEAR WORCESTER,

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce would like to thank all who supported our servers, bartenders, small restaurant owners, in the Worcester area at the ballot box by voting No on Question 5 this election season.

If passed, Question 5 would have had a disastrous effect on Worcester's hospitality industry, making it more expensive to operate a restaurant, more expensive for consumers to eat out, and possibly a less enjoyable experience. Your vote represents more than just a stance; it's a commitment to the well-being of our friends, neighbors, and families who rely on these jobs and local establishments.

We cannot thank you enough for your support in Voting No on Question 5. Your decision to stand with us means so much to those in the local service industry, who work tirelessly every day to serve our community.

With our deepest gratitude,
Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce



Former Red Sox All Star Catcher Rich Gedman Inducted into the Worcester Red Sox Hall of Fame

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

As one of the best hitting catchers in the mid-1980s for the Boston Red Sox, former MLB all-star Rich Gedman continues to impact young hitting prospects for the WooSox.

In his three seasons as the Worcester Red Sox hitting coach, Gedman has helped players like Triston Casas, Jarren Duran, Connor Wong, Wilyer Abreu, Bobby Dalbec, David Hamilton, Ceddanne Rafaela, and Enmanuel Valdez become productive offensive players in Boston. Durran also was selected to his first MLB all-star game this season.

As a result of his work for the Worcester/Pawtucket Red Sox for the last decade, Gedman was chosen as a member of the inaugural 2024 Worcester Red Sox Hall of Fame. He was enshrined in August along with the late WooSox owner Larry Lucchino and former city manager Ed Augustus Jr.

“As a young boy who grew up in Worcester less than a mile from here,” Gedman said during the induction ceremony. “I got a chance to live out a childhood dream and play for the Boston Red Sox. Baseball has taken me from Crompton Park to Polar Park and many places in between. I’ve come full circle back to where it started, the city of Worcester and now Polar Park.

“I am humbled and honored to be part of the WooSox hall of fame class of 2024,” he said.

Gedman continues to positively impact current and former Red Sox Triple-A hitters. Top prospects like Nick Yorke, Nick Sogard, and Niko Kavadas praised their hitting coach as they’ve reaped the benefits from Gedman’s tutelage.

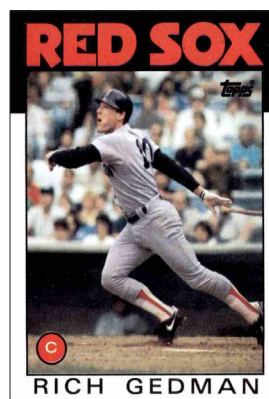
“What Geddy does best is that he’s able to calm you down between your ears,” said Kavadas. The former WooSox first baseman was having his best offensive season since being drafted by Boston in the eleventh round (316 overall) of the 2021 MLB Draft. He has consistently hit around the .290 mark all season, nearly 50 points higher than his previous minor league average combined. He has also showed an increase in his power numbers. As of July 22, he has a career high 17 homeruns and 62 runs batted in (RBI) with two months still to go in the season. He also raised his slugging percentage nearly 150 points (.573).

“We live in a world where everything is video, data, and analytics,” he said prior to being traded to the Anaheim Angels at the end of July. “And Geddy is able to look through all that stuff and say, ‘yeah, those things are all a byproduct of what’s going on between your ears.’ Geddy really does a good job keeping you right and keeping you calm and keeping you in the present.”

Kavadas said he enjoyed working with Gedman every day. “He just has such a calm presence about him. Even though he may not be the most outspoken guy, he has an effect on you and it’s a positive one. It’s just his presence. He doesn’t have to sit you down in a one-on-one conversation on what he’s seeing. It’s just his constant reinforcement and feedback that’s contagious.”

Gedman’s professional baseball career started in 1977 when he was signed by Boston scout Bill Enos as a non-drafted free agent out of St. Peter-Marian High School in Worcester. He played 13 major league seasons with the Red Sox (1980-90), Astros (1990), and Cardinals (1991-92), batting .252 with 88 home runs in 1,033 games.

Gedman’s best seasons hitting came during a three-year span from ’84 to ’86 where he hit 58 homeruns during that time. He smashed a career high 24 homeruns in 1984. His best year in RBIs came



Left: Playing for the Red Sox in 1985 as depicted on this 1986 Topps card.



Above: Rich Gedman throwing wiffleballs to kids during a WooSox kids baseball clinic at Polar Park. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba.

the following year with 80 in 1985. He was named to back-to-back American League All-Star teams in 1985 and 1986. He also hit for the cycle with seven RBI on September 18, 1985 in a game against the Blue Jays.

“Geddy provides a unique perspective,” said Sogard, who, under Gedman’s guidance, has been consistently in or near the top ten for total hits (89) in the International League all season. Sogard, with Gedman’s help, also made his major league debut for Boston this season.

“Geddy played for the Red Sox,” Sogard said. “He’s been around the game for a really long time. I think his calmness is really important and that comes with him being a hitter ... I think he provides me with a more mentally clear mind and a good feel for hitting versus the game becoming more analytical and computer based. It’s really refreshing to have someone like Geddy around who can talk to you as a ball player versus a computer screen.”

Below: Gedman with Clemens in 1986.



Gedman was the primary catcher during Boston’s 1986 AL pennant-winning season and 1988 AL East championship campaign. In a total of 75 playoff plate appearances during 18 games, Gedman batted .292 with a .320 on-base percentage (OBP); he slugged .444 with three homeruns, two doubles and a total of 21 hits.

Gedman was also an excellent defensive catcher with a strong arm behind the plate. After leading the International League in catcher assists (65) and double plays (13) with the Pawtucket Red Sox in 1980, Gedman made his major league debut as a September callup. He played nine games as a rookie, including catching Dennis Eckersley’s one-hitter on Sept. 18 of that season.

Red Sox legend Roger Clemens credits Gedman’s guidance as a battery mate for helping him become a superstar pitcher. According a recent Worcester Telegram article, Clemens said Gedman “was one of the building blocks for me

FAME , CONTINUED

in my career.” Gedman, most notably, caught Clemens’ first 20-strikeout performance against the Mariners on April 29, 1986.

Gedman ranks fourth in club history in games caught (858), and in 2012 he was one of 40 players recognized on the All-Fenway Park Team.

He has spent the past fourteen seasons as a hitting coach in the Red Sox minor league system (2011-present), including ten with Triple-A Pawtucket/Worcester, which is the longest tenure for any Triple-A coach in franchise history. He was promoted to Pawtucket in 2015 after spending two seasons as the hitting coach for Portland Sea Dogs. Prior to returning to the Red Sox organization, Gedman managed the Worcester Tornadoes for five years. The Tornadoes were a member of the Canadian-American Association of Professional Baseball, an independent baseball league which was not affiliated with MLB. The Tornadoes played their home games at Fitton Field on the College of the Holy Cross campus from 2005 to 2012.

Gedman was elected to the Boston Red Sox Hall of Fame in the Class of 2020 along with David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez. He was officially enshrined prior to a game at Fenway Park during the 2022 season.

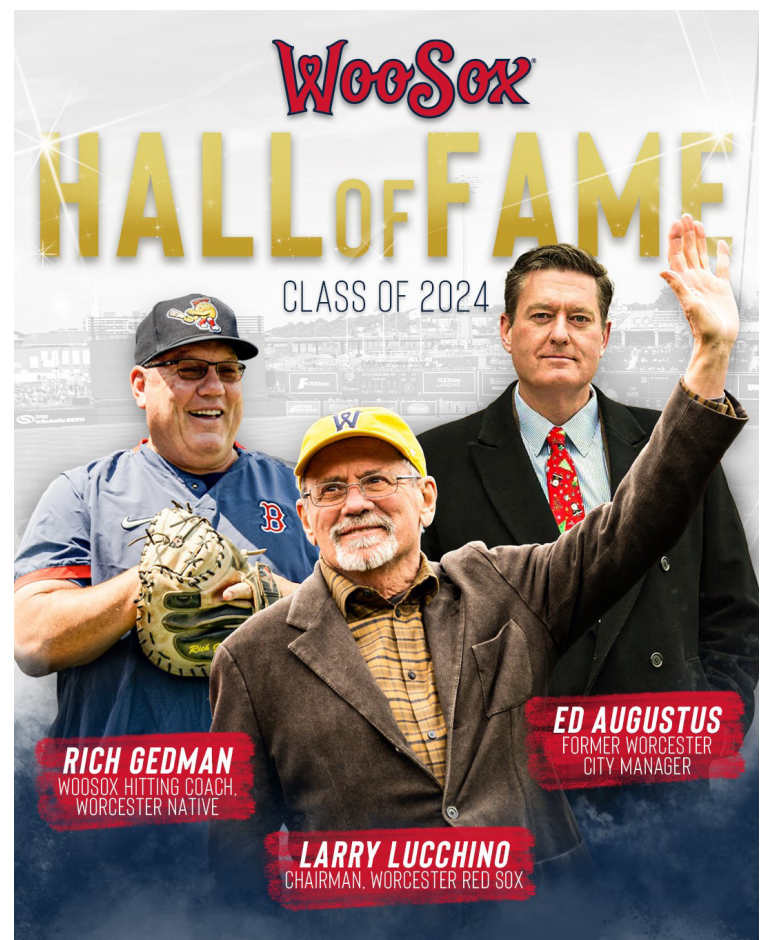


Gedman had a hand in several recent team hitting accomplishments. The

2023 Worcester Red Sox batters broke the all-time Boston Red Sox Triple-A record for most homeruns in a season belting a total of 215 dingers. That mark beat the 1996 PawSox who owned the previous Red Sox Triple-A record with 209 homeruns. That team also established a new Triple-A record for most walks (721) and tied the club record for most triples in a season with 36 to match the 1996 PawSox.

Despite all his accomplishments in professional baseball, it’s the knowledge he passes on to young Red Sox hitters that will resonate.

“A lot of what he talks about is being relaxed in the box and trust in yourself,” said Nick Yorke, who was ranked the sixth top prospect in the Red Sox organization at the time he was traded to the Pittsburgh Pirates at the trade deadline. Since his late May promotion to Worcester, he has been a hot hitter with a .325 average with 42 hits, six



Above: Rich Gedman throwing wiffleballs to kids during a WooSox kids baseball clinic at Polar Park. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba.
Left: WooSox hitting coach Rich Gedman

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FAME , CONTINUED

homeruns, and 17 RBI. He said Gedman has been key to making the transition from Double-A to Triple-A seamless.

Yorke said, “you know, coming here ... (it) helped to have that kind of guy in my ear after every at-bat.”

LARRY LUCCHINO

The Late Larry Lucchino joined Rich Gedman with his posthumous enshrinement into the WooSox Hall of Fame. Lucchino devoted 44 years of his life to professional baseball. For 30 years since the early 90s, Lucchino and architect Janet Marie Smith worked on numerous ballpark assignments throughout the country, most recently constructing Polar Park in Worcester.



He served as the distinguish president of the Baltimore Orioles, the San Diego Padres, and the Boston Red Sox. He played a vital role in building Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Petco Park in San Diego, and the renovations to modernize Fenway Park.

Lucchino was the WooSox chairman and principal owner from the club's inception until December of 2023. He remained as chairman until his death on April 2, 2024. He singularly was the man who chose Worcester as the new home of the Boston Red Sox' Triple-A affiliate.

After exhausting all options to keep the Pawtucket Red Sox in Rhode Island, Lucchino secured the franchise's New England future with a commitment on August 17, 2018, to bring the team to Worcester for more than 35 years. That led to the creation of an innovative downtown ballpark in the city's resurgent Canal District. Polar Park opened on May 11, 2021.

Along with his induction, the WooSox honored the life and legacy of their late chairman and principal owner with a commemorative patch featuring his initials “LL.” The players have been wearing white “LL” letters on their home red Worcester jerseys since the day he passed away on April 2 of this year. However, as of July 5th at Polar Park, the WooSox started to wear a new, commemorative “LL” patch on their white



Worcester jersey sleeve and their red WooSox jersey sleeve for the remainder of the season. The navy patch with red LL letters is a tribute to the nickname that Larry was affectionately called throughout his professional life.

Prior to his death, Lucchino learned that he would be an Inaugural Member of the WooSox Hall of Fame. He is also a Boston Red Sox (2016) and San Diego Padres (2022) Hall of Famer.

Lucchino was active in numerous civic and charitable efforts. At the time of his death, Lucchino was still the Chairman of the Jimmy Fund, the philanthropic arm of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, which had helped to save his life three times from bouts with cancer. The “home white” and “home red” Worcester jerseys with the commemorative “LL” patch will be auctioned off to fans at the



end of the season, with proceeds benefitting the WooSox Foundation and the Jimmy Fund - two organizations near and dear to Lucchino.

ED AUGUSTUS JR.

Ed Augustus Jr., the former Worcester City Manager from 2014-2022, worked closely with Lucchino for more than three years to bring the Boston Red Sox Triple-A affiliate from Pawtucket, RI to Worcester, MA. Augustus is currently the Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities after being appointed to that newly created post by Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey in June of 2023.



Augustus has spent more than 35 years in public service, building effective teams and bringing people together to have a positive impact on communities. Before joining the Healey-Driscoll Administration, Augustus served as Worcester city manager where he led the state's second-largest city through a revitalization that became known as the Worcester Renaissance. Under his administration, the gateway city saw a wave of new development, infrastructure improvements and new housing. He also led the \$240 million landmark redevelopment of Worcester's Canal District and Kelley Square. This included relocating the Pawtucket Red Sox to the city and the construction of Polar Park.

Born at Worcester City Hospital, Augustus graduated from St. John's High School in Shrewsbury in 1983. He went on to Suffolk University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, and then received a Master of Arts from Johns Hopkins University in Political Science.

Before joining Worcester, Augustus served as Director of Government & Community Relations for the College of the Holy Cross, state senator for the 2nd Worcester District, chief of staff for Congressman Jim McGovern, and chief of staff to the assistant secretary for Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs at the U.S. Department of Education under President Clinton's administration.

As the secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Augustus leads the state's mission to create more homes and lower housing costs for Massachusetts residents. The executive office also distributes funding for community development initiatives, oversees the state's public housing and operates homelessness prevention and housing stabilization programs.

Gedman, Lucchino, and Augustus join eleven members of the Pawtucket Red Sox Hall of Fame that was established in December of 2015, including former PawSox owner Ben Mondor, Wade Boggs, Jim Rice, Joe Morgan, Carlton Fisk, Mo Vaughn, Mike Tamburro, Fred Lynn, Roger Clemens, Nomar Garciaparra, and Jason Varitek.

Pincince Pounding the Ball for the Bravehearts

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

All-Star Bravehearts outfielder Owen Pincince smiled as he stood outside his team's clubhouse located between the Fitton Field baseball and football stadiums at the College of the Holy Cross last July.

“This is basically a second home to me,” said Pincince prior to a mid-July Bravehearts home baseball game. Owen's father, Chris Pincince worked as the offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach for the Holy Cross football team from 2004 to 2007.

“I had to laugh, because that felt like home,” he said, pointing to the nearby Holy Cross football field. “I had no idea what this was,” he said pointing to the home baseball field of the Bravehearts. Turning his attention back to the football field, he said “that's where I spent most of the time. We'd park in the parking garage and walk over.” He then reminisced about walking around as a three-year-old toddler with a Holy Cross helmet on his head and taking photos with the Crusaders then star quarterback Dominic Randolph.

“It's really cool being back,” he said. “I was born in Worcester Memorial. So, it's kind of like a second home here. I think it's a great place to play baseball here this summer. My grandparents live 20 minutes down the road in Uxbridge. They

come to almost every game to watch me play. My parents are only an hour and ten minutes away in Connecticut. It's really nice to see them more than I thought I would. More than last summer where I was in the middle of nowhere in New York. They'll be here tonight.”

As great as the 6-foot, 200-pound outfielder's homecoming has been for his personal life, his play on the field may be better. Touted as an aggressive hitter, the 2024 FCBL All-Star has been one of the best hitters in the league all summer.

“I hate striking out,” Pincince said. “It's my number one pet peeve. I think anytime I walk into the box, I'm better than the pitcher and that's the mentality I have to have. Otherwise, I become timid when I swing.”

Pincince has certainly not been nervous in the box for the Bravehearts this summer. In 46 games this season, Pincince hit safely in 35 of them, including one seven game hit streak and two eight game hit streaks. He has 21 multi-hit games, with four, three-hit games and two, four hit games. He won the league's batting title with a .376 batting average; he led the league in total hits (65); he is second in the league with runs scored (42); he has the least strikeouts (16) among players with a minimum of 170 at bats.



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He hates striking out. Regardless of the count or the situation, Pincince is looking to “attack” the baseball.

“Even with two strikes, I’m not trying to baby it or just put something in play,” he said. “No, I’m still trying to rip a backside double. I hate (just making) contact. I love hitting the ball hard. It always fires up the dugout when you hit it hard, because even when you walk back into the dugout after you get out, you’re like ‘yeah, I won that at bat’ in my own mind.

“If you look at 95 percent of my at-bats probably this summer, I get a hit usually within the first three pitches,” he said. I like to hit that first pitch. The pitcher usually is trying to get ahead of you and I’m trying to beat him. So, if I jump (early in the count), it’s a better chance I’m going to get a better pitch to hit. If it’s a ball, I’ll take it, but if it’s a strike I’ll swing ... I’m always looking to hit.”

Bravehearts manager Alex Dion said Pincince has a “great approach” to hitting. “He’s a very self-aware kid that understands what he does well and what he doesn’t do well. He doesn’t try to do anything or be anyone different ... Owen knows what he does well. He’s a line drive hitter who can hit the ball to all fields. He can handle off-speed pitches and he’s comfortable hitting with two strikes. So, I think his comfort hitting with two strikes speaks to how few strikeouts he has this season. But he’ll pick his spots, too. He does have the ability to hit the ball in the gap or hit it over the fence, but he’s a very consistent line-drive hitter.”

Dion said Pincince adds great versatility to the lineup. “He’s a guy who can hit in a number of different spots in the lineup for us. We’ve had him bat leadoff, hit him second or third. Fifth, sixth, he’s comfortable everywhere. He’s going to drive in runs. (He is third on the team with 23 RBI.) He’s one of the guys I really feel comfortable with at the plate with runners in scoring position. He just always seems to get it done for us. He’s on base nearly every night, scoring a run nearly every night.”

According to Dion, Pincince is most effective hitting in the two-spot with normally fast runners on the base pads and he has a knack for getting on base ahead of the Bravehearts power hitters.

“I wanted Owen hitting as much as possible with runners in scoring position,” Dion said. “We’re just trying to put Owen in a spot where he’s going to have guys on base and plus get in scoring position himself for some of the bigger bats in the lineup.” Pincince leads the team with 31 runs scored.

Pincince also plays a good left field for the Bravehearts while even throwing a couple innings on the mound. He has pitched in two games with a 1-0 record, a

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On to the Knicks: WooSox announcer is NBA Bound

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

The Worcester Red Sox were on the verge of history on August 4th, 2022. “The Woo Sox lead it twelve to nothing; an out away from a combined no-hitter here at Polar Park,” said the calm, smooth talking WooSox play-by-play announcer, Tyler Murray.

Durham Bulls designated hitter Josh Lowe stood at the plate as Sox pitcher Chase Shugart was about to deliver the pitch. The then 32-year-old Murray had the radio call of his life.

“Here’s the 2-0 pitch ... lined to left.” Murray’s voice filled with excitement as Lowe hit a sinking line drive. “Granberg coming on ... diving for it ... OH! HE GOT IT! DEVLIN GRANBERG! IT’S THE FIRST NO-HITTER IN WOOSOX HISTORY!”

Murray had a brief moment of silence as Shugart and catcher Ronaldo Hernandez embraced on the mound with their teammates dancing all around them.

Murray continued, “Michael Wacha! A.J. Politi! Chase Shugart! And a big assist by Devlin Granberg and the WooSox have no-hit the first place Durham Bulls!”

Fast forward to Sunday, September, 15, during the last home game of the 2024 season. Murray was back at Polar Park enjoying another walk-off WooSox victory. Shortstop Chase Meidroth had just walked in the game-winning run in the bottom of the ninth, but Murray was no longer behind the microphone. He already made his final call for the team earlier in the game. He wanted to step away early to enjoy the rest of the game in the DCU Club with his wife, Chrissy.

The team had announced three days earlier that Murray was hired as the new radio voice of the New York Knicks. He will handle play-by-play on all Knicks games throughout the 2024-2025 NBA season.

Murray, 34, said calling the final play of that combined no-hitter two years ago was the biggest highlight of his WooSox announcing career.

“There was a diving catch on the last out, and so I got excited about the call,” Murray said, who will also fill-in for select MSG Networks telecasts of Knicks basketball. “People started noticing me from that big call. I started getting more attention from the Boston media because I did a good job on that call. Which is why I get nervous during no-hitters because I know people are going to be replaying the audio no matter what ...so that was a big moment.”

Murray joined the WooSox radio and television broadcast team in 2022 and becomes the 13th former full-time PawSox/WooSox broadcaster currently working in Major League Baseball, the National Football League, and now the National Basketball Association.

The New York Knicks and MSG Networks said Murray will join their broadcast team for all 82 regular season games and playoffs on 880 ESPN New York Radio. He will also fill-in for select TV broadcasts when legendary Knicks voices Mike Breen and Kenny Albert have national assignments.

“MSG Networks welcomes Tyler to our broadcast team,” said Kevin Marotta, senior vice president of content and marketing for MSG Networks. “We’ve admired Tyler’s versatility, his work ethic and his passion for New York Knicks basketball and he will be a great fit with our current group of distinguished Knicks broadcasters. Tyler and Monica McNutt will form a dynamic team that Knicks fans will respect and appreciate.”

“I’ve dreamed of calling Knicks games for as long as I can remember, so my family and I couldn’t be more excited,” Murray said. “It’s an honor to join MSG Networks, and to represent everyone who has lifted me up along the way.”

Murray was the lead radio and TV broadcaster for the Worcester Red Sox during their 2022-2024 seasons appearing on NESN, NESN+, and the WooSox/Cumulus Radio Network with Jim Cain, Mike Antonellis, Jay Burnham, Cooper Boardman, and J.P. Ricciardi.

“He’s been great. He just creates a good atmosphere,” said Ricciardi before the final NESN broadcast of the season. “I originally thought he was going to major league baseball or an NHL team, but when he got the NBA, I was obviously excited

ANNOUNCER , P17



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Leadership Worcester is currently in session with its 10th cohort to cultivate the next generation of community leaders. Here are some recent alumni accomplishments.

Jennifer Maynard LW '21, started a new role in October 2023 as the Executive Director of the MassPACE Association. In May 2024 she obtained her Doctor of Health Science degree from Bay Path University and obtained certifications in Organizational Excellence in Healthcare and a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt.

Nina T. Dow LW '21, an attorney at Bowditch & Dewey, was named an Emerging Woman Leader in the Law by the Women's Bar Association (WBA).

One of four attorneys to receive the coveted award this year, Dow works in the firm's Estate, Financial & Tax Planning practice area. She co-founded and sits on the board of the first Arab American Bar Association of Massachusetts

and is co-chair of the Worcester County Bar Association's Tax, Trusts and Estates section. She was also a member of Leadership Worcester's Class of 2021.



Laura Marotta LW '18, reports that after ten long years of raising funds to renovate the former Ionic Ave Boy's Club, Creative Hub Worcester held our groundbreaking ceremony last month for the commencement of construction of the future Creative Hub Community Arts Center, which they anticipate to be up and running by late 2025.



In September, **Elizabeth Wambui LW '17**, was honored with an Outstanding Women In Business Award from the Worcester Business Journal. In 2021, Wambui became Fontaine's first director of diversity, inclusion, and impact.

WPI, CONTINUED

returned to work in the aftermath of COVID.

Thankfully, the Worcester City Council in a recent show of unity, unanimously supported an order filed by City Councilor Candy Mero-Carlson who chairs the council's economic development committee to have the city develop an Institutional Zoning ordinance similar to what exists in Boston and Cambridge which are both home to a large number of institutional non-profits that are not required to pay property taxes under state law. The Institutional Zoning Ordinance would require these large institutional non-profits to file 10-year master plans.

These ten-year plans would require these large institutional nonprofits to articulate their land acquisition or construction plans to city officials, local businesses, and neighborhood and community groups publicly. While state law allows large non-profits to not pay property taxes, this process would prevent a repeat of WPI's unilateral and non-transparent acquisition of the two hotels as they would

have to declare their intentions in their master plan or seek an amendment to their 10-year institutional master plan with the city which would trigger a public process and discussion.

While many of Worcester's institutional non-profits play important roles in the community, the consequences of having pieces of property taken off the tax roles annually and as these institutional nonprofits grow is not only resulting in increased real estate tax bills for commercial business and residential taxpayers, but it is also having a chilling effect on the development of commercial and industrial buildings in the city. When modern commercial industrial buildings do not exist within city limits, we have witnessed numerous companies, and the jobs associated with them, leave Worcester. The institutional zoning process will slow this budgetary and economic bleeding and require enhanced transparency by Worcester's institutional nonprofits, which hopefully will lead to a more collaborative approach with municipal and community leaders in the future.

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Next On Your List: Create a Crisis Plan

by DAVID A. BALL, BALL CONSULTING GROUP, LLC

The question is likely when, not if, your business will be tested by a crisis. Mishandling a crisis can create major reputational damage, which will affect the bottom line and, in some cases, put an organization out of business altogether.

One key to managing through a crisis is the development of a crisis communications plan, which can anticipate a multitude of adverse events and create a plan for managing them. Having a plan gives a business the ability to take control of challenging situations, and in a crisis, control is essential.

MISHANDLING OF CRISES

Businesses often do not consider the ramifications and long-term effects of a potential issue and may not believe that the situation could develop into a crisis or lead to negative media coverage. All too often, even after a negative news story, there is a tendency for executives to dismiss the issue as a “one day story” or “much ado about nothing,” both of which I have heard in my many years of counseling business leaders on managing a crisis.

A lack of transparency and proper communication with key parties, staff or the public can exacerbate the problem and result in reduced confidence in your business and its products or services, and lead to a long-term decline in profitability. This has never been more true than today, when bad news lives online seemingly forever, and reversing its impact often requires years of positive news. If ever there was a compelling reason to get ahead of a problem, this is it. A crisis plan will identify potential issues up front so that they can be considered and managed.

HOW TO CREATE A CRISIS PLAN

Potential crises can include things like: natural disasters, such as fires, gas leaks and climate-driven events; cyberattacks; allegations of harassment or discrimination; labor relations issues; government investigations and settlements; and litigation.

Major components of creating a crisis plan include: identifying potential crises; reviewing past situations; establishing a crisis management team and identifying key stakeholders; and diagramming existing communications within an organization and how they can be improved. Additionally, materials can be created in advance and included in the plan that will give your business a head start in dealing with an issue.

In order to plan for crises, it is important to create a process for identifying challenging issues across the enterprise, and address them. When we begin our crisis planning process with clients, we generally ask a business’s management team this simple question: “What keeps you up at night?”

By identifying risks facing a business and addressing them proactively, a company can mitigate potential crises. If policy or operational changes are needed, make them now, before they become an issue.

It is also important to evaluate your organizational communications chain. When bad things happen, does the CEO get notified in a timely way? Conversely, does the CEO get informed of too much minutiae? Analyzing how bad news travels up through the organization’s chain of command is vitally important when developing a plan, as is making operational changes to improve internal communications flow, particularly with respect to “bad news” that can quickly become a crisis if not managed properly.

The entire management team must take the time to become familiar with the plan. Tabletop drills on the plan are essential to ensuring that everyone involved understands their role. Any plan must be tested from time to time, and also updated to address changes in the organization.

HOW TO ESTABLISH A CRISIS TEAM

Building a crisis team is essential in effectively executing a crisis plan and ensuring a consistent response in times of trouble. The CEO generally sits atop the crisis team, though they have wide latitude to delegate tasks and responsibilities depending on the particular matter. Other members of the C-Suite, including the general counsel and communications lead, will have key roles, as will those responsible for overseeing operational lines. Human Resources, Information Technology and Finance will need a seat at that table, along with key external advisors such as an external communications consultant and outside legal counsel.



MEDIA MATERIALS TO PREPARE

Many crises can lead to media coverage, and a plan will enable you to think through this response in advance. The news media should never be ignored. At the same time, you do not want to grant media interviews before you know all of the facts. A media holding statement will be critical. This statement should generally be no longer than a paragraph and can communicate the steps being taken to address the issue or concern for anyone impacted by the crisis. It ensures that the company will have a voice in the story rather than appear evasive with a “no comment.” In the eyes of the public, no comment equals guilt.

INTERNAL ISSUES CAN BECOME CRISES

Having a strong workplace culture, where ideas are openly exchanged and concerns can be raised to leadership without concern for job security should be the ideal for all businesses. If employees feel that they can freely raise concerns and that these concerns will be addressed, there is less likelihood for an internal issue to become an external issue. Businesses with a strong culture tend to weather crises better than others.

The best way to manage a crisis is never having one in the first place. Leadership should make a concerted effort to foster a culture of communication and collaboration and lead by example. Urging ethical behavior at every turn goes a long way as well. Lastly, invest in and support strong and proactive HR leadership to help manage internal conflict.

FIVE CRISIS RULES OF THUMB

While every situation is different, here are five rules of thumb to manage through a crisis.

1. Always prepare for the worst-case scenario; hope for the best.
2. Be as direct, transparent and straightforward as possible in communications while tightly controlling the flow of information.
3. Talk in detail only when you have a true command of the facts; avoid early conjecture, because the media and public will hold you to it.
4. Have a strong team of advisers and a line of credit in place before a crisis emerges.
5. Continually assess your organization for risk and make risk awareness part of your culture; hire an independent risk management professional to proactively assess the adequacy of your insurance coverage.

Planning for a crisis may sound costly and complicated, however, any true crisis will surely cost your business more and will be filled with complexity. Take the time to get ahead of your next crisis.

David A. Ball is the President & Founder of Ball Consulting Group, LLC, a strategic communications firm that works with many organizations in Central Massachusetts. He has helped more than 100 organizations plan for and manage major crises. His email address is david@ballcg.com.



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CREDIT UNION

Tax Credits for Companies Who Hire New Arrivals

by **MICHAEL KANE**, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

and **DAVE GARVIN**, MANAGER OF WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

On October 11th, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual Game Changers Conference and Expo on the topic of the Workforce: Finding and Training Talent to Keep Worcester Moving Forward. Leading up to the event the Chamber hosted a variety of information sessions and roundtables on topics relevant to how organizations in Central Massachusetts can address their current and future Workforce needs.

One of these discussions was our Business & Government Forum in June, where the Chamber welcomed the new Assistant Secretary for Employer Engagement and Employment Outcomes, Ken Brown. The discussion at the Forum centered on how businesses in Central Massachusetts can fill open job positions with newly arriving migrants who want to work.

In his role, Brown focuses on helping connect new migrants who have obtained work authorizations, with job opportunities across key sectors like healthcare, retail, hospitality, and manufacturing. Brown is dedicated to addressing the state's urgent workforce needs by filling open job positions with qualified individuals, while also overseeing hiring and job placement efforts for new arrivals.

Recently, the state passed legislation in the supplemental budget to assist with the efforts of connecting new arrivals with employment opportunities in the form of a tax credit that businesses can utilize to fill positions. A total of \$10 million has been (set) to operate the program, which businesses can tap into to assist with their workforce needs.

The tax credit, formally known as the Temporary Authorized Training Tax Credit for Emergency Assistance is a component of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's ongoing strategy to help break down barriers to employment for individuals in emergency assistance shelters and connect them with training and jobs.

In order to qualify for the tax credit an eligible business corporation, partnership, LLC or other legal entity **MUST**: be engaged in doing business in the Commonwealth; hire a qualified authorized job seeker on or after April 30th, 2024; and provide authorized training to the jobseeker.

A qualified jobseeker is an individual who receives benefits through Emergency Assist Shelter programs, they must be a resident of MA, legally authorized to work in the United States, and provide a copy of the following: An NFL-9, a length of stay approval extension, or a length of stay denial extension. Furthermore, the employer must ensure the job seeker, lives in an emergency assistance shelter, participates in authorized training, and works at least 20 hours per week.

A qualified 'Authorized Training' for the tax credit is a training program approved by the Massachusetts Department of Career Services and is offered by an employer to train qualified trainees. These programs could include, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Training Leading to a Certification, credential, or license, training-on-the-job. I complete list can be found here.

Also, employers must enroll the qualified jobseeker(s) within ten (10) business days of hire in an authorized training program, retain the qualified jobseeker(s) as an employee for a period of at least ninety (90) consecutive days in a taxable year; and provide post-placement support services and

evidence of hire and retention.

The tax credit, it is not to exceed \$150K per employer, to which \$2,500 is provided to the employer for each qualified jobseeker that receives the training from the entity. The tax credit applies to taxable years starting January 1, 2024, and will expire by January 1, 2026, or earlier if the shelter capacity limit is lifted.

Overall, this program serves a dual purpose for the Commonwealth, an initiative that assists new arrivals with jobs as well as businesses with addressing their workforce needs. If you would like to learn more about this Training Tax Credit program, please reach out to Mike Kane, Economic Development & Public Policy Associate at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. mkane@worcesterchamber.org

Temporary Authorized Training Tax Credit for Emergency Assistance A Quick Start Guide

Submit your application today!



TATTCEA

For eligible businesses who hire and provide job training to newcomers from Emergency Assistance (EA) shelters to help them thrive in Massachusetts and meet your workforce needs.

The "Temporary Authorized Training Tax Credit for Emergency Assistance" (TATTCEA) is a tax credit for employers that provide employment, work-related training, knowledge, and skills to work-authorized jobseekers in Emergency Assistance (EA) shelters.

If you are a Massachusetts business corporation, partnership, Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), or other legal entity, you may be eligible to claim a tax credit of \$2,500.00* for each Qualified Trainee (EA jobseeker).

Program Eligibility

- Conduct business in the Commonwealth;
- On or after April 30, 2024, hire a work-authorized Qualified Trainee to work at least 20 hours per week;
- Enroll the Qualified Trainee in an authorized training program within 10 days of hire;
- Retain the Qualified Trainee as an employee for a period of at least 90 consecutive days in a taxable year; and
- Provide post-placement support services and evidence of hire and retention.

Application Process

1. Complete and submit the TATTCEA Training Authorization Application Form.
2. MDCS will authorize training if not previously approved.
3. Hire and train the Qualified Trainee (jobseeker).
4. Upon attainment of Qualified Trainee 90-day retention, complete and submit the TATTCEA Tax Credit Application Form.
5. If applicable, return any requested additional documentation to MDCS.
6. MDCS will verify eligible jobseeker participation.
7. MDCS will review additional documentation and approve or deny Tax Credit Issuance.

*Total tax credit is not to exceed \$150,000.00 per employer (FEIN). Non-profit businesses with a tax liability may also participate.

Scan the QR code to the right to submit a TATTCEA Application Form or visit mass.gov/mdcs/eataxcredit

DEPARTMENT OF CAREER SERVICES

To speak with your local MassHire Career Center Business Service Representative, visit: mass.gov/careercenters.

ANNOUNCER, CONTINUED

and happy for him. He's got the kind of voice that can transfer to anything. And I know he loves basketball. I'm just happy to have the opportunity to be a part of what he was doing and to see his progression. He going to do great!"

Ricciardi said he learned a lot from Murray during the time they spent in the booth this season. "What you learn is when maybe to speak and when not to speak. He sets you up in a way that works. When you work with someone good like Tyler, they slide you right into the scene really easy. He's like playing with a good point guard. He makes you look good."

Murray said he enjoyed working with a career baseball man like Ricciardi. "When you have a guy like that who's done everything in baseball and someone who garners a ton of respect throughout Worcester, I just try to tee it up for him. He needs to be the star. I've seen 13 years of minor League Baseball, but J.P. has seen 40 years of baseball at every level. I think I'm lucky to know that the audience doesn't care what I think. They want the facts from me and a lot of fun information, but the stories come from J.P. The whole job is teeing him up. You want to bring the best out of him."

Tyler also joined the Boston Red Sox radio broadcast crew for approximately 25 games this season on the WEEI/Red Sox Radio Network. He worked with Will Flemming, a former PawSox broadcaster, and Lou Merloni, a former PawSox/Red Sox player.

Murray is the latest in a long line of PawSox/WooSox broadcasters who have received the call to the big leagues. Those include: Gary Cohen (New York Mets in 1989), Don Orsillo (Boston Red Sox in 2001), David Flemming (San Francisco Giants in 2004), Andy Freed (Tampa Bay Rays in 2005), Dave Jageler (Washington Nationals in 2006), Dan Hoard (NFL Cincinnati Bengals in 2011), Aaron Goldsmith (Seattle Mariners in 2013), Bob Socci (New England Patriots in 2013), Jeff Levering (Milwaukee Brewers in 2015), Will Flemming (Boston Red Sox in 2019), Mike Monaco (ESPN & Boston Red Sox fill-in on NESN), and Josh Maurer (Milwaukee Brewers in 2022).

Being a member of the PawSox/WooSox announcer fraternity has meant a lot to Murray. "It's mind-blowing to come from a long line broadcasters," Murray

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CHAMBER BOARD LAUNCHES YES PROGRAM TO EMPOWER YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Below: WRCC Board Members and YES Program participants at Mechanics Hall this Spring.

by CAIT LUBELCZYK, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



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"Our employees have helped build this company, and Worcester is our home. By giving through our [corporate donor advised] fund, we benefit our community and improve its quality of life."

Thomas J. Bartholomew
President, Bartholomew & Company

This year, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is fostering the next generation of business leaders with its newly launched Young Entrepreneurs Sponsorship (YES) Program. Spearheaded by Chamber Board Chair Dr. Satya Mitra, the initiative invites Board Members to sponsor young entrepreneurs as Chamber members, providing them with access to valuable networking opportunities, business programs, and mentorship. Dr. Mitra, elected at the start of the year, envisioned the YES Program as a way to "pay it forward" and help develop emerging leaders within the Worcester community.

With unanimous support from all 40 Board Members, the YES Program has successfully enrolled 38 young entrepreneurs, each aged 45 or younger. Participants now have access to a wealth of resources and connections through the Chamber, with Board Members offering their expertise as mentors. Highlighting his vision, Dr. Mitra compared the program to cultivating a "farm team for the Chamber," much like the WooSox serve as a training ground for the Red Sox.

The new YES members are enthusiastic about joining and benefiting from the guidance of established business leaders. The initiative marks a milestone for the Chamber and, according to Dr. Mitra, promises to inspire future cycles of mentorship and development. "My deepest, heartfelt gratitude to all of the Board Members for their dedication to this program," said Dr. Mitra. "I would also like to extend sincere thanks to all Chamber staff members who worked hard and gave a dedicated cooperation to make this program a success, with special thanks to Kristen Luna who has given a tremendous support." Dr. Mitra hopes to see the YES Program continue annually.

ANNOUNCER , CONTINUED

said. "The development I've gone through. I definitely was not good in Single-A or Double-A. Listening back to those tapes, it's like, yikes, how did I even get this far? It's definitely been a lot of work, but it's rewarding. And everybody on that list of 13 names, more so the recent guys, have hit me up when I got this job and let me know if I needed anything ... they'd say, 'keep working hard and things will work out' and they were right. Having their backing meant a lot to me ... I'm proud to have continued the incredible tradition of Red Sox Triple-A broadcasters taking the next step in their professional careers."

Murray was hired by the WooSox prior to the 2022 season after being the lead broadcaster of the New Hampshire Fisher Cats for the previous six seasons. In addition to 13 years as a Minor League broadcaster, Tyler has been the primary voice for Hockey East on NESN and broadcasts dozens of college sporting events on NESN throughout the year. He's primarily called college basketball for UMass on WEEI Springfield and for UNH on ESPN+.

Upcoming Affiliate Chamber Events

Auburn

auburnchamberma.org



Auburn Chamber Annual Holiday Mixer

December 10, 2024
5:30pm-7:30pm
Pakachoag Center
203 Pakachoag Street, Auburn, MA

Blackstone Valley

Chamber of Commerce

blackstonevalley.org



Jingle & Mingle & Stroll

December 4, 2024
5:30pm-7:30pm
Vaillancourt Folk Art
9 Main St #1H
Sutton, MA 01590

Love Your Legislator Breakfast

February 14, 2025
7:30am-9:15am
Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern
5 Southwick Street
Mendon, MA 01756

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Chamber of Central MA South

cmschamber.org



Chamber Family Jingle Mingle at Festival of {Giving} Trees

December 7, 2024
6:00pm-9:00pm
LaSalle Reception Center
444 Main Street
Southbridge, MA 01550

Clinton Area

Chamber of Commerce

clintonareachamber.org



Business After Hours

December 10, 2024 5:00p-7:30pm
New England Botanical Garden at Tower Hill
11 French Drive
Boylston, MA
Admission includes Holiday Light Tour

LABO

labous.org



End of Year Recognition Reception

December 6, 2024
6:00pm-11:00pm
Mechanics Hall
321 Main Street, Worcester, MA

Wachusett Area

Chamber of Commerce

wachusettareachamber.org



Annual Holiday Gathering

December 3, 2024
6:00pm-9:00pm
Tatnuck Country Club
1222 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA

Webster Dudley Oxford

Chamber of Commerce

wdochamberma.org



Annual Legislative Breakfast

November 22, 2024
7:30am
Samuel Slater's Restaurant
200 Gore Road, Webster, MA

Jingle All The Way Christmas Party

December 9, 2024
5:30pm-7:30pm
Point Breeze
114 Point Breeze Road, Webster, MA

ANNOUNCER , CONTINUED

Murray said calling a baseball game is much different than calling hockey or basketball. "Baseball is a lot a storytelling to fill the time, so you want to make sure you talk to players. It's every day. You want to make sure you're keeping things fresh. That comes with a lot of conversations with players. It's the same thing with the other sports, but there's so much action with the other sports. Your main focus is accurately describing everything. It's a fun challenge getting all the little info nuggets in, but during the rhythm of the game.

"For instance, if the point guard has it, you only have so much time to say he's coming off a 30-point night. For baseball, a guy walks up to the plate. Here's the stats, here's where his mother went to college, you know, all that kind of stuff. You have all day to say that, but for basketball and hockey, it's all about timing ...

"It's like studying for a test because if you don't know every single player's sweater number or jersey number, the puck moves so quickly. You don't have time to look down to see who's number 10. You have to know it," Murray said as he snapped his fingers. "Because the puck is going to be on someone else's stick in less than a second ... where in baseball, you're watching a 10 pitch at-bat, two bases loaded walk. Okay, J.P. Ricciardi, take it away, man. That's unique to baseball. You'd have to come up with different ways to fill that time. The other sports are all action."

Tyler was born in Riverside, Connecticut, grew up in Medfield, Massachusetts, went to Xaverian Brothers High in Westwood, MA, and graduated Boston University with a Broadcast Journalism degree in 2011. He started his play-by-play career with the Daytona

The City of Worcester has announced that it will offer free parking on Saturdays for five consecutive weeks beginning with Small Business Saturday (see dates below).

This initiative is designed to make it easier for residents and visitors to shop locally, while also helping to drive foot traffic to the city's many small businesses, particularly in the retail and restaurant sectors. As we all know, the holiday season is a critical time for many of our businesses, and this effort will make a meaningful difference for them by reducing parking barriers for customers.

It's more important than ever to support local businesses, especially as they work to recover and thrive after a challenging few years. Shopping local not only keeps dollars within our community but also helps maintain the character and vibrancy of Worcester's neighborhoods. We appreciate the City's initiative to make it easier for residents and visitors alike to enjoy and support our local businesses!

Every Saturday from Nov. 30th (Small Business Saturday) to Dec. 28th - Five Saturdays

- Free parking at all parking meters in the city.
- Free parking all day at Green Street Lot, Water Street Lot, and Millbury Street Lot.

Festival of Lights, Friday, Dec. 6 - BOSTON POPS at HANOVER and RAILERS at DCU.

- Free Parking all day at all meters in Downtown Passport Zones beginning at 2PM.
- Free parking beginning at 2PM at Pearl Elm Garage

Canal District Holiday Stroll (10AM - 10PM) and Tree Lighting (3-5PM, tree lighting at 5PM), Saturday, Dec. 7

- Free parking at all parking meters in the city.
- Free parking all day at Green Street Lot, Water Street Lot, and Millbury Street Lot.

stART at the Station, Sunday, Dec. 8

- Free parking all day at Union Station Garage, Green Street Lot, Water Street Lot, and Millbury Street Lot.



2024 Ribbon Cuttings AND GRAND OPENINGS!

2024 was an exciting year for grand openings and ribbon cuttings! Congratulations to our member businesses in Worcester on your grand openings and ribbon cuttings! Your hard work, innovation, and passion bring new energy and opportunity to our community. We are excited to see you thrive and make a lasting impact. Best of luck as you begin this exciting new chapter! Make sure to visit and support these new businesses in our city!

- January 4 - The 1885, 48-52 Green Street, Worcester
- January 31- Positively Suzanne, 48 Jackson Street, Worcester
- February 6- ScrubaDub, 575 Park Avenue, Worcester
- February 8- Hamilton Soriano (Edward Jones), 1 West Boylston Street, Worcester
- February 15- Rt. 12 Pickle, 184 West Boylston Street, West Boylston
- March 14- Center for Women & Enterprise, 300 Main Street, 1st Floor, Worcester
- March 20- The Bean Counter Bakery, 113 Highland Street
- April 9- Dipody Woo, 446 Main Street, 4th Floor, Worcester
- April 25- Christopher Group, 490 Shrewsbury Street, Worcester
- May 16- M. Pope & Co. Fine Jewelers, 365 Shrewsbury Street, Worcester (J)
- May 28- VentureX, 100 Front Street, Worcester, MA (C)
- June 18- Countrybank, 1393 Grafton Street, Worcester, MA (L)
- June 26- Upright Design & Build, Inc., 234 SW Cutoff, Worcester
- July 11- Neelu's Café/ Grove Village Market, 100 Grove Street
- August 15- Center for Applied Behavioral Instruction, 80 William Street, Worcester
- August 22- Ita's Pizza Kitchen, 453 Lincoln Street, Worcester
- August 28- Safe Exit Initiative, 534 Cambridge Street, Worcester
- September 12- SBDC, 20 Franklin Street, Worcester (A)
- September 24- ConvenientMD Urgent Care, 70 Gold Star Blvd., Worcester (K)
- September 25- Kelly's Roast Beef, 70 Gold Star Blvd., Worcester (E)
- September 25- Tembo Grill Restaurant, 1105 West Boylston Street, Worcester (F)
- October 1- Masis Staffing, 1158 Main Street, Worcester (M)
- October 8- Shawmut Construction, 20 Franklin Street (G)
- October 15- CASA Project Worcester, 100 Grove Street, Worcester (D)
- October 21- Saint Vincent Hospital Physical Therapy, 1 West Boylston Street, Worcester (H)
- October 31- Meryl's Safe Haven, 48 Wachusett Street, Worcester (B)
- November 7- Veterinary Urgent Care, 70 Gold Star Blvd., Worcester (I)



BRAVEHEARTS , CONTINUED

strikeout, and has not given up a run. He said facing opposing hitters has helped with his approach to hitting.

“Pitching helped me with sequencing,” he said. “So, if you throw me a high fastball on an 0-2 count and I take it for a ball, a lot of things pitching coaches will say is to bury a curveball the next pitch because you are adjusting the hitter’s eye angle. So, you’re looking lower in the zone as a hitter. Or if you run me in with a fastball that’s moving into me, (then) the pitcher could run a backdoor slider the other way on the next pitch ... Pitching really helps with pitch sequencing. It helps knowing what’s coming next. You never want to guess what a pitch is, but having an idea what it could be really, really helps.”

As good as a hitter Pincince has shown, Bravehearts pitching coach Greg Stagani sees some untapped talent when it comes Pincince throwing the ball. “He’s very raw, but he has a lot of talent, a lot of ability. He’s in our lineup almost every night hitting wise. It’s tough asking him to come out of the lineup to pitch. I think he’s a super talented kid that can do both at a pretty high level, which we’re excited about. I think the raw ability is there. He just needs to fine tune a couple things to get where he wants to be because I know the kind of competitor he is. He’s always trying to get better, so, it’s getting those little things worked out to a spot where he’s comfortable.”

Pincince’s fastball has been clocked at 93 miles per hour last season at the University of New Haven. Stagani said Pincince also features a splitter with his regular fastball. “He’s a kid that throws pretty hard,” said Stagani. “He’s unique. He’s a splitter guy. He’s just one of those guys whose freakishly talented. If you just put him on the mound, he’ll do it. Just getting him consistent reps in bullpens and games will go a long way for him.”

Prior to playing for the Bravehearts, Pincince played two seasons of varsity

baseball for North Haven High School in Connecticut where he was named team captain as a senior. He earned All-State honors as a junior and received All-Southern Connecticut Conference twice, as a junior and senior.

During his two-season stint as a freshman and sophomore at the University of New Haven, Pincince had 85 hits in 82 games with a slugging percentage of .377 and 47 RBI. He was named to the Northeast-10 All-Conference Third Team and the All-Rookie Team as a freshman.

Pincince will look for a change of scenery by transferring to play college ball at Siena College next season in Loudonville, New York.

“I think he made a good move,” said Dion. “He was a guy who entered the transfer portal at the beginning of the summer. He played a couple years at New Haven and didn’t get a ton of run out there this spring. He found himself in a position for a change. He explored a lot of different options in Divisions 1, 2, and 3, but Siena came after him pretty hard. They wanted him ... He’s a division 1 (caliber) baseball player and I think he found a place he can call home for the next two years. I think he’ll do very well there.”

After all his success this summer, Pincince said his time working with local kids during Bravehearts baseball clinics has been most rewarding. “It’s cool to be kind of a local celebrity to them,” he said. “They think you are a lot better than you really are ... The kids started asking questions. ‘How do I get better? What am I doing wrong?’ I love that part of it. I love it. It was really cool to hang with the kids ... Coaching is definitely on the bucket list.”

Bravehearts note:

Seven players from the Worcester Bravehearts were chosen to attend the FCBL All-Star Game played at Dodd Stadium in Norwich, Connecticut. Two pitchers, Nik Pavia and Brady Stuart; two infielders, Shea Grady and Dylan LaPointe; and three outfielders, Matt Milone, Cody Smith, and Owen Pincince were selected to participate in the event.



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by **MONIQUE JOSEPH**, PRESIDENT, DISCOVER CENTRAL MA



Gift giving can also give back to your community when you shop local. Whether you're supporting a new local maker or a family business rooted in the region for generations, when you shop at a local business during the holiday season, know you're making an important economic impact in Central MA.

GIFTING BY TYPE

Here's a shortlist of ideas to help you find the perfect present for the many types of people on your list.

FOR THE BOOKWORM: Feed the imagination of a friend or family member with a book from Bedlam Book Book Cafe or Annie's Book Stop in Worcester, MA.

FOR THE FASHIONABLE: It's all the rage to support local pride with a cool shirt or crewneck from Worcester Wares. For something more sophisticated while still casually chic, try Lake Road Living in Sturbridge, MA.

FOR THE SPORTS FAN: Between the WooSox, the Worcester Railers HC, and The Bravehearts, it's never been a better time to be (or shop for) a sports fan in Worcester. If your family is into college sports, the Holy Cross Athletics also have team stores online.

FOR YOUR HOLIDAY HOST: A gift basket, edible treat or regional wine from a local market is a perfect gift for your host this holiday season. The premade gift baskets at Tutti Quanti, an Italian market in Fiskdale, MA, packs an authentic punch. The imported olive oil selection at Kalamos Greek and Mediteranian Market is bountiful, and the wine and dip selection at Ed Hyder's is unmatched.

FOR YOUR WHOLE FAMILY: Live theatre is always a winning choice, and tickets to see a holiday show make an excellent early present everyone will enjoy. The Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts is hosting numerous holiday shows, such as 'A Christmas Carol,' 'The Nutcracker,' and the Boston Pops Holiday Tour. At the DCU Center catch the Trans-Siberian Orchestra.

LOCALLY MADE

When you give a locally made gift, there's a strong chance it's also one of a kind. Central MA is home to a wide variety of skilled artisans, so you're bound to find a special present that shows how thoughtful you are when you visit one of these establishments.

ILAH CIBIS JEWELRY | WORCESTER, MA | This shop is a destination experience for anyone who visits. While you can buy their goods online, we highly recommend visiting because you'll be immersed in creativity of this unique space, and there are many interactive displays that make it fun to try things on to help you decide. If you're looking to create something custom, book an appointment. They can use loose gemstones you have, or you can start with a blank slate to create a one-of-a-kind masterpiece.

VAILLANCOURT FOLK ART | SUTTON, MA | While the online store is excellent, we suggest visiting Vaillancourt Folk Art in person to meet the makers behind these treasured chalkware ornaments and collectable Santas. Not only can you watch the artisans work, but you'll also find a Christmas museum and displays that will inspire your holiday spirit.

WORCESTER PUBLIC MARKET | WORCESTER, MA | A huge benefit to holiday shopping at the Worcester Public Market is the variety of vendors at one destination. We recommend a gift set from Girly Girl Soaps, the chocolate from Bri's Sweet Treats, and a warm wool sweater from Erin's Gifts.

IDEAS FOR BIG SPENDERS

The holidays can be a great time to surprise your partner (or treat yourself) to the big ticket items you've been keeping your eye on all year.

JEWELRY & CRYSTAL | Gifted in their signature silver and purple packaging, presents from Sharfmans Jewelers in Worcester have sparked joy since 1937. From exquisite diamonds and gems to Seiko timepieces and Waterford crystal bowls, you'll find a wide selection of gift options. On the less expensive side, locals may also appreciate their ornaments featuring landmarks like the Burnside Fountain and Salisbury Mansion.

UPGRADE APPLIANCES | From stainless steel French door fridges to QLED 4K flatscreens, Percy's TV & Appliance is a local family business that stands the test of time. With the shortage of electronic components on the rise, it's

the right time to shop what's in stock locally so you can enjoy your upgrades sooner than later.

NOT SURE WHAT TO GIVE?

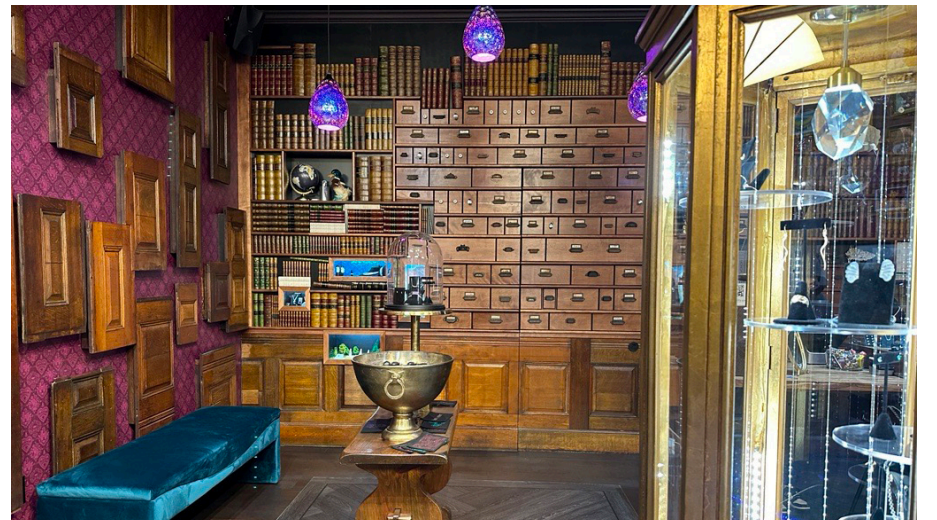
When you have no idea what you're looking for and prefer to shop at a bigger store, take a walk around KLEM'S in Spencer, MA, where you'll find a little bit of everything for anyone on your list. Or sit back from the comfort of home and shop their curated gift box section online, where they've done all the selection work for you!

The WORCESTER ART MUSEUM'S GIFT SHOP is an excellent choice for unique and artful gifts for people of any age. With gifts like inspiring activity books for kids, a beer stein made from a baseball bat, and a Monet Water Lillies tea set, your taste in gift-giving will be elevated simply because the museum's shop is as thoughtfully curated as their galleries.

ECOTARIUM and OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE also have incredible gift shops with a wide variety of goods to suit adults and kids in your life. Pair a gift like an otter stuffed animal with tickets to an otter feeding experience, or get a Village-made tin lantern and an annual family membership so you can revisit a favorite destination again and again all year round.

The City of Worcester and surrounding towns are full of excellent places to shop, so it couldn't be easier to buy local this season. For more ideas, visit DiscoverCentralMA.com and download our mobile app to discover itineraries that guide you on a local shopping spree. From the Worcester Women-Owned Shopping Trail to the Holiday & Winter Bucket List, consider us your local treasure trove for ideas on what to do and where to shop.

Discover Central MA is the official Regional Tourism Council of Worcester and Central MA. Interested in becoming a member of Discover Central MA? Email Tim Power, Business Development & Engagement Manager at tpower@discovercentralma.org.



Above: iLAH Cibis Jewelry in Worcester's Canal District.

ANNOUNCER , CONTINUED

Cubs in 2012 and spent four years in the Florida State League. He returned to New England to broadcast for the Fisher Cats in 2016.

Murray, who lives in Nashua, NH with his wife Chrissy, has also provided play-by-play for a variety of sports and schools in New England over the past dozen years, including Boston University, Boston College, Dartmouth, Harvard, Holy Cross, Merrimack, Northeastern, Providence, UConn, UNH, UMass, UMass Boston, UMass Lowell, and many others.

Murray said he will miss the Worcester baseball fans, as well as his time behind the mic.

"The fan attention and passion for this team is insane," he said. "They care about everything on the field more than any other fan in minor league baseball because Worcester is full of great baseball fans ... The WooSox took a chance on me three years ago, and I'm so grateful for the experiences I've had and the friendships I've made at Polar Park."



2025

WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SIGNATURE EVENTS

JANUARY

Thursday, January 23rd
Business after Hours 150th
Kick Off | Top of the Tower
Sponsored by: Country Bank

Monday January 27th
Young Professional Night Out
| Boland's Bar & Patio

FEBRUARY

Thursday February 13th
Business after Hours |
EcoTarium
*Sponsored by: The Guru Tax &
Financial Services*

MARCH

Thursday, March 6th
Breakfast Club | AC Hotel
Marriott Worcester

Thursday, March 13th
Business after Hours | DCU
Center/ Worcester Railers
Sponsored by: Country bank

APRIL

Thursday, April 24th
Business after Hours w/
Affiliates | Sparetime
Recreation
Sponsored by: Rockland Trust

MAY

Friday, May 9th
Woostapreneurs |
College of the Holy Cross

Thursday May 15th
Business after Hours
Annual Awards &
Networking | TBD

JUNE

Thursday, June 12th
Worcester Women's
Leadership Conference |
DCU Center
*Sponsored by: The Hanover
Insurance Group and UMass
Memorial Health*

Thursday, June 26th
Breakfast Club |
Beechwood Hotel
Sponsored by: Country bank

Monday June 30th
Chamber Golf
Tournament | TBD

SEPTEMBER

Thursday, September 11th
Breakfast Club | College of
the Holy Cross

OCTOBER

Thursday, October 23rd
Business after Hours |
The Hanover Theater

DIVERSE PROFESSIONAL ROUNDTABLE EVENTS

Thursday, February 6th
Annual Business Meeting &
Social Mixer| 4-7pm

Thursday, April 17th
Social Mixer w/ LABO | 5-7pm

Wednesday, May 14th
CEO Breakfast | 9-11am

Thursday, September 18th
Awards & Networking Event |
5-7pm

Tuesday, November 18th
Education Event | 9-10am

Thursday, December 4th
Social Mixer | 5-7pm

NOVEMBER

**Monday, November 10th-
Wednesday November 12th**
Worcester goes to
Washington

Thursday November 20th
Breakfast Club
Sponsored by: Bankhometown

DECEMBER

Friday, December 5th
150th Annual Meeting |
DCU Center

Thursday December 11th
Business After Hours |
Good Imperial Brewing
Company
Sponsored by: Rockland Trust

Make sure to keep an eye on our calendar for more information on the following programming: Business and Government Forum, Emerging Workforce Forum, President's Council, HR Roundtable, Healthcare Roundtable, Manufacturing Roundtable, Construction & Real Estate Roundtable, Nonprofit Roundtable, POW, Seminar Series, Young Professionals Night Out, and more!

