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BERKSHIRE NONPROFIT connections

Published by the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires



BERKSHIRE BACKYARD BOUNTY

This new nonprofit founded by Mark Lefenfeld and Jay Weintraub harvests surplus food for those in need. They have attracted 13 contributing farms, 31 homeowners with fruit trees, 39 gleaners, and 17 distributors.

PHILANTHROPY

Hannah Van Sickle interviews Robin McGraw of the Black Rock Foundation Fund. "I grew up in a family where I was given a lot and it was expected that we give a lot back."

SHARING SERVICES

Erin Sullivan assesses the interest of local nonprofits surrounding the use of shared services.

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JANUARY 2018

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ON THE COVER:

Riiska Brook Orchard is tucked away on a pretty, secluded spot in the southern Berkshire Hills of Sandisfield. Bill and Barbara Riiska's family business boasts 2,500 semi-dwarf apple trees with over ten varieties from which to choose. Visit them at riiskabrookorchard.com.

Photo: Richard B. Migot

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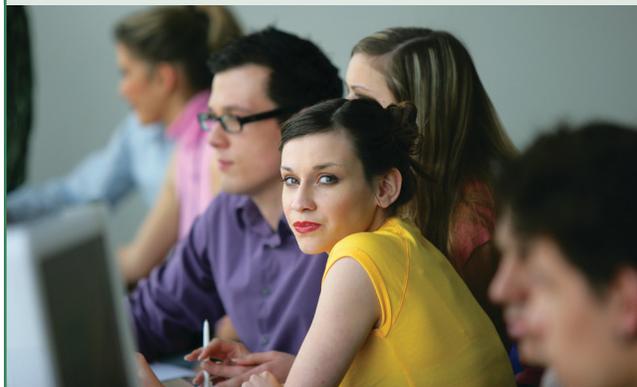
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Nature transitions through the seasons beautifully. As the days get shorter, and the weather turns colder, everything under the sun—from foliage to foragers—makes the preparations necessary in order to avoid the proverbial “feast or famine” that comes with the changing seasons. With nothing but a cursory glance, life in either of these extremes appears to be the norm for most people. As a result, balance in the modern world seems elusive. Nonprofits are hardly exempt from this conundrum. While the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas often presents the greatest outpouring and support for the roughly 30 food pantries and 13 meal sites throughout Berkshire County, the weeks and months that follow are often bleak. Balance, it would appear, is quickly becoming a necessity.

In this issue, we undertake the topic of food—and, in large part, food security. Nearly 12% of households in Berkshire County, or roughly 1 out of every 8, are food insecure—they do not know what their next meal will be or where it will come from. Even more staggering is the fact that 1 child out of every 3 in Berkshire County faces food insecurity. How to mitigate the extremes, and effectively find middle ground, presents real challenges.

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, as part of their Coalition to End Hunger, launched a targeted media campaign aimed at erasing the stigma associated with seeking food assistance; restoring social values and shared responsibility; and providing vulnerable households with a sense of self worth and dignity. The Massachusetts Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) matches SNAP purchases of local fruits and vegetables from farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets and farm share programs; and, from one end of the County to the other, residents and community members are joining forces to stock pantries, serve meals and literally share the bounty with their neighbors in need.

As always, our stories are rife with connections. The amount of crossover among the four nonprofits we profile in this issue is huge. That Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires, our “New Kid on the Block,” is providing the bulk of the fruit for the Thanksgiving Angels’ monumental pie effort while simultaneously looking to acquire refrigerated storage space through the help of Berkshire Agricultural Ventures is no coincidence: we live in an area where, if one pulls on a single string, the likely result is a fistful of threads

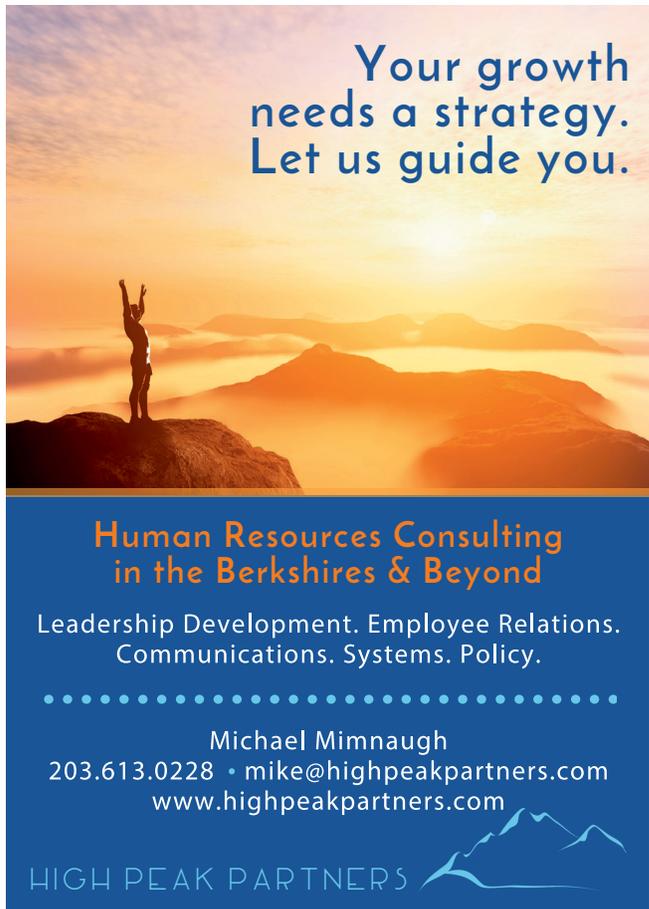
that—in some shape or form—is inextricably linked to the next.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that we’ve just scratched at the surface of this important topic. As is our mission, we hope that readers—after perusing the profiles and voices that spark their individual interest—will venture into the community and make their own connections so that our many hands will make light work of the important task at hand: coming together and finding balance.

Best,



Hannah Van Sickle, Editor



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From the PUBLISHER

*Liana Toscanini, Executive Director
Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires*



I've always complained about having a birthday in early January. The holidays are over and people are just plain partied-out. Planning my birthday dinner starts with the snow forecast. Ugh! This year, however, I have something to look forward to – the second issue of *Connections Magazine* you now hold in your hands.

Editor Hannah Van Sickle continues to write beautifully about nonprofit work, with a talent for storytelling that warms our hearts, even in the coldest months of the year.

The local food movement is experiencing huge momentum. A recent visit to a pre-holiday farmer's market attended by 1200 people confirmed that our profiles of farms and food distribution organizations are timely and relevant. More importantly, our county's work to combat food insecurity is moving swiftly in a positive direction. And while we celebrate these laudable efforts, we also acknowledge there is so much more to be done.

To that point, I'm particularly pleased with this issue's wealth of practical advice for nonprofits. Every one of our contributing writers, whether consultant, professional writer, or volunteer, advocates for nonprofits on a daily basis. And that is something to acknowledge, along with the generous support of our local businesses whose advertisements make it possible to produce 1,000 copies of this magazine for our community.

Speaking of birthdays, the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires will soon be two years old. Like a toddler running as fast as she can away from her parents, the NPC is also experiencing a certain gleeful growth spurt. But just like the local food movement, there is so much more to be done to increase the health of Berkshire County's nonprofit sector.

Berkshire nonprofits want more opportunities to network and collaborate, to share resources, and to work more efficiently. 2018 promises to be a busy new year for the NPC as we honor those requests to the best of our ability. To that end, we'll need partners of all kinds including volunteers, board members, businesses and donors. We are grateful to all those who have supported the NPC thus far. Happy New Year to all.

Berkshire Nonprofit **connections**

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VOICES:

STATE REPRESENTATIVE SMITTY PIGNATELLI



Pignatelli Brings Berkshire Perspective to Environment Committee

I enjoy being from the Berkshires. We are unique from the rest of Massachusetts, and I take great pride in the sense of community we've continued to foster. Whatever our internal challenges may be, we have risen to every occasion and been vocal in the advocacy of our needs and our potential. I'm humbled by the work our region does to address problems locally, and I have always been proud to represent our interests at the state level.

Earlier this year, I was tapped to be House Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. The information I've taken in from meetings, site visits, tours, and public hearings has allowed me to more thoroughly explore Massachusetts' approach to our environment and resources. I've learned of various collaborations between local organizations funded by state and federal governments that innovatively assess regional levels of need and lift local farmers, two of which are being implemented right here at home.

In late September I was able to join Barbara Zheutlin of Berkshire Grown at the Great Barrington Farmers Market to support the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). Jointly funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a line-item in this year's budget, HIP benefits both local farmers and low-income families. SNAP recipients are encouraged to purchase locally grown produce from participating outlets and HIP matches their purchase dollar for dollar, up to \$80 a month depending on household size. Although it only began in April, the program has distributed \$1.5 million in incentives, helped over 300 farms and markets, and assisted 30,000 of the 440,000 families currently enrolled in SNAP.

As HIP's funding is unfortunately set to end in March 2020, my colleague, Representative Paul Mark of the 2nd Berkshire District, has filed H.2131 which would direct the Department of Agriculture to run such a program in perpetuity. I'm proud to relay that the bill was given a favorable report by my Committee.

Similarly, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has partnered with the Berkshire Alchemy Initiative and Berkshire Farm & Table to create the Berkshire Market Collective. The Collective, funded by the USDA's 2017 Farmers Market Promotion Program grant, aims to link the 20 independent farmers' markets currently existing in the Berkshires and to provide them the opportunity to grow

stronger together instead of losing out through competition.

The 2014 Sustainable Berkshires Plan showed that the demand for fresh vegetables in the Berkshires was twice as high as the supply; the demand for fruits was almost four times as high as what was available. This proved that the right path to connect farmers with demand still didn't exist. With more than \$200,000 received from the USDA, the Collective plans to gauge the challenges and needs of each individual farmers' market and provide a resource through which market managers can share their knowledge and information to better meet existing demand. This project is quite literally all about collaboration, and I'm excited to see where it will go.

I believe both these examples highlight the wonders of what can happen when local initiatives—focused on fostering dialogues and finding solutions within their communities—are recognized and supported by their state and federal governments. After 15 years as the state representative from the Berkshires, I am consistently inspired by the work our region puts forward to highlight our potential and to build a better County; I'm thrilled that my position as Environment Chair will allow me to remain close to my roots as the Berkshire agriculture sector continues to move forward. 



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Abbie, based in the Berkshires, has 40+ years providing counsel in the nonprofit sector.

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BERKSHIRE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

By Lo Sottile and Leah Thompson

Lo Sottile and Leah Thompson co-chair the Berkshire County Development Alliance (BCDA), an informal group of nonprofit professionals who represent area organizations in a fundraising capacity. Members meet to share information and engage in meaningful dialogue about advancement issues affecting the industry.

Here's a look at a recent discussion we had about what motivates us to give.

Lo Sottile, Director of Development for Berkshire Museum

My donations are made spontaneously, and are almost entirely motivated by my emotions, especially when I'm made to feel hopeful about something personal to my life. As a nonprofit administrator with student loans and lofty life-goals, my home budget is (surprise) less than stellar, and I don't have much room for charitable giving.

So you have to pull at my heartstrings! I'm reminded immediately of a certain Senator's recent presidential campaign, and the highly targeted emails I received leading up to the election. It felt like he was speaking directly to me, that I would help him achieve our mutual goals once he was in office. Part of me knew I was being tricked into believing so deeply in this personal connection, but the rest of me wanted to grab onto the hope these emails, this team, was helping me visualize.

Once you get me, I'm yours. Of course I can give \$2 if it means we can build and grow together. Absolutely, I will forgo my coffee today with another \$4 to your cause. You're right; \$10 is not a huge leap from my last donation. Why not

upgrade my gift again to help that much more? I'm a fundraiser's most exciting challenge: Tell me a sappy story, and I'll be a regular contributor in no time.

But you have to keep me connected. When I first saw a video about the Berkshire Natural Resources Council High Road project, which will connect trails throughout the Berkshires, I teared up as the video drone panned out over our beautiful hills, helping me imagine a 100% walkable region. A few days after my first donation, I had an email thanking me for my support. Not two weeks later, I had a message in my mailbox signed by their President, celebrating all I've done to make their project possible. Even though my gift was small, they made me feel like a true partner.

Leah Thompson, Director of Development for BART Charter Public School

At 36 years old, I'm not technically a millennial; I'm part of that middle generation that doesn't fit easily into a development or marketing plan. In general, I like to support the agencies in my community that are doing important work and anything my friends are working on directly. That kind of support is deliberate. Spontaneous giving for me happens when I'm angry. When a news story or event makes me viscerally upset, I feel a call to act and, because I can't often do anything physically helpful, I give.

Unfairness gets me every time. If a law is passed that I feel hurts my LGBTQ friends, I'll make a donation to the Human Rights Campaign. When I heard about the plan to defund Planned Parenthood, you can bet I reacted with a donation. I am emotional and reactionary when it comes to my giving

habits. I know my small donations aren't making a big dent in an issue, but I like to think of my meager gifts as a token of encouragement.

Catch me on social media. I receive so many solicitations in the mail and in my inbox that I start to become numb to the messages. Many of my gifts this past year, like to the ACLU and Stand with Standing Rock, were reactions to videos I saw while scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed. I was outraged, I gave, I encouraged my friends to give (hopefully some did).

You don't actually have to ask me. Just make it easy for me to give with a few clicks. These spontaneous gifts are reactions to news or social media. Once I decide I want to support a specific cause or organization, I take to Google. Often this plays out on my iPhone screen and so I am grateful when I find the mobile-friendly website of the organization I'm searching for with an easily accessible mission statement and button to give. These gifts land me on mailing lists and often result in more gifts.

Emotional giving is real! Whatever your message, make sure you're putting it out there in a way that might snag a gift from both of us. Consider what drove your last spontaneous gift.

We'd love to meet you! If you are a fundraising professional in the Berkshires and want to find your people to learn from and network with, please reach out. Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/groups/BerkshireDevelopmentAlliance. For more information or to become a member of BCDA: lsottile@berkshireremuseum.org / leah.thompson@bartcharter.org. 

VOICES:

MASSACHUSETTS NONPROFIT NETWORK

The Massachusetts Nonprofit Network is the only statewide organization dedicated to strengthening and supporting nonprofits from the Berkshires to Cape Cod. **Below is an excerpt from our latest Commonwealth Insights publication, featuring fundraising advice from Margaret Keller, Executive Director of Community Access to the Arts in Great Barrington.**

To join MNN as a member and get access to benefits such as networking, capacity building services, cost savings, and advocacy, visit www.massnonprofitnet.org/join.

Community Access to the Arts provides more than 1,000 visual and performing arts workshops for over 600 people with disabilities throughout Berkshire County every year.

Q: Have you noticed any trends and shifts in the philanthropic landscape, and do you have thoughts on what's to come?

There's much more focus on how to connect with donors. I see much more attention paid to effective storytelling and how to use storytelling to connect to donors, as well monthly giving and planned giving. Also, the way in which donors give is certainly changing. I think giving via mobile devices is really important for everyone to be acknowledging and looking at in their own fundraising efforts.

Q: In your previous positions, you worked as a professional grant writer and secured a great deal of support from philanthropic foundations. What would you suggest to an organization looking for more foundation contacts and support?

The initial research one does on foundations can be a little deceptive. It can seem like there's a lot of money out there. I think you have to do a little deeper research and really make sure that your mission matches a foundation's priorities as you craft an approach to it. Even then, getting in the door can be hard. Reach out to program officers—they can be your best resources and are tremendously knowledgeable and helpful—and say something like, "I see that your foundation has a very strong interest in this problem or this issue. Would you be available for a short conversation where I can share how we're making a difference in addressing this problem?" If you can get a personal introduction through a board member or mutual colleague, that never hurts. Also, recognize that there is a different timeline involved with foundations and that this is not work that's going to result in an immediate payoff.

Q: Have current events (i.e., things happening in the news that captures donors' attention) influenced your strategies, and have you experienced "donor fatigue"?

It's impossible not to be concerned about that. There are some donors who are shifting their priorities and want to be sure that they're able to support those organizations that are already losing in the current climate. However, at the same time, because people are more alert and engaged right now, I think that many people are looking for more ways to make a difference, and I think that is what we need right now and what we need always. You still have to let your supporters know that you matter and that you have the power to make a difference. Show them how they can change the world through your organization. I really do think that donors are more engaged and more committed than ever. 



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PROFILE:

BERKSHIRE BACKYARD BOUNTY

By Hannah Van Sickle

"Timing is really important," says Mark Lefenfeld on a quiet fall morning in New Marlborough. Apple "drops" litter the grass where he stands, heavy with dew, rendering them largely unusable. At the top of a sloping hill, beneath blue skies and bright sunshine, he prepares for the task at hand. Eight waxed banana boxes, coveted for their durability, are lined up alongside four wooden handled picking baskets and matching four foot long handle extensions. Before long, the audible crunch of gravel announces the arrival of volunteers who slowly traverse the winding drive toward the day's event: an apple glean.

Historically speaking, the Biblically-derived right to glean the fields was reserved for the poor; in the modern world, gleaning is most often practiced by humanitarian groups who distribute surplus food, that remains after the harvest, to those in need. Today, it takes neither a farmer nor a



Photo: Hannah Van Sickle

language enthusiast to glean that an apple tree laden with fruit might need to be—well, gleaned—in order to fully make use of the crop, residual or otherwise. It is this most practical sense of the word that propels the work of Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires, a nonprofit created in 2015 and aimed at harvesting food for those in need.

"We're rookies at this," jokes Lefenfeld who, along with

co-founder Jay Weintraub, oversaw the gleaning of a whopping 8,000 pounds of peaches, apples, pears and grapes in their inaugural season. The genesis of the pair's nonprofit venture stemmed from what Weintraub calls a "bumper crop" in 2015, and his own little orchard in Alford which generated a surplus of fruit that ended up going to waste. Elsewhere in the Berkshires, the pair noticed that large amounts of unpicked fresh fruit were falling to the ground and going to waste. Despite knowing "nothing about anything" in the orchard business, Weintraub and Lefenfeld met for lunch and hatched a plan to enlist the help of volunteers who might fuel their idea: to gather surplus fruit and vegetables and deliver it to their neighbors in need.

In their first season, the focus at Backyard Bounty has been on developing relationships. This has proven to be an incredibly integral part of the process considering the chain of events that has to occur for a complete and successful glean: a viable homeowner must be enlisted, reliable volunteers secured, trees effectively gleaned, and produce quickly distributed. And Lefenfeld and Weintraub are still fine-tuning the flow. The learning curve has been steep, and Lefenfeld cites logistics—or "perfecting the process"—as consuming most of their time and energy to date. "There have been real bouts of inefficiency," he says, "around issues of timing, where and when to pick-up and drop-off produce." Their work, in large part, has been made possible by a grant from the Green Pastures Fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. As luck would have it—or Mother Nature, in this case—wildly unpredictable temperatures in the spring of 2016 that all but thwarted the fruit crop, resulted in harvesting efforts being put on hold for a season due to lack of predictability—an issue that continues to plague those in the proverbial business of cultivating fruit.

In the midst of the inaugural season, Backyard Bounty quickly met its next obstacle: space. "We don't have refrigerated storage space [which] compresses the time we can hold onto produce," Lefenfeld explains. At present, they are making use of extra storage space at their respective homes. This makes for a time consuming and labor intensive process that is largely inaccessible by third parties, an obstacle that could be eradicated with a central location and cold storage. "Distributors have been our biggest constraint," says Lefenfeld, citing the necessity of distributing gleaned produce in an efficient and timely fashion as being paramount. To date, South Congregational Church in Pittsfield has been their biggest recipient, using up to six crates of apples per week at the height of their Thanksgiving pie baking, thanks to ample cold storage at the Pittsfield church.



Photo: Hannah Van Sickle

By the numbers, the nonprofit has attracted 39 individuals to glean; 13 contributing farms; 17 different distributors; and 31 homeowners who have fruit trees. These figures represent what Lefenfeld calls official registrants—those who went through the very efficient process on the nonprofit’s website—to become involved. In addition to the high interest from individuals, Backyard Bounty has reached out to area youth organizations—including Greenagers, Railroad Street Youth Project and Project Sprout—and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. “They feel good because they feel connected,” says Weintraub. This type of tethering to the community has been instrumental in the nonprofit’s inception. According to Lefenfeld, Backyard Bounty is “effectively riding the coattails,” of The Nutrition Center, an established 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, that serves as the fiscal sponsor and bypasses the need for obtaining independent status—further evidence of the pair’s affinity for collaboration. Additionally, Lefenfeld and Weintraub are culling expertise and advice from an informal Board of Directors, consisting of Peter Stanton of The Nutrition Center; Barbara Zheutlin of Berkshire Grown; and Andrew Morehouse of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

Back in New Marlborough, reality sets in. “This is gonna be a rough sell,” says volunteer Paul Kaplan, examining both the size and flavor of the diminutive, golden apples clinging to the tree. “It’s a timing issue,” he adds, noting that these apples were not quite ripe, while another local property was already past its prime. “They’re applesauce apples,” says Lefenfeld, before offering a quick demonstration of the claw, pull, twist motion needed to glean apples from high in the tree. Three volunteers navigate the thick branches and make quick work of stripping the tree of its bounty. “They’re better than they look,” he adds of the ugly apples being harvested, likening them to the boxes of Concord grapes he had dropped off at Community Health Programs with a note: Fresh grapes, tart, good for jelly, jams and

preserves. But not necessarily eating out of hand. “We knew we had to convince people that ugly apples taste great,” says Weintraub who, in addition to having accomplished this feat, considers their first official year a success. As for Backyard Bounty’s wishes going forward? “What would be nice is some predictability from these pantries,” says Lefenfeld. In the absence of a commitment from food pantries and distribution sites as to how much produce they can move, the entire process screeches to a halt. Which points to precisely why this process is so frustrating: it is inherently unpredictable. And so, for the moment, it is quite literally feast or famine. At least that’s what I’m gleaning. 🍏



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PROFILE:

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK:

BERKSHIRE AGRICULTURAL VENTURES

By Hannah Van Sickle

Cynthia Pansing plays heavily on an agrarian analogy despite the ostensibly financial aim of Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV), the burgeoning nonprofit organization where she sits at the helm. “Seeds appear and we are able to nurture them into a plant,” says the Executive Director of BAV who, a scant year after filing for 501 (c) (3) status from the IRS, has already partnered with 22 farms and farm businesses in their five-county, three-state coverage area as a means of fulfilling their mission: in short, growing the future of food in our community through investment, resources and collaboration.

“It’s a wonderful role to play,” gushes Pansing “[of the] fluidity and flexibility to help grow a business as it moves forward.” In short, BAV is taking a private sector approach to increasing healthy food access to all and strengthening food security in the region. Their strategy? Investing in food producers—and connecting farmers to consumers in innovative and creative ways, that make fresh, healthy and local food available to more people.

The efforts of BAV are fundamental

to the region’s food security. The organization’s co-founders, Joel Millonzi and Neil Chrisman, pride themselves on offering targeted support to farms and food businesses. Pansing describes them as, “not only united in their interests, but also devoted stewards of the nonprofit sector in the region.” The pair has worked tirelessly to build a local constituency to support their mission, one that evolved from a simple question: What could be more important to our lives than what we eat and to our environment than how we care for it?

Chrisman and Millonzi’s partnership stems from a conversation that began in the summer of 2009; according to Chrisman, “[Joel and I] were musing on the fragility of our beautiful Berkshires and the pastoral life that surrounds us. We were aware of the struggle farmers are having to make a go of it, staying solvent and expanding in the face of corporate food and farming competition. We set out to diagnose the most critical needs and we concluded that it was the need for capital, business assistance and land at the start up level.” This realization is what now forms the backbone of BAV, an organization

that provides farms and food businesses support in the arenas of business development, technical assistance and financial support. Why? Because these elements are imperative if a business is to thrive in today’s challenging economic landscape.

Hosta Hill, a West Stockbridge based business committed to growing and producing cultured foods—from sauerkraut and kimchi to lacto fermented hot sauce—is one such recipient. Six years into their trendy and wildly successful business fermenting vegetables, Maddie Elling and Abe Hunrichs were pointed in the direction of BAV for help with marketing. The pair—who take pride in their bold, vibrant healing foods that are both local and sustainable—relies on the yield from farmers in the region to supplement what they grow in four acres on Division Street in Great Barrington. On a late fall afternoon, I paid a visit to Hosta Hill where the morning production was a blur—quite literally. A trio of workers was making quick work of 300 pounds of local yellow onions, part of what Hunrichs called, “a big slug of vegetables, all at once.” The nearly 800 pounds of Napa cabbage from

Photo: Erik Lewandowski



Atlas Farms in the Pioneer Valley was just a fraction of the more than 30,000 pounds of regional produce—including carrots, onions, garlic, peppers and radishes—accepted by Hosta Hill within the week.

Just inside the door at their cramped quarters, the aftermath is dizzying: dozens of 55 gallon drums, weighing in at 360 pounds each, fill the space. Each is packed with sauerkraut in its most basic state, salted and shredded cabbage which, “requires an anaerobic environment [and] can ferment indefinitely,” according to Elling. The couple’s business model, one focused on growing vegetables in alliance with passionate farmers between the Hudson and Pioneer Valleys, is not only building community but also resilient food systems. “[We are] extremely grateful for the resources, support and funding Berkshire Ag Ventures provided to us,” says Maddie Elling. “We hit on a good niche product [but BAV] was instrumental in making connections and providing technical assistance and funding to support our growth. With the help of BAV, we expanded our marketing strategy that, in turn, continues to strengthen our brand and business in the region.” And remember that aforementioned slog of autumn vegetables? Money being put back into the food economy that, for all intents and purposes, pays it forward both literally and figuratively.

“To invest in the food economy is invaluable,” says Pansing whose background in food access and food security spans more than two decades. Although the field is balkanized with myriad organizations serving the locavore movement, BAV is unique in its commitment to the region. By providing a range of both immediate and long-term support to farms and food businesses, BAV is effectively building the regional food economy and providing greater access to fresh, healthy and local food in a landscape rife with willing partners. In just 946 square miles, the Berkshires boasts 525 farms on 61,656 acres of farmland—making this region the third highest producer in the state. Add to those numbers the fact that the Berkshires were deemed a National Food Destination by the New York Times and the onus of responsibility feels great.

“This is a really dynamic time for food economy,” says Pansing, for whom food and farming are at the heart of both her interest and experience. Hosta Hill is just one of many food businesses on the ground in Berkshire County reaping the benefits of this important work. In their first year of operation, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures has provided support to Marty’s Local, LLC in Richmond; North Plain Farm in Great Barrington; and Sky View Farm in Sheffield. At the core of each of these success stories is a for-profit business, one with food at its epicenter. This blending of not-for-profit and for-profit businesses, and the realization that their coming together is often a necessity, must not be overlooked. The simple fact that the price of living and doing business in the Berkshires is slowly eclipsing locals—especially the under 30 set, of which



Photo: Hannah Van Sickle

Elling and Hunrichs are a part—causes the picture to become quite clear: the efforts of BAV, an organization working on the ground and investing in food producers in our local and regional communities, is doing the important work of connecting farmers to consumers via out-of-the-box thinking. Their effects can be far reaching, particularly with the prospect of new businesses like food hubs, regional processors and commercial kitchens that stand to make fresh, healthy and local food available to more people.

In the meantime, BAV provides access to practical, non-traditional funding to help the region’s food businesses grow. On-farm projects range from season-extending strategies to land acquisition; off-farm projects range from meat, dairy, and vegetable processing to automatic bottling equipment. To complement their financing, BAV provides wraparound technical support and educational programs that build capacity and teach new skills to entrepreneurs and business owners. These services run the gamut from labor recruitment and new entry training to marketing, branding and consumer relations. In short, BAV is addressing infrastructure gaps—and filling voids that “prevent [farms and food businesses] from doing the job they aim to do,” says Pansing. It’s like seed capital that, inch by inch, will connect clusters of ideas and move communities and the food economy forward. ♡



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PROFILE: HOOSAC HARVEST

By Hannah Van Sickle



Michael Gallagher and Ashley Amsden are full-time farmers; they met as apprentices on a farm in rural Vermont, and they've settled in the Hoosac Valley on 185 acres in Lanesboro purchased from Berkshire Natural Resources Council. Their beautiful and diverse land runs the gamut from rich, rolling fields to steep, wet woods that stretch from a ridge above their brick farmhouse to the banks of Cheshire Lake. I visited the couple on the final pick-up day for the season—marking the close of their eighth—with membership having swollen from 30 to 60 shares since they began less than a

decade ago. Their venture, Square Roots Farm, is a nod to Gallagher's stint as a math teacher before turning his attention to farming full-time; while clever and a bit humorous, this couple is no joke: as they make quick work of setting up their wares—from crates of butternut squash and onions to piles of slender leeks, leafy kale and more than half a dozen varieties of garlic, their mission is clear: to broaden the base of those involved in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) by making shares both accessible and affordable for all.

The couple crossed paths with Hoosac Harvest while deep in the throes of looking for land on which to start their farm. Hoosac Harvest was born—as an offshoot of Target Hunger, a community-wide project through the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts—by a dedicated group of volunteers looking to increase access to local, healthy food for all—in particular those individuals who would not be able to participate without some assistance. The mission of Hoosac Harvest supports community-initiated ideas with the goal of getting fresh produce to the people who need it most. How? Through subsidized CSA shares. Sharon Wyrrick stands out as one individual who, along with Lee Venolia, “[emerged] from the larger group [and] met rigorously to brainstorm how to structure an ongoing effort.” Wyrrick went on to start Many Forks Farm, based in Clarksburg, in 2012 and was quickly added to the subsidized share roster; a third farm, Wildstone Farm in Pownal, Vermont, now rounds out the trio of farms offering income eligible families in north county subsidized shares through Hoosac Harvest.

Hoosac Harvest, a nonprofit whose roots stretch back more than a decade, is part of a network looking to address food security in the region; their vision includes a participatory food system in which all members of the community

have access to locally grown, healthful, and sustainably-produced food. Traditionally, low-income families might be eclipsed by CSA membership, a process which requires pre-payment, in full, and constitutes taking a bit of a gamble on a share in the season's harvest. Enter Hoosac Harvest. The organization, seemingly miniscule in the big scheme of things, must not be overlooked. Their ability to offer subsidized CSA shares stems from an affiliation with Berkshire Grown which serves as their fiscal sponsor. Berkshire Grown's "Share the Bounty" program, now in its 15th year, has grown to include 19 farms, subsidizing not only CSA shares but also 14 Farm to Pantry Partnerships. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a relationship between a farmer and community members who commit in advance of the growing season to receiving a share of the farm's harvest. As a result, the CSA relationship is much more than an economic exchange of cash for goods; it is a commitment to sustaining access to healthy, locally grown food in the community where it will be enjoyed and eaten. Share the Bounty strengthens the community in two ways: donations are used to purchase fresh food from local farmers, which supports local agriculture, helps to preserve open space, and strengthens the local economy; then, produce is distributed to local food pantries where it is used to feed our neighbors in need, which effectively supports partnerships between farmers and food pantries.

According to Amsden, she and Gallagher are “committed to reserving 20% of [their CSA] shares,” for Hoosac Harvest; this year that translated to 12 shares. A share at Square Roots costs \$550—which is prepaid by the nonprofit—and serves as seed money for the farmers to invest in their next season. According to Amsden, Hoosac Harvest has been instrumental in both recruiting

families who will have a successful experience and facilitating the process. Wyrrick, of Many Forks Farm in Clarksburg, clarifies the myriad perks of securing a subsidized share: "The subsidized share member is getting a reduced price that they can afford, the farmer is receiving full price for the share, and the subsidized shareholder pays back to Hoosac Harvest the portion of the full price that they are responsible for." She goes on to add, "Hoosac Harvest raises funds to pay the farmers the full share price upfront, as is typical in a community supported agriculture arrangement...while [each] individual or family can structure a payment plan to pay the portion they are responsible for." For many, this translates to the use of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) funds to purchase a CSA share. Amsden speaks clearly and confidently, as one proficient in such transactions. The total value of the season's share is divided into monthly payments which are then paid for using a SNAP/EBT card. From Amsden's perspective, this is yet another way in which accessibility to farm fresh produce is being increased.

"Massachusetts is a leader in innovative programs to be sure people of limited incomes can access fresh, healthy, local foods," says Wyrrick. Furthermore local farmers will benefit from this direct investment in local agriculture. Across the county, season extension strategies on many farms—as well as the growth of year-round farmers' markets—are steadily increasing the year-round availability of locally grown produce.



Photo: Hannah Van Sickle

Sharon Wyrrick speaks passionately on the subject: "We, as farmers, want to do what we can to help those in need, and are most grateful that we have routes to do so. The structure and relationship between the participating farms and Hoosac Harvest is a marvelous way to have participation in our CSAs reflect the diversity of our community. More of these kinds of collaborations can have greater impacts beyond only getting good food to people. This interaction between those of differing circumstances is sorely lacking in almost all of our community or public life. These efforts are creating a rich and diverse community environment through their encouraging and insightful structures and services. At the same time, we need everyone to come on board to create this reality as a living, shared one." As for the subsidized shareholders? "I lose track of who is subsidized and who is not," says Amsden. "It's kind of nice." 🍷



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PROFILE: BERKSHIRE INTERFAITH ORGANIZING

By *Hannah Van Sickle*

Watching Linda Thornton turn a towering heap of dough scraps and leftover edges into a smooth, cohesive pie crust becomes a fitting metaphor for the Thanksgiving Angels, a group of volunteers who—despite differing faiths and varying walks of life—have come together almost seamlessly for the past six years with a common goal: to provide a takeaway holiday meal for 1,500 families in Pittsfield. “We’re all different,” Thornton explains, working opposite Sarah Milano who quietly cuts apples across the workspace. “But it doesn’t matter—we pull it together.” This attitude of coming together in spite of differences, in the kitchen at South Congregational Church in Pittsfield, translates into palpable energy that has the power to elicit great change.

A trio of dedicated volunteers—affectionately known as the pie

ladies—meets each Thursday morning, between late August and late November, to bake. Last year, they contributed 868 pies to the effort. “It’s literally like the loaves and the fishes,” remarks Gretchen DeBartolo, who got involved about four years ago serving Wednesday night dinner. “It’s nourishing,” she says, possibly overlooking her interesting choice of words. “You get out way more than you put in,” she adds of her work nourishing those in need.

Their work is not fancy or pretty, but they move quickly and the results are tangible: 18 pies come out of the convection oven at a time as they inch toward their goal. And the conversation moves swiftly, lest any one individual remain in the limelight too long. “John’s our inspiration,” DeBartolo adds, while combining butter and sugar topping for the next batch of pies. She is talking

about John Sandifer, the cook at South Congregational for the past three years, who made 375 pies last year—sweet potato, pumpkin and apple—at his house.

Each year, on the Monday before Thanksgiving, the commercial kitchen in the basement of South Congregational Church on the corner of South and Church Streets in Pittsfield turns into a veritable freezer; volunteers don winter coats and gloves as the relatively small space becomes command central for distributing thousands of pounds of prepared food for Thanksgiving. Joel Huntington, pastor at the church, cites the project’s inception coming as the result of, “a hilarious story—the turkey wars.” His reference is to the “old model,” one marked by the fragmented distribution of Thanksgiving meals, at multiple sites throughout the city, that resulted in the literal fighting over turkeys in the parking lot. The consolidation of 17 distribution sites culminated in the Thanksgiving Angels, a monumental effort born in 2012. That first year 800 takeaway family meals were distributed; this year, the Angels are poised to churn out 1,500—no small feat considering the continuing economic hardships in the city.

“Pittsfield has been struggling mightily since GE left,” laments Huntington whose emphasis is on bringing about social service and social justice. “How do we go about changing that?” The answer has been through grassroots organizing and collaboration, much of which is being orchestrated by Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO), a nonprofit started in 2015 and geared toward making systemic change. BIO, as explained by Lead Organizer Wendy Krom, was “formed by the faith community [in an effort to] bring people together across lines of difference—in faith, race, ethnicity, language, even geography.” BIO consists of 16 member groups spanning the county, from Sheffield



to Williamstown, bound by a single, main objective: to alleviate the root causes of poverty in our community.

BIO's mission statement reads, "We work together to make social justice real in our community and to improve the quality of life for all in the Berkshires." Krom seeks to make one thing exceedingly clear, "We make systemic change—we do not offer direct service—[although] many of our congregations are involved in that as well." Which brings me back to the kitchen at South Congregational Church. As I furiously peel imperfect apples [the bulk of which were donated by Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires]—secretly wishing I'd brought my 3-in-1 gadget that peels, cores and slices—I am surrounded by communicants from St. Charles, AME Zion and First Church of Christ Congregational (just to name a few); I'm trying to get it right, because I pride myself on details, but no one there seems to care. In fact, my identifying what makes the individuals surrounding me different seems inherently in opposition to why they have come together: to address the simple yet unspoken question of, how to make the world a better place? One particular saint of the operation is Mary Wheat, a congregant of South Congregational since 1960. Catching up with her is tricky; she moves swiftly and wants little credit. "There seems to be a great need... there are a lot of hungry people [in Pittsfield]," she says quietly.

Wheat's sentiments unwittingly become the foundation for BIO's important work. Krom goes on to explain that in bringing people of faith together, the organization aims to ensure that those affected by the issues craft the solutions. And what do those solutions look



like? BIO seeks to build relationships and strengthen community, identify and develop diverse local leaders, and achieve systemic solutions. "We all need to start working together," says Huntington who, in his 28 years leading his congregation, points to "the reality [that this is a] struggling time in our culture." And his hope? That responding with compassion will be a first step toward alleviating what has become a persistent problem in the community.

The results of their work have been far reaching. BIO held a Hunger Action Day at the Massachusetts Statehouse on September 16th in conjunction with the showing of *Take Another Look: A Berkshire Photographic Essay on Food Insecurity*. This exhibit, by Berkshire photographer Nicholas DeCandia, explores the topic of food insecurity in the Berkshires, and aims to make visible the dignity, strength, and dilemma of those trying to feed themselves and their families on minimum wage salaries or other minimal incomes.

For BIO, their aim is to address the more complicated, systemic problems that exist in a city whose population—as the largest city and County seat—hovers around 45,000. Huntington speaks passionately about the microcosm of issues plaguing so many, from job loss and access to health insurance to addiction and poverty. He worries that the confusion surrounding food insecurity—that often results in what he calls, "the blaming and shaming of the lower class,"—are judgements

made in error.

"These are our neighbors, they do not live in a Third World Country. They live and work and go to school among us in Pittsfield," he says. "The photos, words, and videos [in DeCandia's exhibit] will show the dignity and plight of the working poor and the huge amount of volunteer help that fuel the area's feeding programs." Huntington goes on to add, "Religion is not going away, but hopefully it will evolve," noting the inherent hypocrisy that often comes from those who "cling so tightly to the Christian label [that they] forget what Christianity is." At BIO, it's all about sharing a vision with the community—one that, if seen clearly, has the potential to make a real difference.

Huntington serves as the President of BIO and, despite his being the minister at South Congregational Church, the entities are separate. Combining them here, however, is apropos considering the aim of BIO: attempting to overcome the fragmentation that permeates nearly every facet of life for so many in the Berkshires. The first step toward eliciting change? "Let's eradicate the Scarlet Letter on the guests [who visit the food pantries and meal sites]," Huntington suggests. And then, despite daunting logistics, look to the groundswell of individuals—with wildly different stories—ushering in a new chapter from a basement kitchen on the city's south side. 🍏

Acknowledging Source of Donations with Soft Credits

Allison Bedard, CPA

Adelson & Company PC

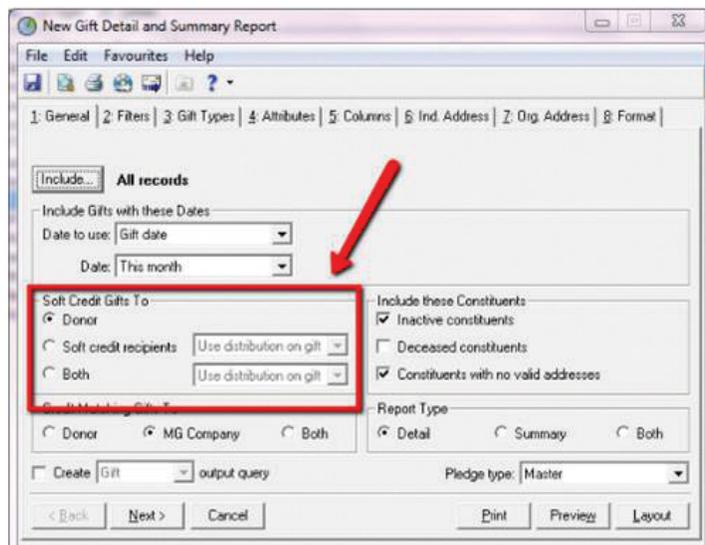
When a nonprofit organization receives a tax-deductible donation, it needs to record where the gift came from for tax reporting purposes, but it also wants to recognize the people responsible for making the contribution. What does the development team do for those people who brought contributions to the organization from other donors? Many development professionals would agree that a relationship resulting in donations also deserves acknowledgment, even if the monetary contributions from that responsible party alone did not warrant the required reporting.

Hard credits link the contributions received to the source of the funds. A hard credit does not acknowledge the third party responsible for bringing the contribution into the organization. Non-profit organizations are typically familiar with hard credits and the related required reporting. This is the information that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) looks for in the Form 990. Running a report of hard credits for a specified time period out of the development program should also correspond to the contributions recorded in the organization's general ledger for the same period.

A soft credit is a link to the relationship that brought a donation into an organization and it allows a nonprofit organization to aggregate donations by relationship, rather than by source of funds. Many development programs have the capability of assigning this type of recognition to the facilitating parties in a way that does not dilute or muddy the results of reporting for IRS purposes.

Assigning soft credits to the parties responsible will allow a

In Reports on the General tab select Credit to Donor



development team to quantify these relationships. This may help in composing year-end acknowledgment notes, tracking those parties instrumental in attracting the monies needed to support a mission, and even in crediting otherwise silent relationships. Soft credits are not for information reporting to the IRS, but are for internal use only and will typically not agree to contributions recorded in the organization's general ledger because more than one individual may receive a soft credit for one contribution.

Most nonprofit organizations required to file the information return 990 are familiar with Schedule B "Schedule of Contributors" and the requirement to track donations. Schedule B calls for organizations to aggregate contributions by source of funds (hard credits), rather than by party responsible for directing those funds and, therefore, does not report soft credits.

The general rule for reporting requirements on Schedule B call for nonprofit organizations to compile a list of donors who contributed or pledged \$5,000 or more (in total) during the year presented in the 990. These donations include money, securities, or other property. When compiling this list to meet the minimum reporting requirement, separate and independent gifts of less than \$1,000 can be disregarded. A nonprofit organization should follow the general rule unless one of a number of special rules applies.

At year end, when preparing for the 990, the development team can run its Schedule of Contributors out of its development program based upon the dollars brought in. The total reported should correspond with the total reported in the general ledger according to the organization's basis of accounting. The team can also run a soft credit report, quantifying the relationship with the Board member or party responsible.

The following examples help illustrate the difference between hard credits and soft credits.

Example 1: Dinner Party

A member of the Board of Directors held a dinner party to which he invited several potential donors. Throughout the dinner he highlighted the mission and programs of the nonprofit organization. As a result, the organization received several donations directly from those in attendance.

Each attendee would get a hard credit for his or her individual donation. The organization can also apply a soft credit to each contribution received as a result of the dinner party linking the Board member responsible.

As for the Schedule B reporting, several of the attendees' contributions did meet the minimum reporting requirement and so, they would be listed on that schedule. The Board member's monetary contribution did not meet the minimum necessary for reporting and would not be listed. So, even though the Board member received the soft credit for several contributions required to be reported, he was not the source of the funds.

At the end of the year, or near the end of the Board member's term, the organization can then run a report quantifying the contributions influenced by that Board member.

Example 2: Family Foundation or Donor Advised Fund through a Community Foundation

A donor makes a donation to the

organization through her family foundation. The contribution meets the minimum reporting threshold for Schedule B of the 990. Schedule B requires reporting the Foundation (source of funds) as the contributor.

The organization could apply a soft credit to the party responsible that would link it to the Foundation contribution.

Example 3: A fund-raising team

A team of three works together to successfully secure a grant of \$100,000 for the organization. The source of the grant receives the hard credit for the contribution and is listed on the Schedule B. Each team member involved receives a soft credit for his or her role in attracting the donation.

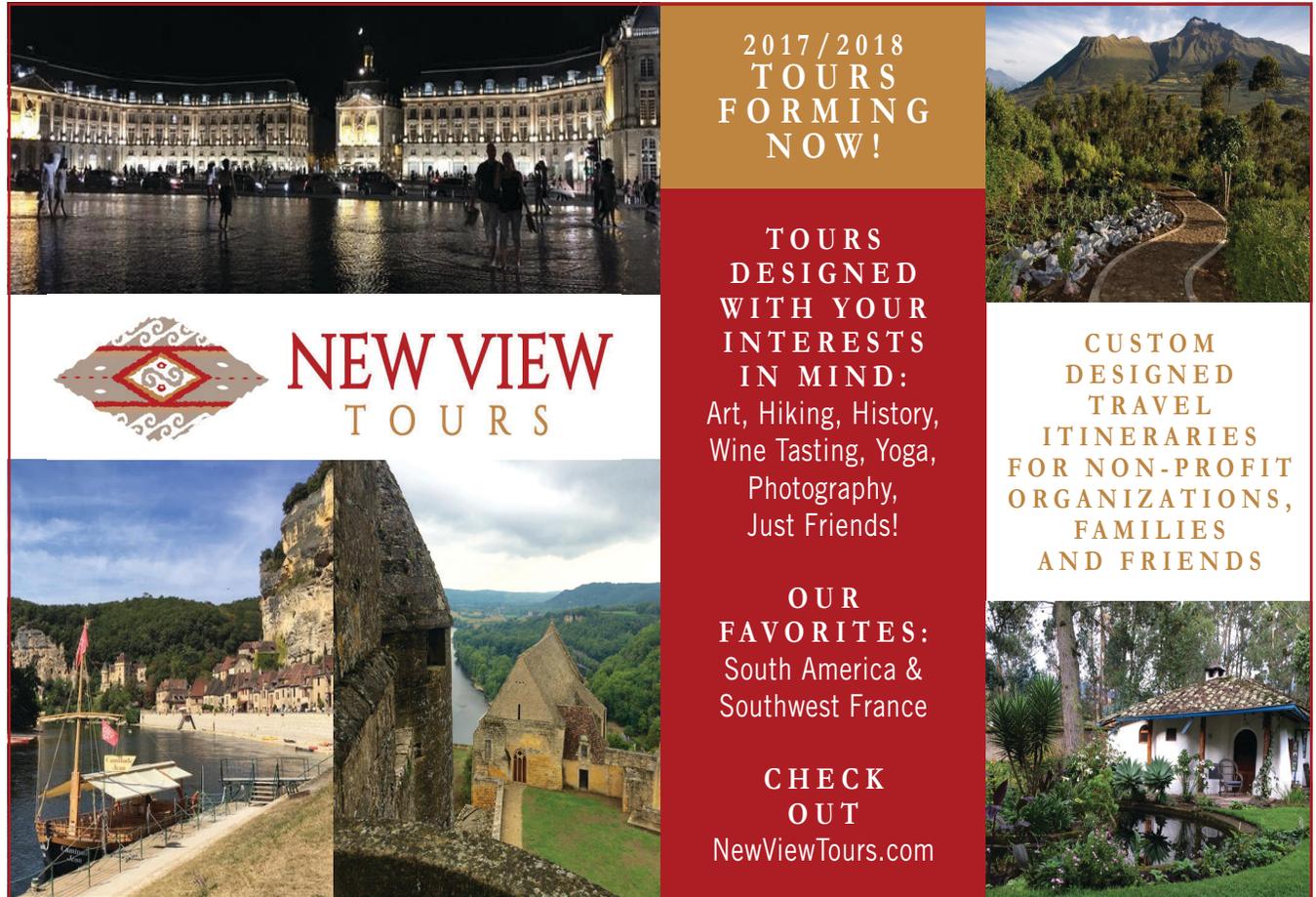
For Schedule B reporting, the donation of \$100,000 shows up once.

For the acknowledgments at year end

or for internal analysis, the development team would see a report listing that \$100,000 three times. Each soft credit would show up individually.

Ultimately, every development professional would agree that an important part of acknowledging donors is in giving credit where the credit is due. Using the soft credit feature of the development program helps to do just that by linking responsible parties to contributions based on influence and effort. 

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NEW VIEW TOURS

YOUR ANNUAL REPORT: A Storytelling Tool with a Shelf Life

By *Ellen G. Lahr*

Storytelling is at the heart of nonprofit organizations' work. Stories inspire giving. Stories are the tools of fundraising and development. Stories inspire internal and external audiences to engage, and stay engaged.

Ideally, storytelling happens year-round – but for some organizations public relations and marketing resources are slim and communications are infrequent. But at least once a year, nonprofit organizations must tell their stories: to inform generous donors how their gifts have been spent, to introduce donors to the people who benefit from these gifts, to confirm that the books are balanced, and to call out the leadership of board and staff. This is the stuff of the annual report: which can be dry, factual and obligatory, or rich, inspiring and a joy to create.

Increasingly, the best annual reports focus more and more on telling extraordinary stories: the inspiring anecdotes that bloom from an organization's mission-driven good work. The pages devoted to balance sheets and financial reporting have been simplified and relegated to smaller spaces, clearing room for the inspiring stories, photography and testimonials that get to the heart of the matter. Increasingly, stories are conveyed in pictures, graphics, quotes and

paragraphs; the long, laborious narratives have gone by the wayside.

- For instance: A gift to Elder Services of Berkshire County helped an elder citizen live safely and happily at home, in her lifelong neighborhood, instead of in a long-term care facility, among strangers.
- A first-generation college student at MCLA achieved a family dream by graduating from college, thanks to scholarship support made possible by alumni donors.
- A refugee from a war-torn country is now nearly fluent in English thanks to the volunteer tutors at Southern Berkshire Literacy Network.
- A South County family with young children learns to grow their own organic food, thanks to the Greenagers' Donor Garden program, which seeks to "close the food gap."
- A domestic violence victim finds peace, safety and self-confidence in a new community, thanks to the work of counselors and volunteers for the Elizabeth Freeman Center.

Such anecdotes are ripe for the telling at any time of year. But a year-end compilation of good works provides a concise, streamlined platform for balancing organizational messaging, summing up "where we are," and recognizing key supporters.

Furthermore, an annual report can have a year-long shelf life: If carefully crafted, it serves not just as a tool to inspire donors, but to recruit new staff and educate potential clientele about your work. An annual report can raise awareness among grant-making organizations, foundations, government leaders and among peer organizations.

If your public relations and marketing budget is limited, be strategic: invest generously in your annual report.

In our region, not all nonprofits have the resources for creating and producing a great annual report. A few of our region's larger organizations have robust, internal communications teams to manage the various aspects of annual communications: story development and messaging, photography, design, presentation, printing and distribution. But small- and medium-sized organizations may need outside help for their annual report: a project manager who can work with you to develop the stories and direct the photography, design, printing and distribution of your report (yes, your annual report should be printed for distribution the old-fashioned way).

Your annual report is just one of the many communication tools your organization can tap to tell your stories and inspire your stakeholders. But it could be the most important tool you have. 

Ellen G. Lahr is owner and president of EGLahr PR & Media in Great Barrington. ellenlahr.com

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Chamber Membership Should Be Part Of Every Nonprofit's Cultivation Efforts

By Liana Toscanini

Chambers of Commerce have existed for hundreds of years. The modern chamber of commerce has expanded to address socioeconomic concerns and social needs, going far beyond its original intent. Because the prosperity of businesses depends on the development of the community and visa versa, it makes perfect sense that nonprofits, which are basically small businesses, are beginning to consider Chamber membership an integral part of their development plan.

While I was working for Community Access to the Arts, I joined the board of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. I soon saw the benefit of schmoozing with corporate folks at Business After Hours networking events. Establishing personal relationships with local businesses made it easier for me as a nonprofit development person to solicit program ads, sponsorships, partnerships and collaborations. Additionally, the Chamber's marketing support helped raise awareness of our organization.

When I formed the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires in 2016, I purposely made membership dues very low so that nonprofits could join BOTH the NPC and their local chamber. Big or small, every nonprofit should participate in this kind of outreach. We asked several Chambers to weigh in on the topic of how nonprofits can benefit from joining and participating in events designed to help them connect to the community.

The Williamstown Chamber believes that in small town communities, the best form of advertising is name recognition. This is true for both nonprofit and for-profit entities. If customers (or donors, as the case may be) can put a face(s) to your organization, they are more inclined to use your services. Local Chambers offer so many ways

to connect with the community...from volunteering at community events, to hosting a Chamber event at your venue, to being a town Ambassador, and more.

Joining only gets you so far, **participating is the true key to receiving the benefits of chamber membership.** The old adage "out of sight, out of mind" has never been more true. Be visible, get involved with your local Chamber!

1Berkshire is the voice of business in the Berkshires, and that means nonprofit businesses too! "As a nonprofit ourselves, we understand your need for efficient, cost-effective marketing, the kind that works for you constantly while you are busy pursuing your mission. That's exactly what we do: offer efficiency in reaching over 600,000 people per year by way of Berkshires.org, 40,000+ people through 1Berkshire.com, and countless visitors, residents, and area businesses in our Official Guide to the Berkshires.

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saying, 'I believe in our region and I want to be a part of making it even better.' Together, we're creating community, strengthening the economy, and a building a bright future for the Berkshires."

The Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce offers three quick reasons to join:

1) The beautiful Berkshires has the largest number of nonprofits in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: all are amazing and worthy. How can your organization stand out and represent itself to the business community? Join the Chamber. There are dozens of built in opportunities to connect with members, whether it's a monthly After Hours gathering, a Networking Before Nine breakfast, an educational seminar, or one of our very special events. So many opportunities.

2) Marketing dollars are tight and targeted. How to get more reach? Join the Chamber. In addition to FREE ads in our weekly e-newsletter blast, members are listed in our Annual Brochure, which reaches THOUSANDS of locals and visitors every year; are welcome to place their brochures in our Great Barrington visitors' booth (and our town visitor kiosks, as they get placed); have a presence on our website; can be featured on our extensive and active social media; and access our membership mailing labels to directly reach Chamber members.

3) Non-profits have a laser view on their mission, staff and clients. Joining the Chamber is an easy and established way to become a part of the wider community to grow your perspective and your connections. For one set fee annually, you can receive access to the pulse of commerce in your area and a partner in promoting your business/organization. 

By Hannah Van Sickle



Photo courtesy of Robin McGraw

Black Rock has loomed large in Robin McGraw's life for nearly five decades; historically, the rocky ledge that protrudes eastward off Mount Bushnell's southeast ridge is a popular hiking destination from the campus of Berkshire School in Sheffield, of which McGraw is a 1970 graduate. Currently, the visible outcropping whose pinnacle resides at 1,404 feet inspired McGraw's nonprofit foundation fund, run through Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, and bears the name Black Rock. The moniker aptly points to McGraw's solid history of service to the community in which he lives, thanks—in no small part—to his mother's sage advice.

McGraw grew up in a family where serving the community was part of the DNA. He credits his mother, who advised her four boys to figure out how to give back to the community in which each of them chose to live, as instrumental in catapulting him on his life's journey. As luck would have it, McGraw chose to settle in Berkshire County and in the ensuing years the community has benefited from his tenure as volunteer, public servant and philanthropist. Furthermore, his commitment to service has positioned him to have his finger on the proverbial pulse of nonprofits in the County, and his perspective is forward thinking.

"All the nonprofits in the Berkshires struggle," McGraw says, in a statement arrived at due to involvement "up to [his] elbows" in the Berkshires' nonprofit sector. And McGraw cuts straight to the chase: "There needs to be more collaboration," he says, across the board but particularly in an area that is already oversaturated with nonprofits.

McGraw's advice—particularly to fledgling organizations—is to partner with someone. "What I'm looking for [when funding an organization] is less administration and more boots on the ground," he explains, citing the importance of eliminating costly overhead in favor of more dollars directed toward programming.

When it comes to disbursing funds, McGraw is keen on collaboration, "because we do need to partner," he explains. And partnership can take many forms. It can come in the guise of a challenge grant, through funds that a nonprofit must match with new money; it can come via shared services, like McGraw's vision for a Development Consortium, comprised of local experts who—by consulting with multiple nonprofits—stand to elicit what he calls, "less administrative nightmare" and the cost associated with it. For start-up nonprofits, launching under the umbrella of an existing organization with established 501c3 status is an immediate means of eliminating costs associated with aforementioned administration and overhead. "You don't want nonprofits who are doing the same thing," McGraw continues, which gives rise to his next idea: inviting individuals to sit around a table and examine the specific needs of organizations who need immediate attention versus those who are in pretty good shape. Otherwise, it's a bit like losing sight of the forest through the trees. In Berkshire County, where a large volume of nonprofits are chasing after the same dollars, there runs the risk of what McGraw calls "fiefdom," a territory or sphere controlled by the minority. Not to mention, at some point the proverbial well runs dry. His proposed solution? "Let's focus on [an identified number of] nonprofits together, collectively, and get them where they need to be." In this vein, efforts become more focused and less redundant.

For McGraw, and his Black Rock Foundation Fund, this translates to both energy and funds being directed towards organizations where the individuals affiliated with the nonprofit have the potential to change their stories after walking through the doors. Case in point? Berkshire South Regional Community Center in Great Barrington, of which McGraw has been a staunch supporter calling it, "exactly what is important to the core of this community, because it serves so many people." Going forward, McGraw is excited about his work with the Berkshire County Drug Task Force and a current project underway in Pittsfield. They have broken ground for two aquaponic greenhouses—which employ hydroponic growing using fish to fertilize the water—at the Berkshire County House of

Corrections. “We are going to go into the food business,” says McGraw, thanks to a privately funded project being built on State land that is coming to fruition through community support as well as gifts in kind. The foundations are soon to be in place for two 30 x 60 foot greenhouses that—in addition to three large gardens on the Berkshire Mall access road between Routes 7 and 8—will produce leafy green vegetables as part of Phase I. Inmates will run the operation during the early part of the day after which members of the community—including students from Williams College, Berkshire Community College, and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts—will contribute their efforts to sustaining the science of this program.

Phase II will include a production greenhouse, and “a big portion of [the produce grown] will be sold farm to market,” to fund programming at the House of Corrections. Surplus food will be directed to local food pantries, schools, and community members who stand to benefit from the inclusion of more fresh vegetables. The novelty? Three ostensibly diverse sections of the population—inmates, college students and the food insecure—in conversation, and working together, to move communities forward in the midst of the real issues that prevail. “As long as it is easier to get high than it is to get treatment, people will continue to get high,” says McGraw of the rampant opioid epidemic in Berkshire County. But that, as he admits, is another conversation.

“The education piece is key,” says McGraw, returning to the discussion at hand. “That’s the piece that we work on,” he adds. “How do we make those connections so that people have their best chance to have their best life?” he asks wholly rhetorically, despite holding the answer: focused attention on the human service piece and how that affects every aspect of one’s life from education and access to health insurance to healthcare and overall quality of life. “The more people come together—the more that we can get people to collaborate around these pieces and to understand the importance of these pieces—the better we will be,” says McGraw emphatically. As to his motivation? It all goes back to his boyhood in Morris County, New Jersey and our conversation ends where it began: “I grew up in a family where I was given a lot and it was expected that we give a lot back; I feel lucky to have had this opportunity.” He continues, “[I hope people will remember] I did my best to try to truly make a difference in the community sort of from the ground up,” noting this role is often a bit of a juggling act, which means one has to pick and choose. As to whether or not this is possible, McGraw has the last word: “Without a doubt.”

Editor’s note: Black Rock Foundation Fund does not accept unsolicited proposals. For more information, please contact Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.



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APRIL 18, 2018
- Telling Your Story, Hannah Van Sickle
MAY 16, 2018

SHARING NONPROFIT SERVICES IN BERKSHIRE COUNTY

By Erin Sullivan

Introduction

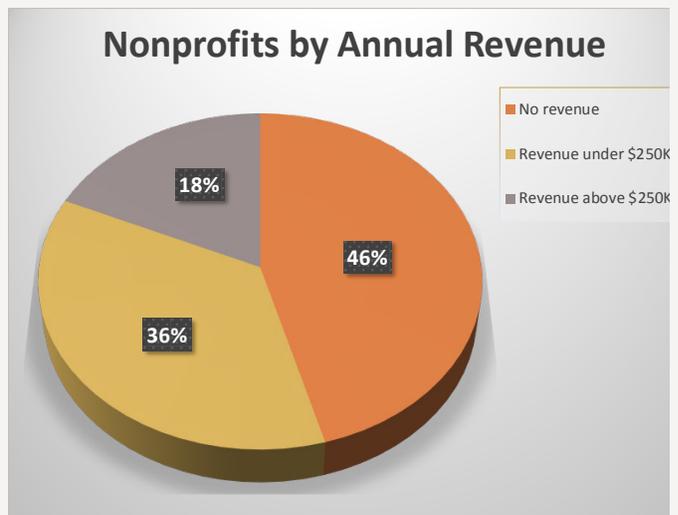
There has been much discussion in the Berkshires about the state of nonprofits. In 2008 and again in 2015, Stephen Shepard and Kay Oehler of Williams College were asked by the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce (now 1Berkshire) to conduct a study of nonprofits and their economic impact on the community. While the report showed the importance of nonprofits on the local economy, it also raised some concern as to the number of nonprofits. As the Berkshires' population declines and the median age increases, there is growing worry that the community will not be able to support the growing number of nonprofits.

Since that report, efforts have been underway to promote shared services and possible mergers of some nonprofits in an attempt to promote efficiency and effectiveness. This past spring, I partnered with the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires to complete my Capstone project, the final requirement for my newly acquired Masters Degree in Public Administration. We explored the topic of shared services and found that most Berkshire nonprofits are involved in some form of informal collaboration. They believe that shared services can help increase efficiencies and advance their mission. There is frustration, however, over the lack of a unifying voice for nonprofits and the support required to enter into shared services.

We endeavored to discover which nonprofits are willing to participate in shared services, what levels of shared services are of interest or seem most beneficial and how

shared services can help the nonprofit to meet its mission.

Researchers in this field show there is no single reason a nonprofit leader will enter a shared services agreement. A need to increase resources is often the instigator of exploring shared services. Others identified organizational survival, revenue fluctuations, competition, and improved services which an organization could not provide on its own, as a reason for collaboration. Additionally leaders of nonprofits will enter into these conversations to address environmental insecurity, institutional legitimacy, improving their strategic positioning, and growth.



Methods

In order to assess the interest of local nonprofits surrounding the use of shared services, we collected both quantitative and qualitative data in the forms of an email survey, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. Forty-eight individuals participated from 48 organizations, representing a diversity of size, type, budget, and experience of nonprofit leaders. Respondents were primarily executive directors, senior administrators and a few board members. South, central and northern Berkshire County were represented.

Findings

Nonprofits in the Berkshires are already participating in a spectrum of shared services mostly on the informal end of the spectrum. Survey respondents strongly agree that shared services can be an effective way to deliver services, can improve the quality of their services and can build a strong sense of community. One participant reported a past meeting of executive directors, which shared information and partnered on funding opportunities, that has since been discontinued as the partnership tried to develop a collaborative website that no organization was able or willing to administer. Others wondered if more formal

“Private mergers don’t improve customer satisfaction – it’s about money – more money for stockholders. Nonprofits need more money to survive and meet the needs of clients/community. Funders are not going to save money through nonprofit mergers.”

collaborations could solve the issue of “too many nonprofits, not enough money, and too much competition.”

Shared services experiences included:

- ✓ facility sharing
- ✓ The Community Connector (a referral service for clients creating a “no wrong door’ approach)
- ✓ partnerships through grants
- ✓ professional development and training opportunities
- ✓ program partnerships to meet the needs of clients

What Levels of Shared Services Are of Most Interest or Beneficial?

Survey participants reported a high incidence of low level shared services: 93 percent reported involvement in collaborations while 37 percent

reported alliances. In response to future interest in shared services, two-thirds answered as wanting to participate in both collaborations and alliances. **Some participants identified a need for practical shared services:**

- ✓ lawn care
- ✓ listserve
- ✓ software
- ✓ a catalogue of nonprofit services
- ✓ grant applications
- ✓ space
- ✓ backroom operations like human resources, IT, fundraising, finance, or bulk purchasing

Other participants identified partnership elements that would result in a different way of doing business (more formal agreements), and the need to have trusting relationships between leaders and boards and serving clients better. Respondents

discussed trust between leaders and boards, alignment of missions, and shared goals, vision, and values. In order for an agreement to be equitable, organizations need to recognize their areas of strengths and weaknesses. If one organization was in a weaker financial position than another or in a crisis, this is not a good time to enter into shared services, although this is often the instigator for a nonprofit to start exploring partnerships. It was felt that shared services work best when building on each other’s strengths while recognizing there is tension created when coming together. Identifying a facilitator to help with the process and after partnering was also mentioned. “We need help leading up to it, finding the right partner(s), planning, strategizing, as well as post implementation help with transition, and then help in two to five years after to ensure success,” noted one nonprofit leader.



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The Pluses of Sharing Services

No matter the size of the organization, nonprofit leaders realize they all face similar challenges, and addressing those together will bring the community together to serve clients best. Participants discussed possible and realized benefits when considering shared services: obtaining more and bigger funding opportunities, taking advantage of all resources available, expanding the reach of their impact, and providing more comprehensive services for clients. In small nonprofits, staff must be skilled in many areas—shared resources could build the capacity for them to meet their mission more fully. Leaders felt that this could lead to more authentic program creation as opposed to funding driven program development.

The Need for a Backbone Organization

Others thought of geography as a barrier due to no single, unifying voice for nonprofits. Many commented that this could/should be the role of either the United Way, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, 1Berkshire or the Chamber of Commerce. However, there was not an agreement as to which agency would be best due to the divisions in their own sectors—there are three separate United Way organizations, two regional chamber of commerce organizations with many dedicated to specific towns, and a community foundation that covers three counties in three separate states. There is no county-wide organization looking at a collective vision versus their own mission, as county government in Massachusetts was disbanded in the late 1990s. Participants felt there was no organization to be the “backbone” of shared services, and act as a leader for nonprofits. In the past, there were executive director roundtables which informed much of the work of nonprofits; some expressed concern that decisions about how nonprofits’ work were now being made by donors and funders, and not based on the needs of the community.

Perceived Barriers to Sharing Services

- Time constraints of executive directors and other staff
- Fear that shared services would result in a reallocation of resources which initially might require more time and money
- Fear of losing autonomy
- Mission drift
- Job loss
- Changing business partners and practice
- Being responsible for failing programs
- Competition for funding
- Difficulty getting staff & board buy-in
- Being able to demonstrate value
- Geography

“Other organizations often have the same strengths and weaknesses as mine, and so we do not end up helping each other.”

Changing the Conversation

There was much conversation about duplication and competing services – real and perceived. Participants also discussed the bad reputation nonprofits were getting because of the dialogue about too many nonprofits and duplication of efforts. Many agreed that nonprofits needed to do a better job supporting each other and building on the good work and partnerships that are occurring.

One respondent commented, “Despite much talk in favor of collaborating and coordinating services there is still much duplication of services that occurs and competitive instead of cooperative actions taken by area organizations.”

While the Shepard & Oehler report changed the conversation about nonprofits in Berkshire County with a focus on the number of nonprofits, the good work and purpose of nonprofits was left out of the conversation — there was little conversation about meeting the social, cultural, or quality of life needs of the community. This is evident in participants’ comments of increased competition and a feeling of cynicism about nonprofits. Local nonprofit leaders agreed that initially there are increases in staff time and resources to manage a shared services agreement, and that financial gains may not to be realized for years – if ever. They felt the impact and increase in quality of services should be the measure of success.

Participants in the Capstone survey expounded on the fact that nonprofits in the Berkshires were already involved

“Compromising needs for the sake of sharing - maybe what fits my organization wouldn’t fit someone else’s, and so we have to compromise and perhaps not get what we really need.”

in multiple shared services agreements with no acknowledgment or assistance from funders or the community. They understand the value of partnership in furthering their mission and meeting the needs of their clients. They discussed expanding their reach, using all available resources, creating a cohesive system for clients, and building on each others strengths. Further, they discussed how working together throughout the sector could also bring the community together. In pursuit of their own missions, nonprofit leaders need to be bold and innovative to create an environment for shared services to grow with community support.

“Shared services tend to be Pittsfield (central) centered without adequate attention to south county... we, most often, have to go to Pittsfield to participate with not much reciprocity. So, travel time and transportation are additional parts of time constraint.”

Conclusion

There needs to be a shift in the conversation about the nonprofit sector in the community, so that it is seen not as a resource drain but as a true asset. Just as nonprofits are dependent on the community, the community is dependent on nonprofits – not just for social services. Our economy is dependent on a thriving nonprofit sector, and this should be highlighted and shared.

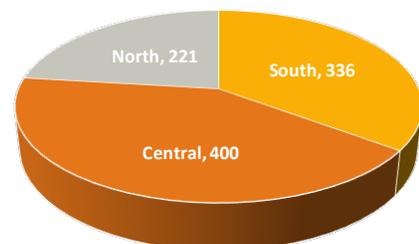
There is opportunity to strengthen the nonprofit sector through increased conversations and relationship building. There is clearly a need for a unifying organization to bring the good work of the nonprofit sector to the forefront and to act as the “matchmaker” between new ideas and the existing sector. Developing a vision for the sector may result in a stronger, unified region with the ability to increase impact and attract larger funding opportunities.



Erin Sullivan has worked in nonprofits for over 20 years. She is currently the Director of Community Relations at Berkshire Children and Families. She just completed her Master’s Degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado, Denver with a nonprofit management concentration.

NUMBER OF NONPROFITS BY CITY/TOWN		
CITY/TOWN	NUMBER OF NONPROFITS	REGION
Cheshire	12	c
Dalton	46	c
Hancock	2	c
Hinsdale	14	c
Lanesborough	14	c
Peru	2	c
Pittsfield	295	c
Richmond	8	c
Washington	1	c
Windsor	6	c
Adams	44	n
Clarksburg	5	n
Florida	4	n
North Adams	86	n
Savoy	3	n
Williamstown	79	n
Alford	7	s
Becket	21	s
Egremont	4	s
Gt. Barrington	103	s
Housatonic	14	s
Lee	35	s
Lenox	59	s
Monterey	14	s
Mt. Washington	1	s
New Marlborough	5	s
Otis	11	s
Sandisfield	5	s
Sheffield	40	s
South Lee	2	s
Stockbridge	30	s
Tyringham	1	s
West Stockbridge	14	s

NUMBER OF NONPROFITS IN BERKSHIRE COUNTY
TOTAL APPROX 987



■ South ■ Central ■ North

Nonprofit Benefits Survey Results Are In!

By Mary Nash

Benefits are an important part of the compensation package that nonprofits provide to attract and retain employees. With the growing number of nonprofits in the region, it is helpful for organizations to know how their benefit packages compare to others in the industry.

With this in mind, the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires (NPC) recently worked with Nash Insights to conduct a survey among Berkshire County nonprofit organizations. The purpose was to learn more about benefits offered to employees. While other studies have looked at compensation and benefits among nonprofits in the northeast (Such as “Valuing our Workplace”), none have focused specifically on just the Berkshires.

The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey beginning mid-September 2017 and continuing for five weeks. NPC sent the survey link out to its members and mailing list and the survey was also publicized in local publications and social media. With some prodding and

reminding, we were pleased that a total of 40 organizations responded. The sample represented a mix of different types of nonprofit organizations in terms of size, scope and location.

The survey results show that Berkshire County employers provide a variety of benefits to their employees. For the most part, more extensive benefits are offered by organizations that have larger operating budgets. For example, 59% of all survey respondents offer retirement plans to their full-time employees. Among respondents that have operating expenses below \$1 million, 33% offer retirement plans, while 81% of respondents with expenses of \$1 million and over offer retirement plans.

The survey gathered information on typical benefits such as medical, dental and vision insurance, retirement plans, life insurance and paid time off. It also demonstrated that with more limited resources than private sector employers, nonprofits are being creative in what they offer to their employees. Nearly three-fourths of survey respondents offer flexible work hours and just over 20% offer health savings accounts, which allow employees to set aside money on a pre-tax basis to pay for qualified medical expenses. 

The full report is available for \$20. Purchase online at npcberkshires.org or call (413) 645-3151.

How do we compare?	NPC of Berkshires	Valuing Our Workplace	Difference
Insurance for full-time employees			
Medical	76%	89%	-13%
Dental	47%	71%	-24%
Life insurance	45%	61%	-16%
Short-term disability	37%	47%	-10%
Long-term disability	39%	53%	-14%
Vision	18%	36%	-18%
Long-term care	3%	18%	-15%
Paid time off for full-time employees			
Bereavement	78%	76%	+2%
Jury Duty	81%	75%	+6%
Military leave	17%	26%	-9%
Parental leave	30%	25%	+5%

Attracting Young Adults to Your Nonprofit

By Julia Dixon

Many nonprofit leaders already know the statistics: Berkshire County's overall population is falling, the workforce is aging, school enrollment is declining, and college graduates are leaving. These nonprofits may be feeling the effects of population loss on their audience, membership, donor base, staff, board, or volunteer team.

In 2014, a task force was formed to better understand these persistent population challenges. **The Berkshire Initiative for Growth (BIG)**, convened by 1Berkshire, was comprised of nonprofit and business leaders, sector specialists, and engaged individuals. Members developed a strategy which was based exclusively on the recruitment and retention of young adults to the region.

BIG members worked for two and a half years to gather data, align resources, and prototype solutions. Now the collected information, as well as 18 critical recommendations, can be found in the **Berkshire Initiative for Growth Report**.

The report details various ways that businesses can strengthen their operations and the greater community by attracting young adults. Nonprofits, however, have their own unique challenges particularly regarding workforce, one of the report's recommendation themes.

• LOW SALARIES AND LONG HOURS

Wages and schedules vary based on organization and position, but the stereotype is that nonprofits demand more for less. With limited financial resources and small staffs, nonprofits

may not be able to offer competitive salaries or flexible schedules. But young adults are increasingly protective over their personal time and need to make enough money to pay off their burdensome student debt. Finding alternative ways to invest in young workers is key to hiring and retaining them.

• GREAT BENEFITS COST MONEY

Nonprofits may not be able to afford to pay hiring bonuses, performance bonuses, or even healthcare to small or part time staffs. Taking advantage of state or federal incentives, such as the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit or Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, or local services such as Greylock Federal Credit Union's Financial Coaching program allows nonprofits to offer alternative perks and added value to their benefits package.

Nonprofits also have a unique set of strengths that allow them to capitalize on their contributions to workplace culture and the community's narrative – two other recommendation themes.

• NONPROFITS OPERATE BASED ON MISSION

Young adults today are extremely cause-focused and want to give back to their communities. Not only would they work for charitable organizations, they would work for companies that partner with charities. Berkshire County's nonprofits can leverage the collective message that cause work is integral to the region's identity and future.

• THE SATURATION OF NONPROFITS IN THE AREA

It may sound counterintuitive, but banding together to support the movement of young adults in the nonprofit space is sector-building at its finest. Leveraging relationships to support the development of interns and employees, within and outside of a single organization, helps a young worker feel less like a commodity and more like a valued asset in the community, where opportunities abound.

Many other recommendations, resources, and insights can be found in 1Berkshire's Berkshire Initiative for Growth Report. To download a copy, visit 1berkshire.com. 



Julia Dixon, author of 1Berkshire's Berkshire Initiative for Growth Report, is a creative economy expert specializing in consulting, project management, mentoring, writing, and teaching. Previous positions include Managing Director of Berkshire Creative and Creative Economy Specialist at 1Berkshire. She is an active supporter of nonprofits and sits on the BerkShares board of directors, MCLA's Berkshire Cultural Resource Center advisory board, and was a founding board member of the Makers' Mill. juliakimdixon.com

The Perfect Boy

An 'orphan disease' turns a family into advocates...and scientists

By Nichole Dupont

"Alexander was born perfect. Perfect! He was the kid that everybody wanted to have," says Laura Zah of her now 14-year-old son. "He was good at sports, amazing at school, very gifted at the trumpet."

But then things began to change. Laura and her husband Stephen Greenspan, both of Sheffield, began to see changes in their son as he approached the 'tween' years. Alexander lost weight, he tripped a lot while doing sports and even everyday activities. For the first time in his life, he "fell behind" his peers.

"He continued to excel academically but physically, something was happening to him," says Laura. "He lost so much weight. I thought we were depriving him somehow, that we were responsible for this. I thought that we were bad parents."

It would take several visits to specialists at several different hospitals—Baystate Medical Center, UMASS Memorial Medical Center, Boston Children's Hospital—to finally discover what was at the core of Alexander's seemingly inexplicable deterioration. Genetic tests for suspected diseases revealed no abnormalities. Finally, they were referred to the National Institute of Health (NIH) where Alexander participated in a large research study for difficult to diagnose cases.

"It took us nearly three years to actually get a diagnosis," says Stephen. "Mostly it was a 'wait-and-see' process, and after he would get testing of all kinds, they kept us waiting for months. All we knew was that it was probably something very rare."

The Zah-Greenspans received a phone call on a Friday afternoon,

right before Mother's Day, 2016. The NIH study revealed that Alexander had Bag3 related Myofibrillar Myopathy, a genetic mutation which effects less than one in six million people. The deterioration of those with the mutation is rapid, and ultimately, it is fatal.

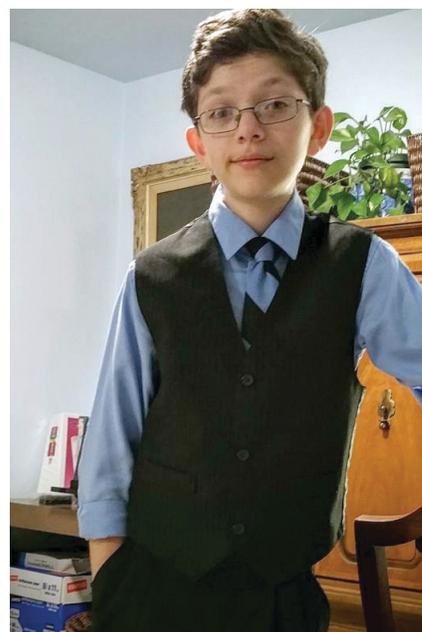
"They basically told us to focus on our healthy child, on Alexander's [older] sister," says Laura. "That's what they told me. 'If I were you, I would be focusing on my healthy child.'"

After the initial shock, which hasn't dissipated much, the Zah-Greenspans began an intensive search through medical journals, research trials, and online archives. Laura's background as a nurse allowed them access to 'non-Google' resources that led them not only to scientists and researchers, but also to other families with the same diagnosis. Their efforts connected them with research teams as far away as Australia and with families inside the U.S. and South Africa. The Greenspan 'team' (that's what they call themselves now) also established the Alexander's Way Research Fund, Inc. (alexandersway.org) in order to hasten the discovery of a cure. It has been a literal crusade for their son's life, exacting a high price.

"Our life is engulfed by this. Skyping Harvard, Australian scientists, other time zones," says Laura. "It would be great if we could just sit down and watch a movie with him, or take a long vacation with him and spend time with him. We can't get that back. But if we slow down, he's not going to live."

"It's a full time job for all of us," adds Stephen.

Alexander knows what's going on. His home, the home that he was raised in,



is always buzzing with conversations and activities related to his 'disease,' although he doesn't like to call it that. Yet, despite this constant hum, the 14-year-old high school freshman—he skipped a grade because of his academic capabilities—insists on living a 'normal' life. He's in the jazz band, he plays video games a lot, he's not a fan of homework, he will devour half a pizza if he paces himself, and he has the signature air of indifference of most young men his age. As far as his diagnosis is concerned, he tries to ignore it.

"I'm really good at separating things in my life. I don't remember the last conversation I had with my mom that wasn't about my health," says Alexander. "I just...I'm not withdrawing or anything. I'm just 14. I kind of prefer to hang out with my dad because we talk about cars and football...life. He's teaching me how to juggle."

This past summer Alexander had surgery to lengthen his Achilles tendons that were rising up and causing him to walk tentatively on the balls of his feet. It took a long time to recover, and he lost more weight. At one point, Laura says, "Alexander was 83 pounds. Now he wears 'boots' to stabilize his feet, but there is a back surgery on the horizon for him to try and stall the scoliosis that has developed in his spine. It's a lot." And Alexander says, "I'm pissed. That's

all. I'm a kid. What can I even do about this? It's up to the adults to fix this."

Right now, the Zah-Greenspans, through the research fund and their own personal finances, will be putting forward \$150,000 for private genetic engineering research (at Harvard) to correct the mutation. Because of this 'private funding' for this initial phase of investigation into the mutation, whatever is discovered can—and will—be shared among scientists and medical professionals who specialize in myopathies, and who could possibly advance their research, and ultimately provide a cure, with more information. The idea that researchers would share any information is nothing short of revolutionary according to Laura.



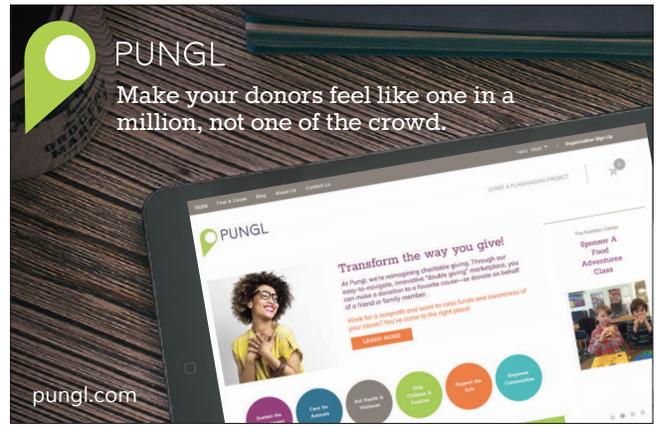
"The guiding principle of everything that we are doing is...we want to foster real-time collaboration between scientists," she says. "It seems like an obvious thing to do, but it goes against the whole economic structure of scientific discovery. And yet, it could save people's lives. It could save my son's life."

Laura and Stephen have been asked to present at the European Neuromuscular Centre Conference in December.

They will be sharing Alexander's story as a boy with an 'orphan disease,' as well as their own journey from 'normal parents' to determined, unwavering advocates for sharing discoveries that can, without a doubt, save lives. Their faith in science and in their own efforts is balanced by their son's belief in blind—sometimes unjust, even cruel—luck.

"I have no idea what's going to happen," says Alexander. "It's jarring if I think about it too much. I think it's about luck. You've got to have luck." 🍀

The Zah-Greenspans would like to thank the Bizational Family, especially Helen and Isabelle, who have raised awareness and support in the community. Isabelle and Anook together with Alexander's sister Sophia sold cookies and brownies at the Sheffield Farmers' Market to raise money for Alexander's Way. Thanks to all the friends and neighbors who have already contributed to Alexander's Way Research Fund, and Alexander's friends and schoolmates, who have stuck by him and to Nichole Dupont, who is keeping our spirits up by getting our story out.





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GOOD ADVICE: KRIPALU

Five Tips for Staying Healthy and Happy This Winter

from Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health



Ready for spring yet? It's that time of year—with the winter solstice behind us, but plenty of short, dark days still ahead—when we need extra inspiration to stay energized and positive. Here are five tips drawn from yoga, Ayurveda (India's ancient healthcare system), and Western science, to keep sickness at bay and to stave off the winter blues.

1. Drink tulsi tea. Also known as **Holy Basil**, tulsi is valued in India for its purifying qualities. It's antiseptic and antibacterial, good for headaches, and reduces

anxiety, fever, and congestion, according to Ayurveda. Tulsi is also recommended for lifting your mood, aiding digestion, and strengthening the immune system. Steep a tea bag for five minutes and drink one cup daily—or more if you're fighting off a cold.

2. Move more—and sleep more.

Physical activity, even moderate activity—like walking for half an hour each day—has been shown to enhance health, by increasing the activity of Natural Killer Cells, which are central to immune system functioning. Yoga is another great movement option, as it provides moderate exercise while easing stress and increasing flexibility. But don't sacrifice sleep time to fit in a workout: Getting enough Zs is also critical to immunity and, like exercise, supports positivity. Note to night owls: Western science and Ayurveda agree that the pre-midnight hours of sleep are most restorative, because we get more non-REM sleep (deep and dreamless) in the earlier part of the night than after midnight.

3. Nurture your microbiome.

"Our gastrointestinal tract is populated with more bacterial cells than all the other cells in the body combined, and these bacterial cells are central to our immunity," says Kripalu presenter Annie B. Kay, RDN, an integrative dietitian and yoga therapist. To keep your gut bacteria (also known as your microbiome) healthy, eat fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, and tempeh, which contain naturally occurring probiotics. Coconut oil, herbs, nuts,

and fresh vegetables also support a healthy microbiome. Added bonus: Eating a whole-foods diet is proven to enhance positivity and to decrease our risk of depression.

4. Breathe.

Three-Part Breath, a foundational breathing practice in yoga, helps boost the immune system by removing congestion, increasing circulation, and releasing stress and tension, says Larissa Hall Carlson, a teacher trainer for the Kripalu Schools. Here's how to do it: Sit in a relaxed position with your spine long. Fill up the belly with breath, then fill the rib cage, and then allow the breath to fill your upper chest, all the way up to your collarbones. Then release the breath in the opposite sequence. Larissa recommends practicing Three-Part Breath for one to three minutes, two to four times a day.

5. Start a gratitude practice.

Studies show that gratitude boosts both physical and psychological health. To bring more of this beneficial emotion into your life, try writing in a gratitude journal each night before bed, recognizing what you're thankful for and what's gone well. "Aim for a list of five things—but if only three come to mind, that's fine," says Lara Tupper, who teaches R&R Retreat workshops at Kripalu. "Consider what exists for you in this present moment. What can you acknowledge?" 🙏

For more information and inspiration, visit kripalu.org/resources for articles by wellness experts, healthy recipes, yoga videos, and more.

5 Social Media Tips to Reach Your NonProfit's Best Friends

By Dawn Stanyon, Professionality Consulting

I'm going to let you in on a little something: I was in fundraising and communications for a large nonprofit for 13 years – before most of us were aware of digital marketing. Yeah, I worked with a team to launch our organization's first website, but we knew nothing about e-mail campaigns, social media sites, hashtags, and search engine optimization.

I never want to head a fundraising department again. I'll leave that important and challenging work up to today's nonprofit professionals – but if I did, I'd use digital marketing and social media for all its worth. Here are five tips to help you reach your current and future best friends.

1. Create a brand filter.

It's easy to throw a bunch of posts up on Facebook with no strategy. You have an amazing cause with dedicated participants and staff: the photo ops and events are never ending. But are you showcasing the heart of your cause? What 3 – 5 words get hit on the mission of your organization? What 3 – 5 issues does your organization tackle on a daily basis? Write them down. Almost any content you generate should hit on those brand words and issues. Use those words and

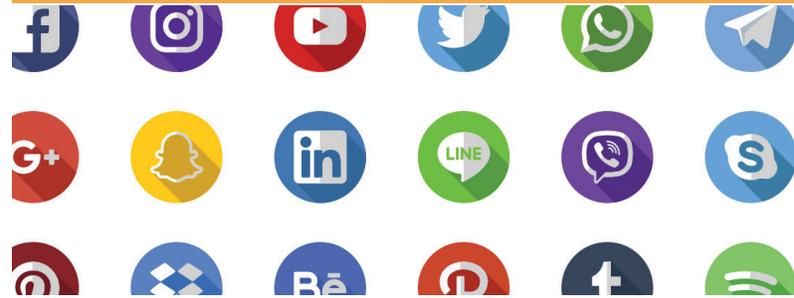
issues as your social media filter system. If what you want to post doesn't fit through the filter, consider not sharing it.

2. Know which social media site is right for you.

Sure, you can do all the social media sites. And then pull out all of your hair. I recommend you start with the basics and perhaps one extra. For example, Facebook is the largest social media site by far with one billion users (of course, they're not all here in the Berkshires...). Facebook provides all kinds of tools to make it a no brainer as a first choice. Instagram (owned by Facebook) is the 3rd most popular social media site: I've found the Berkshires to be pretty active on Insta. And then maybe consider a third site where you know your friends are. LinkedIn? Pinterest? Snapchat? YouTube? And speaking of YouTube...

3. The Internet loves video.

YouTube is the second most popular social media site. I can guarantee, if you type in "cute cat video" the option at the top of your search engine will be a video housed on YouTube. Video isn't hard to do anymore with smart phones. It doesn't need to be a glossy production



– just heart-felt and mission-centered. Put the video on YouTube and your other social media channels and you will be rewarded by the social media gods. Your post will be put up in front of more eyes.

4. Know when your friends are online.

Okay, that sounds creepy. What I mean is: all the big social media sites provide data on when your posts are most popular. For example, I know for one of my clients that his fans respond to his content – and it gets the furthest reach – on Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursday at 9:00 pm, 8:00 pm, 4:00 pm and 1:00 pm. So, I'm most likely to put up posts on those days and times. That doesn't mean I can't put up content at different times – but you need to know the rules so you can break the rules, right?

5. Be an active part of the community.

It's not enough to put up a picture and a blurb once each week. You have to like to be liked; share to be shared; follow to be followed. This does take concerted effort and dedication. Your niece who's good with social media probably isn't the answer. Neither is the amazing intern who will only be with you for three months. They can get your social media program rolling but you need someone on your team who will be the keeper of the filter system: someone who will be responsible for creating and asking for content, interacting with your followers, and working to grow your fan base. Maybe you need two or three people to share the workload.

Social media is free brand building. It's free advertising. It's free fundraising. Go for it. 🙌

Dawn Stanyon is a branding and social media consultant with a passion to help small businesses succeed through digital marketing. Prior to founding Professionality Consulting in 2014, she worked with The Emily Post Institute for nine years to help grow their corporate business etiquette programs by 700% and communicate their message about consideration, respect and honesty. Prior to Emily Post, she worked in nonprofit fundraising, event planning and communications. You can find Dawn at professionalityconsulting.com. And look for Professionality on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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