Joseph Thompson, who has been at MASS MoCA’s helm ever since its early planning stages, believes the North Adams cultural and commercial complex is poised for a new wave of public interest that will match or exceed that of its opening day 18 years ago with the formal debut of Building 6, its most ambitious expansion to date.

“We believe the opening of Building 6 will attract attention to North Adams at a level not seen since 1999,” said Thompson.

That belief will be put to the test on May 28, when MASS MoCA visitors first begin exploring 130,000 square feet of new gallery, exhibition and event space within Building 6, an imposing three-story structure at the western end of the sprawling 19th century mill complex.
Among these will be an expanded faerie village, with larger tents to accommodate the crowds and activities, as well as interaction with the Faerie Queen, members of her court and assorted other characters.

Prominent faerie lore author Jana Laiz will return to lead a full slate of story-telling activity, which Sellers noted was one of the most popular features of last year’s festival. There will also be faerie wing painting and other creative activities, strolling minstrels and performers, live music and dancing under a newly built pavilion, and many other creative activities, strolling minstrels, strolling mimes, and other creative activity, which Sellers noted was one of the column’s favorite events, will return to lead a full slate of story-telling activity this year.

“We’re still doing it for the same reason,” said Tavelli (who at this year’s festival will make a dramatic entrance of orange and green, and coordinated lights), “so that Tavelli is hoping to introduce this year, is an augmented reality app that is being by pop-up galleries and other businesses.

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design was developed in coordination with the library’s advisory board and other community members.

The chamber settled into the 1,000-square-foot storefront at the corner of Pleasant and Main streets in May of last year. “We moved in at the beginning of the busy summer season, so we didn’t have a chance to do any real work on the space right away,” said Spaulding. “We started planning it in September when things began to slow down, and we began making the physical changes in late February and early March. Now that it’s completed, we decided to have an official grand opening celebration.”

The new Visitors Center is marked by large, lively signage and graphics in its windows, and an interior with displays and information. “We're still doing it for the same reason,” said Tavelli (who at this year’s festival will make a dramatic entrance of orange and green, and coordinated lights), “so that Tavelli is hoping to introduce this year, is an augmented reality app that is being
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“We totally remodelled the interior, including a massive custom-made vinyl covering with text,” said Spaulding. “It’s very interactive. People can also talk to the staff to find out more information and get directions. There is also space for several hundred brochures.”

While the emphasis is on Lenox, the Visitors Center also includes information about attractions throughout the Berkshires. One section is focused on outdoor sites and recreational opportunities. That includes a large plexiglass display with a map of sites for hiking, skiing and other outdoor activities.

Another section is focused on local cultural attractions, including photographic displays of The Mount, Ventfort Hall, Shakespeare & Co., and a 14-foot-high seating chart of Tanglewood. The Visitors Center is also a site for 1/2-Tix, a countywide program in which people can buy discounted same-day tickets to selected cultural events.

Works by local artists are also on display, including Andrew DeVries, Judy Bates and Tom Fiorini.

Another section is focused on a new campaign the chamber has launched – called “Why Lenox?” – to inform visitors about the community, and encourage them to move and open businesses in the town. It will also include a website with online information.

“The display in the Visitors Center is an interactive wall that is basically a physical recreation of the website,” said Spaulding. “It includes photographs of local people and community life that visitors can flip to see information on the back.”

There is also informational material about resources, including homes, businesses and commercial sites for sale.

“We’ll talk to people who are interested, and answer questions about Lenox, and offer practical information about relocating, such local schools and how to register their kids,” said Spaulding. “We also have information packets, and can give them forms they would need if they move or start a business here.”

He noted that this includes information and application forms for the town’s new Tax Increment Financing program, which provides extended tax deferments to eligible businesses that start up, relocate or make significant improvements to facilities in Lenox.

The Visitors Center is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. After Memorial Day, hours will be expanded for the summer season to 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Spaulding said that the goal is to always have two people in the office during hours that the Visitors Center is open. In addition to him and Trie, the chamber has hired four part-time workers for the summer. “We also have a crew of volunteers who come in regularly,” he said.
HIGH DEMAND FOR HOTSPOTS

Berkshire Athenaeum expands scope of its technology offerings

BY JOHN TOWNES

In a high-tech version of the traditional practice of lending books, patrons of the Berkshire Athenaeum in Pittsfield can now check out hotspots to connect to the Internet at home, office or other locations.

As part of its broader effort to put technol-

ogy in people’s hands, the library recently acquired two Verizon Jetpack 4G mobile hotspots, which people with a valid library card can borrow for personal use for a week at a time. Each portable hotspot can connect up to 15 Wi-Fi-enabled devices (desktops, tablets, laptops and smart phones) to the Internet.

The devices make the connection to the Internet through cellular service, which is included in the loan at no cost.

“It’s all about access,” said Alex Reczkowski, library director. “This can be very important for people who do not have an Internet connection at home. That’s especially true in the current environment where so much non-stop news and information is coming at us on the Internet, and so many transactions are being conducted online.”

Despite the ubiquity of the Internet, Reczkowski said that it is not universal. “It may seem that everyone is connected, but many people are without Internet access,” he said. “National surveys indicate that at least 25 percent of households do not have Internet service.”

This includes people who can’t afford the monthly fees, or are not familiar with use of the technology, or remain without the Internet for other reasons.

Reczkowski said the hotspots have been popular items since their introduction at the Athenaeum last November. “They get booked up quickly,” he said. “We may be adding more of them to handle the demand.”

People check out the hotspots for a variety of reasons. Some use them to sample the Internet and learn how to use it before subscribing to a regular service. “We’ll help people on how to use it,” Reczkowski noted.

Others borrow the hotspots if they need Internet access for specific purposes, such as conducting personal business or for special events or if they will be visiting a location without Internet service.

In addition to individuals, Reczkowski noted that businesses, organizations and professionals also have checked out the hotspots. For example, he said, one local civic organization was holding an auction and took out a hotspot because they needed temporary Internet access at the site.

During last year’s “Pop Up Art” holiday event, where temporary art galleries were set up in vacant downtown Pittsfield storefronts, artists borrowed the hotspots to help them do business.

“To reserve a hotspot or for more information, contact the library Reference Department at info@pittsfieldlibrary.org or 413-499-9480, ext. 202.”

Technology Lending Program

Reczkowski said that providing hotspots has been a trend at libraries over the last couple of years. He said it started when Google offered it as a program to certain libraries.

For the Berkshire Athenaeum, the hotspots are part of the Technology Lending Program (TLP), an initiative funded since 2010 by the Friends of the Berkshire Athenaeum. The program makes technology available for patron learning, enrichment and entertainment in both the Adult and Children’s libraries.

“Our goal is to put technology into people’s hands and help them have meaningful experiences with it,” said Reczkowski, who assumed his position as director last summer after serving as the library’s supervisor of technical services for five years.

In another recent technological addition, the Berkshire Athenaeum acquired 3D printers, which produce objects from computer renderings. The library has been holding classes where people learn to use the printers and have access to them.

Reczkowski said these classes have been popular. People have used them to make toy robots, bookmarks, and other items, including a replacement washer for a machine.

“People get a kick out of 3D printing,” he said. “It’s about the joy of creating something on screen and then having the computer make it. The novelty is similar when home printers were introduced 30 years ago, and people could create professional looking posters and publications.”

The library also periodically offers other classes in the basics of using computers and the Internet, and specialized topics like conducting genealogical research online.

Providing access to desktop computers has become a staple service in the library. It currently has 14 desktop computers in its Reference Department, 10 in its Local History Department and four in its Children’s Department. In addition, it has six laptops, an iPad and a Chromebook for use in the library.

Library patrons can use the desktop computers for up to two hours a day and the laptops for up to four hours to browse the Internet, work on projects, conduct research or perform specific tasks.

Reczkowski said an average of 2,600 people use the computers in a month, and the usage averages 2,000 hours monthly. (The lower number of hours is due to the fact that some people use the computers for shorter periods of time.)

The computers and other devices are net-

worked to conventional printers at the library.

“One thing we’ve noticed is that an increasing number of people are also using the printers here because the cost of ink for home printers has gotten so high,” Reczkowski said.

On a related front, the library recently began offering scanning services that allow documents to be scanned as black-and-white images for email attachments or saved to flash drives.

In addition to computer equipment and peripherals for onsite use, the library also has various tablet devices that can be borrowed for off-site use, including Kindle, Google Nexus and Samsung models.

Access to information

Reczkowski sees this emphasis on technol-

ogy as a contemporary extension of the traditional role of libraries. “Libraries have always been about public information and service,” he said. “This is just providing other ways to experience those services.”

For example, both home and office computer users or have Internet service, the availability of computers at the library offers access to third-party sources that others have computers at home, but choose to take their laptops to the library, or use its computers there for other reasons.

“Libraries are one of those ‘third spaces’ that are public places outside of the home or work,” Reczkowski said. “For example, those who have home offices like to come here to work because they want a change of scene, and to be around others.”

He added that it also links people to the larger world in other ways.

“Libraries have always been a form of indoor town square, where people interact and engage in civic discourse,” he said. “A lot of the public discourse is online now, and having computers is another way the library can connect people to that.”

However, Reczkowski emphasized that the library’s original role of providing the public with access to printed books and periodicals remains a vital core of its services. He said printed material continues to be popular.

“There’s been a bit of a shift from print to other technologies, but print is not going anywhere,” he said. “We still circulate a quarter-of-a-million items a year, and a lot of folks come in to read newspapers and magazines here.”

He added that, in some respects, libraries have something in common with the new ways that information is distributed. “The Internet has created a shift in people’s expectations, away from paying for printed information and content,” he said. “Instead, they want content for free. As a source of free access to printed resources, libraries fit in with that.”

From another perspective, he said, the proliferation of online news and information has actually made traditional publications more important than ever.

“There’s a lot of conversation about how we use information resources, and concerns about how much trust we can put into sources on the Internet,” Reczkowski said. “The issue of ‘fake news’ has highlighted that. So, it has become more important than ever to have trusted sources such as books and established newspapers that we can trust.”

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18 Year Career

Berkshire Community College (BCC) is accepting applications through May 30 for its 2017 High School Summer STEM Academy for students in Massachusetts’ fourth through ninth grade. The program will take place July 10-14 from 9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at multiple BCC campuses in Pittsfield. Participants will have the opportunity to work with BCC faculty on research and development projects and activities. In addition, participants will get to “Meet the Professionals,” a program that allows students an opportunity to hear from industry personnel about their careers. Current BCC STEM STErstar Student assistants will assist faculty. The program, which will be selective, will be limited to 16 participants. The cost is $200. Scholarships are available. For more information, visit www berkshire.edu/summerstem. For more details or questions, contact Constance West, coordinator of the STEM Starter Academy, at 413-236-4786 or cwest berkshire.edu.

Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival and the Clark Art Institute will partner to host a special site-specific presentation of Trisha Brown’s In Plain Sight for the Trisha Brown Dance Company on August 13. The performance is planned to incorporate selected sites on the Clark’s campus in Williamstown and invites the audience to follow the dancers as they move between locations. The company will stage two performances at the Clark at 1 and 4 p.m. Tickets are free, but reservations will be required. Ticking will begin on June 1 on the Clark’s website at Clarkart.edu.

Lenox has been named the Best Northeastern Small Town in USA Today’s annual 10Best Readers’ Choice travel award contest. The community had earlier been selected as a contender for the Best Northeastern Small Town designation, along with 19 other nominees, with the winner determined by public voting over a four-week period. Lenox defeated 2016 winner New Hope, Penn., which finished second, and other popular travel towns like Cape May, N.J., Rockport, Mass., Bar Harbor, Maine, and Block Island, R.I., among others. According to Lenox Community Development Director Debra E. Litzenberg, winning the contest is another way that the town continues to “spread our wings.” “It’s a big win for us,” Spaulding said. “This award, combined with the recent acknowledgement by Expedia, who named Lenox one of the top 20 luxury travel destinations in the world, is a great example of how many people love Lenox.” By winning the contest, Lenox will be promoted across USA Today’s media, including its website, mobile and print, just as it has socially as well.

A high bid of $5.1 million took the Crown Plaza hotel in downtown Pittsfield at a June 26 foreclosure auction. That bid, submitted by Anil Sachdev, was almost $3 million lower than the previous highest bid, which had resulted in the realization of the troubled property. A second auction was subsequently announced when the winning bidder, Ladder Capital Finance LLC of New York City, pulled out of the deal. Sachdev, who owns hotels in New York City, has his hopes up as he waits for another February auction. According to news reports, he plans to build a new Radisson Hotel for the 14-story hotel complex, which is in need of significant repair of its 325-car parking garage, among other upgrades.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Pittsfield-based Yummy Treasures the 2017 Massachusetts SBA Microenterprise of the Year. Yummy Treasures earned the recognition for its success as the number-one seller in the United States on Etsy.com, a global online marketplace of handmade, vintage and creative goods. The company is also the first to sell the world in the world on Etsy.com, exporting unique crafts and jewelry supplies around the world. Started in 2005, Yummy Treasures was founded by Beth and Greg Carpenter, and their son Zac. The company was launched in 2017 annually to a growing business that has used assistance through SBA loan programs, or has been a client of one of SBA’s technical service providers. Nominees for the award also have at least three-year track record of owning and fewer employees. Yummy Treasures was nominated by Kevin Groudon, regional director for Berkshire Region of the SBA New England Small Business Development Center.

The Department of History, Political Science and Public Policy at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts will Launch a new Master’s degree in Public History in the fall of 2016. New for 2017, the program will partner to host a special site-specific presentation of Trisha Brown’s In Plain Sight for the Trisha Brown Dance Company on August 13. The performance is planned to incorporate selected sites on the Clark’s campus in Williamstown and invites the audience to follow the dancers as they move between locations. The company will stage two performances at the Clark at 1 and 4 p.m. Tickets are free, but reservations will be required. Ticking will begin on June 1 on the Clark’s website at Clarkart.edu.

The Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires is launching a new magazine for the region’s nonprofit sector. The publication will have an initial circulation of 1,000 copies available for the nonprofit sector’s 15th anniversary. It will be available online via the NPC website, as well as through various channels of communication – such as a network that I know of just for nonprofits,” said NPC founder Liana Toscanini. “Given that Berkshire County is home to 1,500 nonprofits, we have 24,000 full- and part-time jobs, generating $2.2 billion in impact annually, there is no question that this vibrant group should have its own vehicle to share information and connect, develop their network, and develop their organization.”

Berkshire Bank received a total of six awards for community engagement and marketing of leading edge products at the Financial Marketing Awards in Newport, R.I., and the New England Financial Services Awards, held in March. The Financial Marketing Awards “recognizes the best in financial services marketing, targeting and brand marketing efforts, while the Corporate Champions Award recognizes non-financial companies for their contribution to the growth of downtown communities.” Berkshire Bank received recognition in five categories: Workplace Community Champion Award; – Gold for Pittsfield Public Schools attendance billboard; Loan Award – Silver for home ownership; Marketing Campaign Award – Silver for FCI Plaza; and Community Champion Award – Silver for YMCA. WAM Theatre has donated $2,500 to Great Barrington’s Flying Cloud Institute, which will provide scholarships to 10 Berkshire County public school students to attend FCI’s Young Women in Science training program at Bard College at Simon’s Rock and Berkshire Community College this summer. The donation represents part of the proceeds from WAM’s recent benefit concert which showcased the talents of Maureen Downey Marquezi de Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight and Marquise de Chatelet at the Festival of the Arts at Jacob’s Pillow. “As we close at the end of this school year, the need for programs continues to grow;” said Allen.

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The Berkshire Family YMCA will establish a new child care center at the location of the current Y Babysitting and Daycare service at the YMCA building in Lenox, effective June 19. Susan Burt, owner and administrator of Mountain Brook School for the last year, has decided to pass the reigns to the Berkshire Family YMCA. “Mountain Brook School opened to provide high-quality early childhood education in our community,” said Burt. “As we close at the end of this school year, the need for programs continues to grow;” said Allen. I believe the Berkshire Family YMCAs pursuit of additional programing meet needs needed by the community children ages 2,9 years old and kindergarten. Laurie Vanuze, Y’s child care director, and the organization is looking to grow the center’s enrollment. “We believe there is an opportunity to serve more families in our area by expanding the center’s license to accommodate childcare on a larger scale which would allow us to serve as many as 25 youth,” she said.

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The nomination process is now open for Berkshire's 7th annual Berkshire Tidewater Awards, which celebrate organizations and individuals whose achievement, innovation, and/or commitment has strengthened the regional economy and helped the Berkshires grow. Top finalists will be the honorees and finalist winners announced at an event in fall. Celebrate the Berkshires, on Sept. 14 at a newly opened Bloom, in Housatonic. The categories to be awarded include Comprehensive Marketing Campaign, Creative Economy Standout, Entrepreneur/Visionary of the Year, Growing/Advancing the Berkshire Economy, Newcomer of the Year, Nonprofit Impact, and Under 40 Change-Maker. “These awards are all about good news stories about the vibrancy of some of the most vibrant things happening here,” said Jonathan Butler, CEO of BOLAr. “We have so many stories of good work being done in this region, and these awards honor those effecting great change here in a way that is much deserved beyond.” The organization encourages everyone to nominate deserving businesses and individuals for these awards or to self-nominate themselves or their business by completing the online form at http://berkshirecalendar.com/celebrate-the-berkshires/tidewater-awards.

Deadline for nominations is June 30. Finalists will be notified in mid-July, and asked to provide additional information for the selection process.

BOLA granola, a handmade granola from the Berkshires, reached a milestone recently when the company celebrated 10 years in business. According to co-founder and co-owner Michelle Miller, the founder of BOLAr, granola grew up in the Berkshires and built a successful career as a pastry chef and food writer. A move to Milan in 1987 to work as a pastry chef forced the company to pivot from the European style bakery in Lenox, founded the Old Inn on the Green in New Marlborough, and the BOLA granola company was born in 2007. In 2015, including the standardization of double-sided printing and the elimination of disposable paper products in offices, among others. The AMEB Green initiative was originally spurred by employee suggestions and was developed through a cross-functional committee that looked at policies, products, operations and behaviors to identify goals and key steps to become a more environmentally sustainable company. Additional information about the company’s sustainability efforts, including information about the company's sustainability

Berkshire Bank has announced that they have exceeded the first of their sustainability objectives through a corporate initiative to become a more environmentally sustainable company. The company, which committed to reducing paper consumption by 10 percent by 2018, surpassed that mark, with a 15 percent reduction of usage a year earlier than projected. The initiative, known as AMEB Green, is focused on results that will impact Berkshire Bank’s social, environmental and financial performance by engaging employees and customers in environmentally conscious behaviors. The bank has completed more than 30 green initiatives since the launch of the effort in 2015, including the standardization of double-sided printing and the elimination of disposable paper products in offices, among others. The AMEB Green initiative was originally spurred by employee suggestions and was developed through a cross-functional committee that looked at policies, products, operations and behaviors to identify goals and key steps to become a more environmentally sustainable company. Additional information about the company’s sustainability efforts, including information about the company's sustainability efforts, is available at www.berkshirebank.com/sustainability.

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation has announced the recipients of its first round of grantmaking for 2017. The foundation distributed nearly $380,000 in grants to individuals, school communities and nonprofits in the four-county region it serves and alone raised $825. Donations are still being accepted for the fundraiser at berkshiresouth.org/swim-a-thon/

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Business Update

Berkshire Theatre Group is the recipient of a $3,500 grant from the Charles H. Hall Foundation to support BTG PLAY’S Year-Round Education Program. “We are truly dependent upon support from such generous donors,” said Kate Maguire, BTG’s artistic director and CEO. “It is vital to our local, regional, and national society that arts education be implemented in as many organizations as possible.”

The Lauzon Glass Study Gallery, anew gallery dedicated to the Clark Art Institute’s collection of early American glass, opened to the public on May 14. Located in the Munson Research Center, the gallery houses some 250 objects, many of them from the Albert and Jane Lauzon Collection of Early American Blown Glass. It features displays that tell the story of the glass industry in early America, and shows how novel forms and patterns of decoration were created as American glass factories developed. Many forms and colors of glass are included in the collection, which features decanters, figured flasks, lighting implements, and objects for the table such as drinking glasses and salt cellars. A small selection of late-19th century art glass and early-20th century glass and colors of glass are included in the collection, and shows how novel forms and patterns of decoration were created as American glass factories developed. Many forms and colors of glass are included in the collection, which features decanters, figured flasks, lighting implements, and objects for the table such as drinking glasses and salt cellars. A small selection of late-19th century art glass and early-20th century

The City of Pittsfield’s Tyler Street District has been awarded a $53,000 grant through MassDevelopment toward the Tyler Street Storefront Improvement Enhancement Program. The City Council also approved matching funds of $50,000 toward the program, which will help an estimated four to five storefronts in the district. There will be an application process for businesses interested in participating in the program. Businesses accepted into the pilot program will contribute a 20 percent minimum of the project’s total cost or the remainder of the improvements, following allocations from both the MassDevelopment grant and the City of Pittsfield’s matching funds. In addition to MassDevelopment, the city’s Community Development Department will work in concert with the Tyler Street Business Group on the initiative. Bonnie Galant, acting community development director, said the city’s inclusion in the overall program is a credit to enhancing the Tyler Street district’s buildings and storefronts. “Realizing this vision will help to create both a positive change in the neighborhood, as well as a more inviting presence for local businesses,” Galant said. “As the case of housing improvements, many times it only takes a few properties taking the initiative to improve their properties to create a domino effect in a specific area.” For more information on the storefront pilot program, contact Galant at 413-499-4949.

Hotel on North has received a 2017 Paul & Niki Tsongas Award for its preservation efforts in downtown Pittsfield. Presented by Preservation Massachusetts, the awards celebrate projects that show the power of preservation while embodying their true essence. The hotel, created through a thoughtful conversion of an 1880s-era department store, was honored as the Best Main Street Project category. “Even though it’s been two years since we first opened our doors, we are still thrilled to be named among the outstanding examples of preservation and support and accolades from our community and peers,” said Laurie Vogel, co-owner of Hotel on North. “All we wanted to do was make our little corner of the world a little brighter and, at the same time, benefit the city that we live in.” Hotel on North has also been designated as one of the “Top 10 New Hotels in America” by Architectural Digest. In addition, it was one of a select group of hotels honored in the Outstanding Story of the Year award in the 2017 TripAdvisor Travelers’ Choice Awards for Hotels.

Central Berkshire Psychiatric Services, the private outpatient practice of Dr. Jeffrey Doshier, recently began offering state-of-the-art transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) for the treatment of major depression. With his TMS Clinic, Doshier has become the first practitioner in western Massachusetts to provide this FDA-approved treatment option to help patients who have tried other options without relief. The treatment involves a series of magnetic pulses that penetrate into underlying brain tissue, causing a release of chemicals, called neurotransmitters, between the nerve cells. By repeating the procedure thousands of times, the parts of the brain linked to mood begin to change the way they function and that leads to improvement in symptoms. Since the TMS Clinic is not affiliated with any hospital or other treatment sites, the treatment is available and its individual treatment plan to the specific needs of the individual. TMS treatment is covered by most insurance plans, if medically indicated. For more information, contact the TMS Clinic at 413-464-7750.

The Williamstown Theatre Festival has announced that its popular “Friday at 8” Reading Series has a new home for the summer season. The program, which offers theater lovers the opportunity to experience new work in development by the Williamstown Theatre Festival, will be presented in the auditorium of the Clark Art Institute. The “Friday at 8” Reading Series will occur weekly from July 7 to Aug. 18, at 8 p.m. All performances are free; a $5 donation to Williamstown Theatre Festival is encouraged but is limited and reservations are required. To reserve, visit wtffestival.org.

Berkshire County Arc is holding a Winter Clothing Drive through May 31, and is accepting gently used coats, scarves, hats and mittens, as well as winter clothing items that have been knitted or crocheted. Drop-off locations (all in Pittsfield) include Berkshire County Arc’s Community Apartments, 189 First St.; 288 Pecks Rd.; and Berkshire County Arc’s Main Office, 393 North St. The agency will hold a second winter clothing drive in the fall, with all donated items to be distributed to various organizations in community. For questions or additional information, call 413-499-4241 ext. 255.

Berkshire Medical Center once again earned an “A” in the latest report card from the Leapfrog Group, a national nonprofit watchdog on hospital quality and safety. Berkshire has achieved such success in its participation in the Leapfrog Hospital Grade in 2012, and is one of only 63 hospitals nationwide to maintain this honor. “We are proud of this accomplishment and we want to recognize the many efforts by all of our staff, nurses, physicians, and other health professionals who work here to improve the quality of patient care and the overall experience for our patients,” said Susan Hulse, CEO of Berkshire Medical Center. “Our Day of Caring is an exciting opportunity to bring the community together, all working to make our lives better.”

The Village Center
68 Main Street, Lenox MA

Office & Retail Space For LEASE:

- 1,000 sq ft plus additional basement storage
- Busy downtown Lenox location
- Ground floor space between Bank and Post Office
- Off street parking

69 Church Street, Lenox MA

- 420 sq ft 2nd floor space
- Professional Building with elevator
- Central Air, Heat & Electric included
- Off street parking

Church Street, Lenox MA

Retail Space
- 650 sq ft
- Available soon!

Contact: Melissa Phone: 413-551-2028
Email: 67church@gmail.com

With professional telephone answering, you’ll never miss an opportunity.

Opponentially, but didn’t leave a voicemail

Opportunity called, but it didn’t leave a voicemail

Economic Development: A Top Priority for Pittsfield

BY LINDA M. TYER

As mayor of Pittsfield, my vision for the city reflects what businesses thrive, strategic collaborations are nurtured, and where the business and creative economies prosper simultaneously. It is a place where people want to live, work, raise their families, and explore the many amenities that we offer.

The driving force that propels this cumulative vision is Pittsfield’s economic development efforts. As a result of our long-term focus over the years, major industries, too, have changed, resulting in new areas for potential opportunities. Over the past year in office, I realized that if we are to be fully active and engaged participants in Pittsfield’s economic development, a strategic and collaborative approach is in order to achieve better outcomes.

Getting it right

Since taking office, I, along with Mick Callahan, chair of Pittsfield Economic Development Authority (PEDA), and Jay Anderson, chair of Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation (PERC) have undertaken a thorough review of each of our strategies and identified new strategies and collaborative plans for how we support business development, and sought ways to sync up so that we’re delivering our absolute best in the competitive arena of economic development.

The city’s new economic development strategy centers on removing silos and streamlining efforts; newly formed and existing committees and task forces are focusing on the needs of businesses that have recently benefited from this process, including Small Business Development Corporation (SMBC) and the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD). In this forum businesses, state agencies, and city departments come together to align resources, and to have the pulse of Pittsfield’s commercial real estate market; and will create and lead a sales and marketing strategy.

We’re ready

I am excited to know that this comprehensive blueprint will help to propel the next evolution of our city’s economy to success in the City of Pittsfield. Our city has no time to waste and neither do the companies that are working so hard on a start-up or an expansion, so our strategy is to identify all of the resources and are here. So, to the businesses that are contemplating Pittsfield, I say, “Let’s talk, we are ready for you.”

For more information, please call me at 413-499-9321.

MAYOR’S ‘RED CARPET TEAM’

BY BRAD JOHNSON

Pittsfield Mayor Linda M. Tyer entered office in January 2017 in the city’s first mayor elected to a four-year term.

The Pittsfield Common, or look at the redevelopment of Rice’s Silk Mill to see just a small fraction of her past Pittsfield accomplishments.

As Community Development Steadfast, the City of Pittsfield, PEDA, and PERC intend to create a shared full-time economic development position entitled Business Development Manager. The individual filling this new position will be both ambassador and technician in recruiting and expanding business opportunities in Pittsfield. In this way, Pittsfield’s three primary economic development agencies will have aligned their strategies, combined their resources, and evolved their commitment to business development.

Specifically, the business development manager will be the principal liaison to private and public entities relative to economic development in Pittsfield, will function as the first point of contact for requests from businesses on city procedures, eligibility for programs, incentives, and services.

Berkshire Trade & Commerce

Publisher Brad Johnson
Contributing Editor John Townes
Guest Columnist Linda Tyer
Advertising Sales Brad Johnson
Circulation Manager Tamra Hjermstad

Berkshire Trade & Commerce is published monthly and delivered free to businesses in Berkshire County via third-class mail. For subscription information, please visit www.btconline.com

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Buyer</th>
<th>Lender</th>
<th>Mortgage</th>
<th>Additional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/24/17</td>
<td>6 Woods Dr.</td>
<td>Christopher Lipa +</td>
<td>$217,500</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Adams Community</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
<td>Price: $217,500 or higher are included.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/9/17</td>
<td>101 South St.</td>
<td>Michael Sharry +</td>
<td>$185,250</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Adams Community</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>Price: $185,250 or higher are included.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/24/17</td>
<td>24 Westwood Rd.</td>
<td>John Lewis +</td>
<td>$220,000</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Adams Community</td>
<td>$127,546</td>
<td>Price: $220,000 or higher are included.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/17/17</td>
<td>176 Blueberry Rd.</td>
<td>Michael Birdsall +</td>
<td>$189,900</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Adams Community</td>
<td>$102,000</td>
<td>Price: $189,900 or higher are included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/23/17</td>
<td>25 Wood Rd.</td>
<td>Jeffrey Macconnach +</td>
<td>$220,000</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Adams Community</td>
<td>$127,546</td>
<td>Price: $220,000 or higher are included.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/23/17</td>
<td>148 Forest Dr.</td>
<td>Charles Stokes +</td>
<td>$137,000</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Adams Community</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>Price: $137,000 or higher are included.</td>
</tr>
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Additional details for loans $15,000 to $550,000:
- The value of the application fee for loans $15,000 to $550,000 is $299.00 and loans $550,000 to $1,250,000 is $349. Please note, we reserve the right to charge for products or services without prior notice. Trustee Bank NMLS Identifier 474178.
Savoy

51 Chapel Rd.
Buyer: Lisa Paul
Price: $174,000
Lender: U.S. Bank
Mortgage: $101,000
Date: 3/17/17

126 Main Rd.
Buyer: Michael Falesky
Price: $174,000
Lender: U.S. Bank
Mortgage: $101,000
Date: 3/17/17

Shelfield

23 Apache Pkwy.
Buyer: Trevor Cebu +
Price: $30,000
Mortgage: $17,000
Date: 3/17/17

13 Maple St.
Buyer: Bevle Hard
Price: $153,000
Lender: V & M
Mortgage: $122,000
Date: 3/17/17

7 Hall St.
Buyer: V Mortgage R2
Price: $221,900
Mortgage: $131,000
Date: 3/17/17

56 Maple St.
Buyer: Christopher Foltz
Price: $449,000
Mortgage: $337,500
Date: 3/17/17

For Sale: 309 Pittsfield Rd., Lenox
5,400 sq. ft. first class office building on 2.96 acres. Move-in ready for your company with high-speed wiring, two kitchens and two conference rooms, multi-level contemporary style, large open deck facing private wooded setting. Office, retail, storage, swimming pool, landscaping. Appraised & inspected. NOW $679,000

For Sale: 6 Renfrew St., Adams
First class office, plus shop, plus 4-bay garage - all new. Locate your company/business in this superbly rebuilt 3,000 sq. ft. 1800 train station, 5,400 sq. ft. shop with 4 overhead doors & 16’ high, 2,160 sq. ft. dry-bay shop/garage. Rail access, Route 8 location. If utility, condition and image are important, this is the place for you. $1.2 million

For Sale: 3301 Route 7, Pownal, VT
Amazing live/work combination with prominent, commanding location overlooking one of the most beautiful valleys in all of Vermont. Create/work from the market in the barn and then stroll into your dramatic, open, expansive, first floor 2,000 sq. ft. 14’ overhead doors & 16-20’ ceiling, 1880 train station, 5,400 sq. ft. first class office building – all new. Locate your company/business in this superbly rebuilt 3,000 sq. ft. 1800 train station, 5,400 sq. ft. shop with 4 overhead doors & 16’ high, 2,160 sq. ft. dry-bay shop/garage. Rail access, Route 8 location. If utility, condition and image are important, this is the place for you. $1.2 million

For Sale: 3037 Route 7, Pownal, VT

For Sale: Prime Williamstown Building Site
Commercially zoned lot featuring 265 ft. of frontage on Main Street (Route 2) and 210 ft. on Adams Road. The only remaining "virgin" undeveloped site in Williamstown, this level 0.8 acre with public bus service and all utilities is ideal for retail, professional, service, or residential business/convenience store, lease, or build to suit. Seller financing available. Broker owned. $495,000

For Sale: 7557 Route 7, Pownal, VT

For Sale: Southern VT Business Opportunity
Live and work on the premises of this outstanding, long-established, stable and profitable business/convenience store with gas and liquor caters to locals and tourists. Includes separate three-bedroom home with family room, new kitchen, first floor laundry, barn and then stroll into your dramatic, open, spacious, 16-ft. cathedral ceiling in the living room, stainless steel and tile kitchen and bath, 5,500 sq. ft. huge spaces, fabulous western sunsets, income apartment, Jacuzzi, close to everything important in the Berkshires and Southern Vermont. $550,000

For Sale: Berkshires and Southern Vermont.

For Sale: Berkshires and Southern Vermont.
David Wallace French will join Great Barrington Radcliffe Steiner School as fifth grade class teacher for the 2017-2018 school year. Finch, who was selected after a national search to replace retiring master teacher Tracey Brennan, brings 12 years of Waldorf teaching experience to his new position, including a full cycle of teaching at the Eugene Waldorf School in Oregon.

Jennifer Atwater, vice president of operations at United Personnel, has been elected to the Center for EcoTechnology’s (CET) board of directors. Atwater, a resident of Exeterhampton, oversees United Personnel’s operations in Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire counties. CET, based in Pittsfield and Northampton, helps people and businesses in the region save energy and reduce waste.

Kenneth Singer, president and CEO of Berkshire County Arc, was presented with the Joseph Andrade Award for Leadership from the Arc of Massachusetts at their April 6 annual meeting. Singer started at Berkshire County Arc in 1980 as a residential coordinator. In 1994 he became the executive director, and has been president and CEO for the last three years. Berkshire County Arc is a nonprofit organization providing a broad range of community-based services to individuals with developmental disabilities, brain injuries and autism throughout Berkshire and Hampden counties.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has announced that Valerie Balint will join the organization as program manager of the Historic Artists’ Homes and Studios (HAHS) program, based at Chesterwood in Stockbridge. Balint’s mission is to enhance the relevance and reputation of HAHS member sites in their communities so as to contribute to a national conversation on the arts in American public life. The HAHS program manager is a new, full-time position with a three-year tenure, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. Balint most recently served as the interim director of collections and research for the Olana Partnership at Olana, N.Y., the historic home and studio of 19th-century landscape painter Frederic Edwin Church, a central figure in the famous Hudson River School. Prior to joining Olana’s curatorial department in 2000, Balint worked at the Fellingham Manor Foundation and at Chesterwood on special curatorial projects.

Juliet Zalmer has been appointed President and CEO of Berkshire United Way’s Live United Community Campaign on April 28: the Robert K. Agar Jr. Volunteer award was presented to Brenda Burdick, associate director of marketing and public relations at General Dynamics Mission Systems; the Lifetime Achievement award was presented to Julie Salatino, judicial counselor for the Statesmen of America-Troop 23; Marzotto is continuing his community involvement as a trustee of the newly organized Great Barrington Community Foundation. The Community Bank Heroes award will be distributed at a dinner event on May 23 in Boston.

The following awards were presented at Berkshire United Way’s Live United Community Celebration on April 28: the Robert K. Agar Jr. Volunteer award was presented to Brenda Burdick, associate director of marketing and public relations at General Dynamics Mission Systems; the Lifetime Achievement award was presented to Julie Salatino, judicial counselor for the Statesmen of America-Troop 23; Marzotto is continuing his community involvement as a trustee of the newly organized Great Barrington Community Foundation. The Community Bank Heroes award will be distributed at a dinner event on May 23 in Boston.

Community Health Partners has named Thomas Walbridge as chief financial officer, where he will oversee the health network’s budget, financial operations and planning. Walbridge has served as CFO and vice president for the Kinsley Group Inc., and as CFO for the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority. He was also director of finance and human resources at Singer St. McNinch will manage the business development aspects of the bank’s residential mortgage loan originations and refinancing efforts. Prior to joining Adams Community Bank, McNinch held positions with financial institutions in Berkshire County and with non-financial organizations including GMAC Mortgage and the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. Choquette joins the bank with seven years of experience as a mortgage originator for other financial institutions within Berkshire County. Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) has announced that Maggie Whitred has ’19 was selected by the campus as the 2017 Newman Civic Fellow. As one of this year’s Newman Civic Fellows, Whitred – who majors in sociology at MCLA, volunteers in social work and child and family studies – joins other student leaders with the Center Compact member colleges and universities from 36 states and Washington, D.C. Whitred is a student leader at MCLA who is active in addressing issues of mental health awareness. For the last two years, she has worked to form the Association for Neurolinguistic Awareness, a club at MCLA that provides peer support and work against the stigma of mental health issues.
Sherry Fonseca has joined MountainOne Bank as senior vice president, senior residential lending officer. Fonseca will succeed long-time Senior Residential and Consumer Lending Officer Peter Radigan, who is retiring at year-end following a successful mortgage banking career. In her new position, Fonseca is responsible for all aspects of the mortgage banking division, including origination, credit quality, and management of the mortgage operations team. Additionally, she will focus on leading the mortgage team in prospecting new business, identifying new opportunities, and cultivating and maintaining relationships with centers of influence. Fonseca, who has nearly 25 years of mortgage lending experience, previously served in mortgage sales leadership roles in the Boston and New England market areas.

Sherry Fonseca

Berkshire County Arc has hired Kristi Nastars as director of human resources. Nastars has over 25 years of HR experience and holds both the SPHR and SHRM-SCP national HR certifications. Her career includes being part of a Corporate Global Human Resource Management Team as well as owning and managing her own recruiting firm.

Kristi Nastars

Berkshire Bank has announced the promotion of Mark Pedrotti to vice president, marketing officer. Pedrotti began his career with Berkshire Bank as a college intern in 2006 and was offered permanent employment in 2008 as a marketing and website administrator. In his new role, Pedrotti will manage the strategic initiatives of Berkshire Bank’s digital properties, in addition to assisting with the overall integrity of marketing assets.

Mark Pedrotti

Makayla-Courtney McGreney has been appointed as communications director for Tunnel City Coffee Company. McGreney has been employed at Tunnel City since August 2016 as a part-time baker, while also reporting for the Bennington Banner and Manchester Journal in southern Vermont. She is a 2015 graduate of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts with a degree in English/Communications. In her new expanded capacity, McGreney will work to connect the community with Tunnel City and facilitate its continued growth.

Makayla-Courtney McGreney

Jay Anderson, president and CEO of Pittsfield Cooperative Bank, has announced the retirement of Leslie Reed-Evans, who has been with the non-profit member-supported land conservation organization for over 30 years. Reed-Evans will succeed Anderson as director of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, succeeding Leslie Reed-Evans, who has been with the nonprofit member-supported land conservation trust for almost 23 years. McGreney has dedicated her career conserving land throughout Massachusetts, having previously worked for Mass Audubon, The Nature Conservancy and the state Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Leslie Reed-Evans

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ARC FINDS ‘PERFECT FIT’
Continuity for clients drives firm’s merger with Apella Capital

BY BRAD JOHNSON

A Lenox firm that has successfully—albeit quietly—provided investment management, financial planning and tax planning services to a local clientele comprised of high-net worth individuals over the past two decades has taken a proactive step to ensure that those clients’ interests are well managed for many years to come.

That firm, ARC Investment Planning & Management Inc., recently completed a merger with Apella Capital LLC, and now operates as the western Massachusetts office of Apella, which is based in Glastonbury, Conn.

“It was a perfect fit,” said Harvey Siegel, a certified public accountant and senior financial advisor who has operated ARC along with partners Ed Richter and Barry Wesson since 1999 (and a preceding firm known as WS Securities since the early 1990s). “The deal [with Apella] made sense on several levels.”

Siegel explained that ARC and Apella were both what are known as Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firms that offer comprehensive investment management, tax planning, and financial planning services. Both shared similar investment management philosophies that, among other things, emphasized the use of low-cost services such as Dimensional Fund Advisors and The Vanguard Group.

While ARC was an independently operated entity, Apella is a relatively recent outgrowth of a larger company, Symmetry Partners LLC. Symmetry was founded in 1994 by Patrick Sweeney and David Connelly Jr., who left their positions at a large Wall Street firm to create an advisory firm that was dedicated to working in their clients’ best interests.

Since then Symmetry has grown to where it now manages over $7.4 billion in assets and acts as a sub-advisor on behalf of over 2,400 financial advisor relationships and 87 RIAs across the country. Among those RIAs is Apella, which was established in 2014 by Symmetry originally to serve that company’s private clients.

Siegel explained that the relationship Symmetry has with Apella provides several important benefits, including access to the larger company’s research department and technology services.

Continuity concerns

While such benefits are important in their own right, there were other factors at play that led Siegel and his partners at ARC to merge with Apella.

Key among them was the unyielding march of time. “I’m not a young man anymore,” said the 71-year-old Siegel, “but I want to...
continue working, and look forward to doing so far as long as I can be useful.”

With Wesson also in his early seventies and Richter in his late fifties, Siegel explained that ensuring long-term continuity of service for their established clients had become an important consideration for them over the past few years. “We had been looking [at various partnering options] for a number of years,” said Siegel, noting that the goal of such an arrangement would be to proactively establish continuity well in advance of his or other partners’ eventual retirement (or any unforeseen circumstances).

ARC’s connection with Apella took shape in early 2016, arising from their mutual association with Dimensional Fund Advisors. Siegel said he had asked their DFA rep for referrals to like-minded firms that might be a good fit. “Apella was not only the best we met with, but it was one we were all very comfortable about joining,” he commented. A merger deal was fashioned, and, following several months of due diligence, the transaction closed in October 2016.

While this merger has Apella as the survivor firm, Siegel noted that ARC actually was the larger of the two firms, with $240 million in assets under management compared to about $160 million for Apella. “ARC’s clients will be the majority of Apella’s entire client base,” said Siegel. “We will be very important to Apella, and they to us. We will learn from each other.”

With the merger, the Lenox office of ARC’s connection with Apella took shape in early 2016, arising from their mutual association with Dimensional Fund Advisors. Siegel said he had asked their DFA rep for referrals to like-minded firms that might be a good fit. “Apella was not only the best we met with, but it was one we were all very comfortable about joining,” he commented. A merger deal was fashioned, and, following several months of due diligence, the transaction closed in October 2016.

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With the merger, the Lenox office of ARC in the Curtis Building at 5 Walker St. has taken on the Apella name. Siegel, Wesson and Richter all continue with the firm as senior financial advisors (all of them are CPAs as well).

All other former ARC staff members have also continued with the firm under Apella. They are Laura Delmolino, a certified financial planner; Jayshree Ganesh, associate portfolio manager; and Heidi Rauscher, portfolio administrator.

Since ensuring that a continuity plan would be in place for ARC’s clients was a key goal, Siegel noted that informing clients of the then-pending merger required both sensitivity and clear communication. “For clients, things like this can be stressful,” he said, adding that a letter sent to clients in advance of the merger addressed many of the concerns they might have, and opened the door for additional communication and information about the change.

“Essentially, all of our clients agreed to make the transition,” Siegel said. “That’s an important point in this kind of transaction.” Although ARC had maintained a relatively low profile over the years, its visibility may be enhanced going forward as part of Apella.

One of the resources available through Apella and Symmetry is “Apella Academy,” a program dedicated to spreading financial literacy in its communities. Financial advisors deliver presentations, online and in person, on a range of topics that may impact investors at different points in their lives, from college planning to Social Security.

Siegel noted that these types of educational outreach programs would likely be handled at personally conducting related seminars for professionals in financial planning, investment management and related fields.

With the successful transition from ARC to Apella, Siegel said he looks forward to continuing his work and relationship with clients well into the future. “I’m really energized by this,” he said. “Together, we can continue to grow and provide our clients, and our staff, with new opportunities, technologies and resources.”

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"Our name should really have an ‘s’ on the end for ‘Contemporary Arts.’"

"Building 6 adds substantial capacity for showing art, hosting performing artists, and commissioning new work through workshops and back-of-house space," said Thompson. "It gives us more of what we do best."

According to Thompson, the new space also plays a contextually significant role in terms of how visitors experience and interact with the overall museum complex. With the new galleries in Building 6, visitors will now be able to connect directly with all interior exhibition space in MASS MoCA’s other buildings through a series of interconnecting loops.

"We really like the way it opens the entire circulation pattern of the campus," said Thompson, noting that visitors will be able to complete a circuit through MASS MoCA’s various galleries without the dead ends and back-tracking of earlier configurations.

He added that a museum staffer had measured a tour of all publicly accessible spaces through the entire complex, beginning and ending at the central lobby, at about 3-1/2 miles.

Beyond the interior gallery space, the opening of Building 6 will also give visitors access to large outdoor courtyards and other exterior features and amenities, including a new bike path that passes through sections of the building, and a planned pedestrian bridge over the northern branch of the Hoosic River.

"People are going to think we’ve quadrupled in size because of the exposure to other spaces," said Thompson.

On a more subtle level, Thompson noted, the advent of Building 6 also underscores the museum’s involvement in – and dedication to – performing arts.

"The fact is that this building spotlights performing arts activities in many ways," he said. Among these are the working studio space for renowned performance artist Laurie Anderson and the hands-on aspect of an installation featuring scores of quirky, oversized musical instruments created by the late Gunnar Schoonbeck, former professor of music at Bennington College.

These aspects of Building 6’s activities complement MASS MoCA’s increasingly robust schedule of performing arts events throughout the year, as well as the three established music festivals that are held annually or biennially: Bang on a Can, Solid Sound (in collaboration with Wilco) and FreshGrass.

"MASS MoCA has always had a performing arts focus, and that plays a large role in our programming DNA," Thompson said. "‘Our name should really have an ‘s’ on the end for ‘Contemporary Arts.’"

Evolutionary process
Thompson noted that Building 6 will be known officially as the “Robert W. Wilson Building” – named after an early supporter of MASS MoCA whose estate continues to support the museum. "It’s the first time we’ve named a whole building after an individual," he said.

continued on page 18
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Building 6 is also the central component of what is referred to as “Phase III” of the overall development of the museum and commercial complex. In that respect, it reflects the ongoing evolution of the project and its broader mission to establish a world-class cultural institution that also serves as a driver for job creation and economic development.

“We have been expanding in increments,” said Thompson, noting that, when MASS MoCA opened in 1999, about one-third of the former Sprague Electric complex was redeveloped for galleries, stages and related museum operations. “We started with 200,000 square feet out of a potential 600,000 square feet here.”

Another 200,000 square feet were returned to use through the next multi-year expansion, referred to as Phase II. That included new galleries and performance spaces, highlighted by the 27,000-square-foot, three-story structure known as Building 7 that houses Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective, a major long-term installation co-organized with Yale University and the Williams College Museum of Art.

However, well over half of the space redeveloped during Phase II was for an entirely different purpose: leasing to commercial tenants.

“Phase II of our expansion gave us 125,000 square feet for commercial lease,” said Thompson. “That was significant for two reasons. It gave us one of the tools we needed to fulfill our mission of attracting and retaining jobs in North Adams. And it provided MASS MoCA with a necessary source of support and sustenance.”

With the completion of Phase II, Thompson said, MASS MoCA found itself at a transitional stage in which the pieces of the picture began coming together in a more cohesive way.

“From 1999 on, staying in business was the focus for the first eight or nine years,” he said. “We began to get our heads above water about five or six years ago. Attendance was going up, our [music] festivals were growing, and a lot of what we were doing was starting to connect.”

In the top photo, taken in mid-April, Boston-based artist Joe Wardwell works on preliminary stages of his new wall drawing along a main corridor in Building 6. In the bottom photo, taken a month later, Wardwell stands beside a section of the work as it nears completion two weeks before its public debut in Building 6. The work, Hello America: 40 Hits from the 50 States, takes inspiration from J.G. Ballard’s 1981 novel Hello America, which is described as including “an all-too-eerie nod to our current political climate” in which “President Manson” grabs the book’s primary protagonist, who is filled with longing for a far-too-distant American dream and declares “together, Wayne, we will make America great again!” (Top photo BT&C; bottom photo Jason Reinhold, courtesy of MASS MoCA)
That set the stage for the launch of Phase III, a multifaceted project highlighted by the redevelopment of Building 6.

“This is a very special project,” said Larry Smallwood, deputy director and chief operating officer for MASS MoCA. “The way it finishes the ground plan makes a lot of sense.”

Smallwood has overseen many aspects of the Building 6 renovations since taking his current position in February 2013. That, however, was far from his first involvement with MASS MoCA, which dates back to its pre-opening days in 1998 when he moved from Brooklyn to North Adams to work as a consultant on the project, followed by two four-year stints as production manager and head of the exhibitions department at the newly opened museum.

A subsequent move to Chicago led to work with other art museums in the Midwest. However, Smallwood remained connected to MASS MoCA and consulted on the opening of the Sol LeWitt installation, among other projects.

He noted that the appeal of the Building 6 project was directly responsible for his decision to return to MASS MoCA and the Berkshires (along with his wife, Lisa Dorin, who serves as deputy director of the Williams College Museum of Art).

“Joe [Thompson] and I had always kept in touch, and he got me really excited about doing Building 6,” Smallwood said. “This was the first project of this scale, and the opportunity to be part of it was a big thing for me.”

Public and private funds

Funding for redevelopment of Building 6 has come from two main sources. In 2014, MASS MoCA secured $25.4 million in state infrastructure grants for the project.

continued on next page
for the galleries and installations themselves has been covered by a portion of the funds from the Confluence Campaign. Thompson noted that the campaign has raised about $23 million toward its $30 million target. While some of this money will go toward Phase III, most will be used to bolster MASS MoCA’s fledgling endowment.

“If we’re successful [in meeting the campaign’s target], we’ll build our endowment from its current $15 million to our goal of $33 million,” said Thompson. The enhanced endowment, he added, would provide the “breathing room” to ensure that MASS MoCA can handle any variety of contingencies related to the maintenance of its sprawling campus, as well as a source of income for future programming initiatives.

While Building 6 is the main component of Phase III, the project has also included other significant work. Among this was the repurposing of a former concrete water tank in 2014 to create a 10,000-square-foot seasonal gallery featuring three large installations by Anselm Kiefer. That project was done in collaboration with the Hall Art Foundation, which also contributed to other exterior enhancements on other parts of the campus.

Those improvements, along with other work still being done, will invite greater use of – and engagement with – the overall campus exterior, as well as provide an alternative pedestrian and bicycling entry to the campus from downtown North Adams. “We want to make it more accessible to wander around and through the site,” said Smallwood.

Since the launch of Phase III, there have also been some adjustments to how Building 6 is being used, especially regarding the nature of the major artists’ installations. “There has been an evolution in how we expected to use Building 6,” said Thompson. Initially, he explained, there was an expectation that the leading installations would primarily be fixed and long-term in nature, with just a few that would have changing content. “We thought it would be three-quarters long-term and one-quarter changing,” he said. “Instead, it has turned out to be 40-percent long-term and 60-percent changing.”

That adjustment, according to Thompson, was strictly artist-driven. “It came about as part of what the artists wanted to do,” he said, adding that the process of changing and updating these major installations benefits the artists, the museum and its visitors. “It means that, along with all the other new and changing programming that we may do, our visitors are going to have even more reasons to come back,” Thompson said.
Smallwood agreed, noting that increasing visitation is an important goal of Building 6’s addition to the museum complex. “I think that the idea that we could work with our partners to enconce millions of dollars of art in this building adds a new weight of attraction here,” he said.

**Function space**

In addition to new art, upgraded infrastructure and enhanced amenities, the opening of Building 6 will also expand MASS MoCA’s role as a venue for weddings, conferences and other private events. A large two-story open space in one section of the building has been configured as a site that can be booked for various functions. This section, which also features a spacious mezzanine, can be closed off from adjacent galleries in a way that allows functions to be held during museum hours.

“We’re really excited about that,” said Thompson. He noted that, while MASS MoCA has regularly been a venue for weddings and other events, these could only be held during the museum’s off-hours.

“We’ve been maxed out in terms of what we could schedule,” he said. “This new function space will allow us to grow our wedding and conference business.”

He added that the function space will be named after Jennifer Trainer Thompson, a museum employee, and Thompson’s former wife. This section, which also features a spacious mezzanine, can be closed off from adjacent galleries in a way that allows functions to be held during museum hours.

“MASS MoCA’s a teenager now, almost an adult,” said Smallwood. “I was fortunate to be involved in its startup, I’ve enjoyed watching it grow up, and I look forward to seeing what comes next.”

Whether Smallwood’s boss will still be at MASS MoCA’s helm to guide any such future projects remains an open question.

“It’s coming up on 30 years that I’ve been involved in this project,” said the 58-year-old Thompson. “But, every time I think it’s time to leave, something interesting comes up.”

“There’s more to look at on May 29, May 30…” added Smallwood, noting that they will be exploring opportunities for repurposing Building 17, along with other smaller-scale developments, as the ambitious museum project continues to mature.

“MASS MoCA’s a teenager now, almost an adult,” said Smallwood. “I was fortunate to be involved in its startup, I’ve enjoyed watching it grow up, and I look forward to seeing what comes next.”

The addition of Building 6 to the museum’s operations is also driving the creation of several new jobs at MASS MoCA. “Our team has been growing,” said Smallwood. “There are a lot of service jobs that come with the expanded space.”

He said that from summer 2016 to summer 2017, MASS MoCA will have added 40 new jobs, bringing total employment at the museum to about 135. While noting that there may be some fluctuation in that number following the initial surge of activity surrounding Building 6’s opening, he said the hiring has been done conservatively based on staffing levels needed for quieter periods.

Beyond the May 28 opening of Building 6, there remains more work to do, according to Thompson and Smallwood.

“Building 6 essentially completes the main component, but we still have 50,000 square feet to develop,” said Thompson, referring to Building 17, a stand-alone structure across the southern branch of the Hoosic River. “There inevitably will be a Phase IV.”

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“It’s coming up on 30 years that I’ve been involved in this project,” said the 58-year-old Thompson, noting that most of his adult life has been given to the planning, launch and growth of MASS MoCA. “But, every time I think it’s time to leave, something interesting comes up.”

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**MASS MoCA’S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MISSION**

New opportunities, initiatives to extend impact beyond campus

BY BRAD JOHNSON

In the weeks and months following the May 28 debut of Building 6, its massive new exhibition and performing arts space (see related story on page 1), the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art expects to draw thousands of additional visitors – some returnees, some for the first time – to its campus on the northwestern edge of downtown North Adams.

This spike in attendance for the new museum and its host city totalizes the persistent challenge of how to extend this buzz of activity from the MASS MoCA campus to other nearby sections of downtown North Adams.

Efforts this summer will include MASS MoCA’s participation in the North Adams Exchange, a new public-private collaboration that looks to enhance the visitor experience beyond the museum complex.

For MASS MoCA, this convergence of events provides a unique opportunity to firmly establish its credentials as a major cultural attraction that features eclectically unconventional cutting-edge programming – and one whose drawing power, combined with that of other northern Berkshire cultural attractions, has a significant and growing impact on the region’s overall economy. On a more proximate level, these events also provide yet another opportunity for the museum and its host city to tackle the persistent challenge of how to extend this buzz of activity from the MASS MoCA campus to other nearby sections of downtown North Adams.

“‘We’re expecting a significant burst of visitation with the opening and the return of Solid Sound. So, it seemed like a moment to double down to position North Adams favorably to every visitor who comes to MASS MoCA.’”

That community redevelopment mission – “to catalyze and support the creation of new art, exposing visitors to bold visual and performing art in all stages of production, and reinvigorating the life of a region in socioeconomic need” – galvanized the support from both public and private sectors that was needed to move the concept to reality, marked by the museum’s opening in May 1999.

During its early years of operation, the museum focused on getting its footing and growing attendance before embarking on its second phase of redevelopment of the mill complex. From opening year attendance of 44,000 visitors, the museum broke the 100,000 barrier in 2001 and remained a little above that level for the next several years.

Over that same period, the city gradually began embracing the concept of arts-driven revitalization – both through the activity generated by MASS MoCA and through other efforts to make North Adams an attractive home for artists and their work. Among the latter was the redevelopment of the Eclipse Mill on the eastern side of town into several dozen work/live studios for artists, which quickly became a thriving enclave for people involved in and contributing to the region’s creative economy.

Other initiatives took shape, such as the debut in 2008 of DownStreet Art – a multi-month program of arts-related events, activities and pop-up galleries throughout downtown North Adams – coordinated by MCLA’s Berkshire Cultural Resource Center. (This summer will mark the 10th annual holding of DownStreet Art, which runs from June 29 to Sept. 28.)

In 2008, MASS MoCA also saw its next significant spike in attendance, rising to 100,000 visitors in May 2009 and remaining over that level for the next several years. During its early years of operation, the museum focused on getting its footing and growing attendance before embarking on its second phase of redevelopment of the mill complex. From opening year attendance of 44,000 visitors, the museum broke the 100,000 barrier in 2001 and remained a little above that level for the next several years.

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138,000. That increase was driven in large part by the November 2008 debut of Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective, comprised of 105 of the late artist’s large-scale wall drawings installed within the 27,600 square-foot, three-story structure known as Building 7.

Commercial leasing

The redevelopment of Building 7 for the LeWitt installation was a major component of MASS MoCA’s Phase II expansion. But Phase II also included a major expansion of another component of MASS MoCA’s operations with the redevelopment of 125,000 square feet for commercial leasing.

The commercial leasing aspect of its mission and operation is often overshadowed – literally and figuratively – by the massive museum and the art it contains. But, as Thompson noted, the revenue generated by commercial tenants has been an important part of the financial equation for a young institution still learning how to sustain itself.

The growth of commercial activity throughout the campus over the past several years has also been an important part of MASS MoCA’s community redevelopment mission – generating new economic activity and creating new jobs as space has been filled by a variety of businesses and organizations.

Its success on that front is evidenced by the fact that the 125,000 square feet of commercial space added in the Phase II redevelopment is now almost completely filled. “We’re at 95-percent occupancy,” said Thompson. “We now have more than 30 tenants that collectively employ about 350 people. These are good jobs, and these tenants pay taxes and make other important contributions to the community.”

Thompson noted that the high occupancy level (see boxed item below) is something of a recent development, having previously been in the 60-percent range for a number of years. He attributed the increase, in part, to an organic process in which the cultural and commercial activity on the campus fueled one another and created a dynamic and attractive environment for prospective tenants.

Another factor cited by Thompson has been the role played by Larry Smallwood, who in 2013 returned to MASS MoCA as deputy director and chief operating officer – literally and figuratively – by the massive museum and the art it contains. But, as Thompson noted, the revenue generated by commercial tenants has been an important part of the financial equation for a young institution still learning how to sustain itself.

While MASS MoCa has seen impressive results in filling its commercial space, that stands in contrast to the situation in other sections of downtown North Adams, where commercial vacancy rates remain stubbornly high, especially among storefronts along Main Street.

Thompson stressed, however, that MASS MoCA’s success in attracting commercial tenants has not come at the expense of other downtown properties. He noted that many of the tenants who have come to MASS MoCA have done so specifically to be a part of the campus environment, and might otherwise not have looked to locate in North Adams.

“Many of our tenants are here because they like being here with MASS MoCA,” he said, pointing out that lease rates there are 20-to-30-percent higher than comparable space in other downtown locations.

“I’m a free-marketer,” Thompson added, “but we don’t want to – and don’t try to – poach from downtown.”

Smallwood agreed, noting that his recruitment efforts have focused on attracting new tenants to fill the available space. While MASS MoCa has seen impressive results in filling its commercial space, that stands in contrast to the situation in other sections of downtown North Adams, where commercial vacancy rates remain stubbornly high, especially among storefronts along Main Street.

Thompson has also been successful in attracting tenants to the city rather than luring those from downtown properties. He noted that many of the tenants who have come to MASS MoCA have done so specifically to be a part of the campus environment, and might otherwise not have looked to locate in North Adams.

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Smallwood agreed, noting that his recruitment efforts have focused on attracting new businesses to the city rather than luring those already there. “We like to poach from other areas, but are not looking to do that here,” he said.

In fact, with MASS MoCa’s space essentially filled, other downtown commercial properties are now capturing some of the overflow. “I spend time every week getting inquiries [from prospective tenants],” said Smallwood. “And, now that we are full, these inquiries are being referred to other commercial property owners in the city.” Of these referrals, he added, “at least half” have been successfully landed by others.
collaborate

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Thompson said this recent dynamic is a satisfying manifestation of MASS MoCA’s community development mission. “Nothing warms our hearts more than to make a referral and then see that the tenant is landed,” he said.

“Quickening pulse”

It also speaks to what Thompson sees as an important stage in the city’s ongoing revitalization efforts.

While noting that “there have been successive waves of consolidation and diversification in our economy” that have included some setbacks as well as positive steps forward, Thompson said there is a different vision of the city taking shape, especially among a younger cohort who see North Adams as a “micro city” that offers the advantages of urban living and has housing that is affordable.

“I’m excited by what I feel is a quickening pulse in North Adams,” he said. “I detect a trend of more and more people looking at great values in North Adams and deciding to become part of the community.”

He said that trend is poised to continue – driven by a number of significant developments that are taking shape, such as the ongoing transformation of the former Cariddi Mill into a multi-faceted commercial complex known as Greylock Works; the re-imagining of a 1950s-era motel into Tourists, an updated-yet-retro lodging experience slated to open this summer; and other proposed attractions that are in the early planning stages (including two separate projects proposed by Thomas Krens).

While these activities and other factors may bring a modest but measurable influx of new people to the city over time, Thompson pointed out that there are also important trends taking shape in terms of those who are simply coming to visit.

“Something very interesting has been happening over the past few years,” he said, referring to the region’s growing status as a major cultural destination and the effect that is having on visitation.

“Ten years ago, before Sol LeWitt and before the Clark [Art Institute] expansion, many visitors to this region would come as day-trippers and then high-tail it back to where they came from,” Thompson said. “That’s becoming increasingly difficult to do. It’s really impossible to see all of what you want to see in a day.”

That dynamic, he said, is driving a significant increase in overnight or multi-day visits which, in turn, generates additional visitor spending and economic impact.

“The jump from day-tripper to overnight – or from overnight to adding an extra night – has huge economic consequences,” said Thompson. “We’ve begun to see that, and I think there’s more to come.”

He noted that MASS MoCA and other nearby cultural venues are also becoming more active in promoting the region’s growing status as a destination and making it easier for visitors to take in the wide range of attractions over a multi-day stay.

One such initiative, known as ArtCountry, was unveiled earlier this year as a collaboration between MASS MoCA, the Clark Art Institute, the Williams College Museum of Art, the Williamstown Theatre Festival and the Bennington Museum. They are working together to highlight and promote the cultural assets of the region through collaborative programming, joint ticket offers and a unified approach to attracting visitors to the region (for more information, go to artcountry.org).

“ArtCountry is just a start,” said Thompson. “There’s all kinds of cross-marketing and collaborating that we can do to bring new people to the region.”

While cross-marketing among the region’s established cultural attractions is relatively new, Thompson said that MASS MoCA has been engaging in a different type of cross-marketing between audiences for various aspects of its own programming.

“We are becoming more successful at cross-pollinating between our music festivals and our museum programming,” he said. “We’ve been engaging in a different type of cross-marketing between audiences for various aspects of its own programming.

“We are becoming more successful at cross-pollinating between our music festivals and our museum programming,” he said.

He explained that the growth over the past several years of its three music festivals –

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There will be special nighttime illumination of the MASS MoCA clocktower and downtown steeples that will create a unique visual effect for the city center. “This will be from dusk on,” said Thompson. “You have to stay around [into the evening] to see it, so it encourages people to linger.”
Solid Sound, FreshGrass and Bang on a Can – has drawn thousands of people to the region who may have never heard of MASS MoCA or North Adams.

“A lot of visitors to our festivals are here for the music and may not know what MASS MoCA is,” he said. “When they arrive, we work hard to keep our galleries open late and offer special ticket pricing to the museum.”

This, he added, has resulted in return visits to the museum and northern Berkshires by many of these festival-goers, which has helped push annual attendance above the 160,000 mark. “A lot of people who were introduced to MASS MoCA through our music festivals end up coming back,” he said. “It’s a powerful dynamic.”

North Adams Exchange
That dynamic will play out again, as noted above, with the convergence of the Building 6 opening and the return of alt-rock favorites Wilco and other performers at the Solid Sound Festival.

With this influx of visitors, Thompson said that MASS MoCA is expanding its efforts to spread the economic impact deeper into downtown. “We’re trying to ramp it up,” he said. “We’re going to experiment this summer with some new things and give people more good reasons to wander downtown.”

Key among these, he said, is the North Adams Exchange – or “NAX” – which features several new attractions in and around downtown that are being staged in collaboration with the city, local merchants and others.

For example, there will be special night illumination of the MASS MoCA campus just to the north, had earlier been earmarked for conversion into a pedestrian park that would connect with downtown and other attractions planned for the nearby Western Heritage State Park.

“Maybe that’s a good thing,” said Thompson, noting that the 20,000-square-foot building may ultimately be used to expand MASS MoCA’s commercial leasing capacity. “In short, we’re going to drag our feet on that project and see which way the winds blow.”

But for this summer, he added, the property will become “a cluster of food and retail” that will help funnel museum visitors the short distance from MASS MoCA to Main Street. “I like to point out to people that, from our parking lot, it’s closer to get to downtown than to our lobby,” said Thompson.

With NAX and other initiatives, Thompson said the goal is “make sure our visitors know all of the good reasons to go downtown.” The impact of these efforts will be bolstered, he added, as the city and other businesses continue to step up to make downtown more inviting and appealing to the museum’s visitors.

“It’s a push-pull project,” he said. “We can push, but it also takes pull.”

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BERKSHIRE GATEWAY JAZZ WEEKEND

Historic church takes center stage as venue for collaborative event

By John Townes

In addition to bringing high-caliber music and enlivening the social scene in Lee, the annual Berkshire Gateway Jazz Weekend has also been setting the tempo for economic and cultural revitalization in the town’s central business district.

The festival, scheduled this year for June 16-17, has grown to become a prominent event that attracts residents as well as jazz aficionados who come from further afield.

The town's historic church, the Lee Congregational Church, also known as the Lee Meeting House, at 25 Park Place, has been the focal point for the event since its inception in 2009.

Over the years, Lee has maintained its position as a cultural hub, with the church and adjacent park serving as a familiar landmark, greeting visitors with a scene that epitomizes those qualities.

Tourism, economic activity in the Berkshires, has had an important role in drawing visitors to the town, according to Vinette, an attorney who was formerly the longtime director of the Lee Community Development Corporation (CDC), the umbrella organization for a collaboration among the Lee Chamber of Commerce, the Berkshire Gateway Preservation Inc., and Berkshires Jazz Inc.

This year marks a new transition to a more formal partnership with Berkshires Jazz, which has become the sponsor for the headline concerts. The Lee Chamber of Commerce and Berkshire Gateway Preservation are primarily responsible for the overall event and outdoor activities.

Berkshires Jazz, (www.berkshiresjazz.org) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and encourage jazz in the county by presenting performances and music educational programs and other related activities.

Berkshires Jazz has worked with the Gateway Jazz Weekend since the beginning, according to Ed Bride, chair of Berkshires Jazz. “We’ve collaborated on an off over the years in various ways,” said Bride. “This year, the festival is handing off the production and ticketing for the headline shows to us on a permanent basis.”

Bride explained that the Gateway Jazz Festival will benefit by having a jazz-oriented organization handling that responsibility.

The arrangement also ensures the annual mission of Berkshires Jazz, which sponsors the annual Pittsfield CityJazz Festival. This Jazz Festival, held over two weeks in October, includes a "jazz crawl" with performers at various venues in the city, a headline weekend of concerts featuring prominent and rising jazz musicians, and a Jazz Prodigy Concert, featuring a selected young local musician with notable potential.

Bride said the formal partnership with the Gateway Jazz Weekend is an expansion of Berkshires Jazz to include events throughout the county.

“Forum, this will also complement the Pittsfield CityJazz Festival as an additional annual event,” said Bride. “Together, they also bookend each other, as major jazz events just before and after the summer season.”

Transition for Lee

The Berkshire Gateway Jazz Festival was started during a notable period of transition in Lee, which has led to a cumulative mix of businesses and attractions.

On the downside, the Lee CDC, which long had a prominent role in promoting economic development, had to suspend most of its operations and eliminate its staff due to a lack of funding.

However, in its last period of activity under Vinette’s leadership, the CDC supported a confluence of separate initiatives which were bringing new activity to the town center.

One notable project was the purchase and redevelopment of the Bookless Block, a commercial building on Main Street by the College Internship Program (CIP). CIP started in Lee and has subsequently established branches around the country. It is a business that provides a comprehensive transition program for young adults on the Autism Spectrum and others with learning differences. Its programs offer preparation for secondary education, employment and independent living.

In addition to providing offices and space for its own programs, CIP’s founder and owner, Dr. Michael McMannan, wanted to use the building for community and cultural activities. When redeveloping the building he created the Good Purpose Gallery and the Starving Artist Cafe as connected adjacent spaces there. These have become a popular gathering spot and site of programs and art exhibits.

He also purchased the former St. George’s Church around the corner and converted that into a venue for live performances and meetings for the Lee Spectrum Playhouse.

The CDC worked with CIP to support the project including a state grant for related downtown improvements through a Mass Works Infrastructure grant from the state’s Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. The funding of improvements leveraged over $4 million in private investment.

“We developed a plan for improvements to that section of the east side of Main Street,” explained Vinette. “That included constructing a new parking lot and upgrade...”
The 6th annual Berkshire Gateway Jazz Weekend, June 16-17, will include a Friday night Ella Fitzgerald Centennial Celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of the legendary singer’s birth. Popular vocalist Wanda Houston will perform a tribute to Fitzgerald, with the Vermont Jazz Center Big Band, a 16-piece ensemble of area professionals, directed by Rob Freeberg.

Saturday night will feature a reunion concert with The New Black Eagle Jazz Band and guitarist Duke Robillard. In 2009, the Black Eagles teamed up with Robillard for a recording called “Nothing But The Blues.” They will be performing together for the first time since then exclusively for the festival.

Both concerts are at 8 p.m. General admission to each is $25 in advance and $30 at the door. Tickets can be purchased online at berkshiregatewayjazz.org or at local outlets including the Lee Chamber of Commerce Info Booth, Lee Congregational Church, or at Wood Bros. Music in Pittsfield.

Updated information on other performances and events during the weekend festival will be released in local media and on the event’s website (www.berkshiregatewayjazz.org).

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