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Coalition news

An update from



Summer 2016, Volume XXX, Number 10

nbCC Celebrates 30 Years of Community Organizing! State Senator Ben Downing is Honored as Our Northern Berkshire Hero



On Friday, June 17, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition held its annual meeting, marking its 30th year as a community organization. Over 200 people representing Northern Berkshire’s service agencies, local businesses, elected officials, nonprofits and other friends of the Coalition were there to celebrate this special occasion.

nbCC board member Kris Maloney welcomed everyone and thanked the board, especially outgoing board member Deb Rosselli for her years of dedication and leadership that helped nbCC to grow and flourish over the years.

nbCC’s Interim Executive Director Amber Besaw reflected on the past year and described the expansion of nbCC into the area of health and wellness and working alongside the neighbors of UNO to make their community center a realization of a dream. Family Place Program Manager Jazmyne Joy told how The Family Place supported over 400 families last year and introduced Chelsea and Brett, a couple who participated in nbCC’s program, Parenting Journey. They told a truly inspiring story of how Parenting Journey classes helped them learn and grow as parents and gave them the

opportunity to talk about their experiences without being judged. By reflecting on their own childhood, they were able to identify things they wanted to do differently with their son. During the program they set real life goals for themselves which led them on a journey to regain custody of their son.

“Although the journey was long and hard, with a lot of work and support from our community programs like The Family Place, it is possible to succeed,” said Chelsea.

UNITY’s Adam Tobin spoke of how grateful he is to have a job that allows him to develop relationships with our local youth and how UNITY programs help unveil their strengths. Adam introduced Sapphire Holland, a Teen Writing Workshop participant who, inspired by other writers in the workshop, developed the courage to not only create but perform her moving piece “She is a Fire” (see page 7 for Sapphire’s poem).

State Representative Gail Cariddi, former nbCC Executive Director Al Bashevkin, and North Adams Mayor Richard Alcombright presented the Northern Berkshire Hero Award to State Senator Ben Downing for his tireless work over the past 10 years advocating for the northern Berkshire region.

“You’ve showed your love for the people,”

Bashevkin said.

Mayor Alcombright thanked Ben Downing for all he has done for the Coalition, and especially for the City of North Adams.

Ben reflected on his 10 years of working with the Coalition and gave praise to nbCC, an organization that has been convening our community to identify and address local issues for 30 years in a unique and special way.

Attendees were treated to music provided by Common Folk’s Flannel Dan and the Panhandle Band. The event was a reflection of the great relationships that the nbCC has made in this community over the last 30 years. We thank everyone who came to celebrate and have fun with us! (see more photos on page 6.)

Special thanks our sponsors, Mountain-One and Greylock Federal Credit Union.
 -Bert Lamb

▲ Our Northern Berkshire Hero, State Senator Ben Downing reflects on nbCC’s 30 years of community organizing; Attendees applaud our Northern Berkshire Hero; nbCC’s Interim Executive Director Amber Besaw and UNITY Program Coordinator Adam Tobin listen as TWW Participant Sapphire Holland recites her piece *She is a Fire*.

Improving the quality of life for people in Northern Berkshire by organizing, supporting, and empowering the community.



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Our Mission

“Dedicated to improving the quality of life for people in Northern Berkshire by organizing, supporting, and empowering the community.”

In pursuit of this mission, we place particular emphasis on the following:

- Strengthening neighborhoods and community life
- Preventing alcohol/substance abuse
- Fostering economic development
- Mitigating poverty
- Supporting positive youth development
- Building bridges between residents and service agencies

Coalition Supporters

Public Sources

- MA Dept. of Children & Families/EOHHS
- MA Cultural Council
- MA Department of Public Health
- MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services
- Mass Service Alliance

Foundation Supporters

- Fund for North Adams

Local Support

- Contributions from our many individual supporters

The Coalition is a member agency of the Northern Berkshire United Way and the Williamstown Community Chest.



To submit announcements to the Coalition E-zine:

The Coalition E-zine is a weekly e-blast published every Thursday and contains announcements from Northern Berkshire agencies and organizations. Submissions must be received by 9:00 a.m. Tuesday morning to be considered for inclusion in that week's issue. All submissions are subject to editing and should be 50 words or less. All events related to Northern Berkshire community public health will be considered for publication. Banner ads are available for your fundraising events. For more information, please call 663-7588, or to submit an announcement, please email phzine@nbccoalition.org.



Join the nbCC Team!!

These job opportunities are currently being offered at nbCC! Visit www.nbccoalition.org for the complete job descriptions. To apply, please send your resume, a list of references, and a letter explaining your interest and qualifications for the position by August 1st to Amber Besaw, Interim Executive Director at abesaw@nbccoalition.org or by mail to nbCC, c/o Amber Besaw, 61 Main Street, Suite

218, North Adams, MA 01247. Note: If interested in more than one position, you must submit a separate and complete package for each position in which you are interested. The nbCC is an EOE.

UNITY Youth Development Coordinator

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is looking for a UNITY Youth Development Coordinator. This full time benefited position is for someone who values empowering local youth to reach their full potential and engage meaningfully in the community.

The right person will have the energy and passion to facilitate programs and meetings with both youth and other youth workers in the northern Berkshire area. Important qualities include ability and interest in working with and supporting youth, familiarity with youth development, flexible schedule, and having ones own transportation.

Program Coordinator of Northern Berkshire Neighbors

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is looking for a Program Coordinator of Northern Berkshire Neighbors. This full time benefited position is for someone who values community building and bringing together neighborhood residents of all ages to discover and capitalize upon the potential and resources that exist in their communities and neighborhoods.

The right person will have the energy and passion to facilitate training programs and meetings with both individuals and neighborhood organizations in the northern Berkshire area. Important qualities include ability and interest in facilitating and working with and supporting our neighborhood residents, flexible schedule, and having ones own transportation.

Northern Berkshire Neighbors Program Associate

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is looking for a Northern Berkshire Neighbors Program Associate. This full time benefited position is for someone who values community building, mentoring underemployed residents and maintaining meaningful and healthy relationships with Northern Berkshire residents.

Important qualities include patience with and understanding of diverse populations and working with and supporting our underemployed and unemployed residents, flexible schedule, and having ones own transportation.

UNITY Program Associate

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is looking for a UNITY Program Associate. This half time benefited position is for someone who values empowering local youth to reach their full potential and engage meaningfully in the community.

The right person will have the energy and passion to facilitate programs and meetings with both youth and other youth workers in the northern Berkshire area. Important qualities include ability and interest in working with and supporting youth, familiarity with youth development, flexible schedule, and having ones own transportation.

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Summer Basketball Returns!

Provides Non-Competitive Fun and Exercise for Local Neighborhood Kids

nbCC's Neighborhood Summer Basketball Program is back this summer with an expanded schedule! This summer there are an 8 - 12 year old division and a 13 - 16 year old division with teams representing four North Adams neighborhoods (Brayton Hill, Mohawk Forest, UNO and Greylock Valley). This non-competitive summer basketball league runs through August. Volunteers from the neighborhoods coach over 100 kids while teaching the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship. The program is free and open to all. Transportation is provided.

The Summer Neighborhood Basketball League is supported by funding from nbCC, the Berkshire Bank Foundation; Greylock Federal Credit Union; North Adams Police Association, Berkshire Juvenile Court, The YMCA, ABC Clothing Sale, and the City of North Adams.

For more information, contact Liz at lboland@nbccoalition.org.



▲ Wendy Penner and Perri Bernstein present at the May forum.



▲ Dr. Tom Hyde explains efforts by local doctors to educate patients.

Youth Substance Use Prevention Strategies Revealed at nbCC's May Forum

The May nbCC monthly forum *Looking Upstream - Primary Prevention*, a response to the opioid epidemic, drew over 80 participants. Results of the student health survey administered at schools across the region were shared. Alcohol is by far the most widely used substance of youth in our region and we know that the longer youth delay use, the less likely they are to experiment with illicit drugs and to develop a substance use disorder (addiction). Risk factors that our youth face include a low perception of harm around substance use, and the perception that community laws and norms are favorable to use. The forum explored what is already happening and what more we can do to prevent youth substance use.

Pediatricians from Northern Berkshire Pediatrics have begun providing age appropriate material pertaining to substance abuse prevention at all well-child visits. Other strategies include promoting the Guiding Good Choices parent curriculum that will be offered by The Family Place this fall, engag-

ing youth workers to receive training about substance abuse prevention, and supporting schools in adopting comprehensive K-12 health and wellness education. We know that by middle school, youth are already beginning to experiment with alcohol at rates above national levels. A final strategy will be engaging in a regional media campaign to prevent youth substance use. The messages for this campaign are being developed right now. If you are interested in supporting efforts to support the health and wellness of our youth and our community, please contact Wendy Penner or Perri Bernstein at nbCC- your voice makes a difference!

In our efforts to address the opiate epidemic, we are holding a rally, walk, and vigil on September 12 at Noel Field with our community partner, Josh Bressette Commit To Save a Life. We will unite as a community to give voice to those impacted by addiction, and bring together resources in the community trying to aid the road to recovery.

-Wendy Penner

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Board of Directors 2016-2017

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Human Resources, Williams College

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Community Resident

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Social Worker, BFAIR

DAN RANDALL
Pastor, New Hope United Methodist Church

RICH TASKIN
Attorney at Law



ArtDoors is Back!

UNITY's newest program is back for its second year this summer. ArtDoors is a 6-week art/outdoor intensive that engages Northern Berkshire teens in the arts community and in the local outdoors by taking them on hiking trails, camping and to local art institutions such as MASS MoCA and The Clark. Teens engage in art workshops put on by MASS MoCA, Makers Mill, and Common Folk and then come back to the Common Folk Gallery to work on their own art projects. In addition to working on their own art projects, teens this year will also be working on a sticker design to promote the arts and the outdoors in Northern Berkshire. You can check out artwork from these local teens in the Common Folk Gallery on 33 Main Street during August DownStreet Art.

Houghton Street Summer Playground Program is Back!

The city, The YMCA, and the Coalition put their heads together to recreate the way parks in North Adams were run in the "good ole days". Some might remember two staff people opening up a chest full of sports equipment and art and crafts activities for kids to use for free range play at the parks. That is exactly what you will find this summer at Houghton Street Park. Two staff members from YMCA will be hosting free-range play from 9-12 from July 6th to August 18th. Kids ages 8+ are encouraged to come by and use the equipment and just have some good old-fashioned summer fun. We'll have footballs, kick-ball, soccer balls, badminton, volleyball, board games, and arts and crafts activities to use. If you have any questions about the program, contact UNITY Program Associate, Adam Tobin, at (413)-663-7588 or email atobin@nbccoalition.org.



UNO Community Center 1 Year Old!

It's been a little over a year since the UNO Community Center opened its doors. It has certainly been an experience working to get this endeavor off the ground. Since opening, we've hosted 18 programs, 26 events, 38 meetings, and 17 rentals, and collaborated with 16 social service agencies, community organizations and education institutions. Last June, we wrote that we were intentionally starting off slow, so that we could build a foundation underneath us made up of residents who would inform the decision making process and help support and promote our activities. This June, I can happily say that we've built that foundation and it is better known as Shirley, Carrie, Aubrey, Dave, Donna, Gail, Lynda, Enid, Elaine and Kathryn, and our unofficial member, David. They are the Community Center's heart, and we're so grateful for the direction and encouragement they've provided.



Outreach Training Wrapping Up

The annual Community Outreach and Civic Engagement training has wrapped up and the participants graduated on July 19th.

Participants split into two groups for their projects, with one group focusing on addiction and the other, unemployment. The first team worked with Josh Bressette Commit to Save a Life, and built a resource library filled with books and materials intentionally aimed to help those actively going through addiction, in recovery, and family and friends of those battling addiction. The second held a fundraiser, Rockin' Raffle Waffle Bar FUNdraiser, featuring live music and a free waffle bar, to support the workforce development pilot project, Employ North Berkshire.

Bye, Sweets!

At the time of this writing we are in the midst of hiring a new Program Associate for Northern Berkshire Neighbors, as we will be saying good-bye to Jess Sweeney in August. For two years, I've adored working alongside Jess. She's enriched my time here at nbCC; I've learned so much from the manner in which she approaches her work and the passion that she brings to everything she's involved with. Onwards and upwards, Jess!

-Annie Rodgers

Summer at The Family Place!

Gearing up for Back Packed for Success, Parent and Grandparent Support Groups

Summer is here and The Family Place is planning our programs and events for the upcoming year. We are happy to reflect on the past years events and excited to offer new and fresh ideas for more family events and programs. We are now offering a number of new parent education classes for any parent with children between the ages of 0-18 years of age, so please stop down to the office and check out the list that we have.

"Back-Packed" For Success!



Back Packed for Success for Students K thru 12

It is that time of year!!! The Family Place and Northern Berkshire Community Action Council is preparing for our annual Back-Packed for Success event. This event will give parents and children the opportunity to come out and choose a backpack filled with school supplies for the upcoming year. This event will take place at The Family Place on August 18th from 1pm-3pm. Florida Mountain residents will be able to pick up their backpacks at Abbott Memorial School on August 17th between 5:30pm-6:30pm. The Family Place will be taking registrations between August 1-12th.

Parent Support Group Builds Relationships

We are very excited to announce that the parent support group that we have been preparing for is now in the works. This group will focus on helping to support parents who are actively parenting or working on reunification in a welcoming atmosphere and to provide connections to resources throughout the community while building a relationship with other parents who are facing similar experiences. This group will be held every second Thursday of each month at the UNO Community Center from 6:30-8:30pm. Our first group started on July 14th. We welcome all parents!

Support for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

The Family Place is continuing our support for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren through out Grandparent Support Group. This group is ongoing and welcomes all grandparents who are actively raising their grandchildren or who have raised their grandchildren This group takes place every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at The Family Place from 5:30pm-7:30pm. Call The Family Place at (413) 663-7588 for more information.

Creating Safe & Complete Streets

Mass in Motion has been working hard with the municipalities and schools of North Adams and Clarksburg to help create and support the process of designing Complete Streets, streets or roads that are designed to be safe for all users, i.e. pedestrians, bicycles, public transit and cars. Currently Mass Department of Transportation is focusing on a statewide Complete Streets Program. Municipalities across the state are adopting local Complete Street policies, which then gives them an opportunity to apply for funding to prioritize complete street projects as well as to implement one of the projects. Mass in Motion provides technical assistance and support to develop the policies and prioritization plans, as well as educate the community around Complete Streets. A wonderful local example of a Complete Street is Rt. 2, Williamstown border to the Sacco Bridge. There are sidewalks, bike lanes, bike sharrows, sheltered bus stops and lanes for vehicles.



The instituting of Complete Streets will encourage and educate North Adams and Clarksburg public schools as they are all Safe Routes to Schools Partners. a MA Department of Transportation program that promotes healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school. It educates students, parents and community members on the value of walking and bicycling for travel to and from school. Through Safe Routes to School, Mass in Motion has helped to organize pedestrian and bicycle safety for the students, and successful bike to school days and walk to school days. Colegrove Park Elementary School, had its first ever Walk to School Day in June. There were 50 students, 20 parent volunteers, and "celebrity walkers" such as Colegrove Principal Fachini, North Adams Mayor Alcombright, State Representative Cariddi and local police officers that walked to school in two separate walking school buses, along safe routes. Parents and students hopped on the "bus" as it walked by their street or house. Walking School buses enables safe walking in numbers, time to socialize as well as get exercise before the school day to help prepare students' brains for learning. Colegrove School, Safe Routes to School and Mass in Motion will work together to plan another walk to school day in the fall.



Our "Superhero", Amanda Chilson

To demonstrate the importance of the work around safe and active transportation, Amanda Chilson, Mass in Motion Coordinator, received the Superhero of the Western Region Award from Safe Routes to School. Amanda received this award at the State House in Boston.

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nbCC's 2016 Annual Meeting Candids



Thanks to all of our friends who have already supported nbCC

Recently, you received a fundraising letter in support of the 30 years of community building that the Coalition has facilitated. This campaign is important to our continued programming and success as an organization. Help us to continue our current programming for neighborhoods, for community organizing, for youth, and for an enhanced helping network in the Northern Berkshire community. Please join us! *Thank you!*

Our 2016 Friends as of July 18

Champion

Jack & Susy Wadsworth

Advocate

Gene & Justyna Carlson

Leader

Steve Green & Sue Walker

Guardians

Berkshire Children & Families
Susan Gold
John & Deborah MacDonald

Benefactors

Linda Becker
Alex & Sue Daugherty
Chris & Eleanor Derby-Kilfoyle
Mark Gold & Ellen Kennedy
Bruce & Judith Grinnell
Steven Miller
Frances Roberts
John Thoman & Lee Venolia

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Al Bashevkin & Nancy Pearlman
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Angelo Berasi

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Edward Damon, Jr.
David Dethier & Nancy Nylen
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Michele Ethier
Manuel & Shirley Finkelstein
Patrick Hernandez
Robert & Beverly Hertzig
Adam Hinds
John Hyde
Dick Lamb & Holly Taylor
Louis & Shirley Lescarbeau
Little's HSC Pharmacy/Surgimed
Paul W. Marino
Mr. & Mrs. John Notsley
David & Susan Noyes
William & Gail Oberst
Bernie Pinsonneault & Dianne Cutillo
Deb Rosselli
Mildred Shapiro
Susan Smith
James Stakenas & Paula Cardinal
Thomas Turner
William & Mary Whitman
Herb Wilkinson
Howard & Deborah Wineberg

Associates

Robert & Carolyn Behr
Sam & Marilyn Bittman
William & Lisa Blackmer
Liz Boland
Patrice Bolgen
Stanley & Maralyn Brown
Andrew & Sue Budz
Jennifer Civallo
Andrew & Andrea Danyluk
Pamela Hawkins
Harry & Marjorie Horn
Nicholas Hruch
Howard Itzkowitz & Wendy James
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Anthony & Augusta Nicastro
Philip Ouimet
Roberta Patten
Daniel Perreault & Joyce O'Brien
Joseph & Janet Rogge
Barbara Rondeau
Richard Taskin
Gary & Sandra Tatro
Kurt Tauber
Henry & Norma Tomkowicz
Gracie Vincent
James Wolfe
Marcia Wright
Francis & Janet Zappula
Susan Zoltek

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Tuesday, August 2

4:00 - 8:00pm

Noel Field, North Adams

National Night Out

National Night Out is a crime prevention event involving citizens, law enforcement agencies, civic groups, businesses and neighborhood organizations in North Adams. Food and fun! For more information, call Annie at (413) 663-7588. Watch for flyers in your neighborhood and check local media for updates.

Starting in August

Savoy, MA

Matter of Balance

A falls prevention class for Older Adults. The class is open to the public and FREE!!! Contact Bret Beattie, or Amanda Chilson, Community Health Workers at (413) 663-7588 for more information.



Aug. 16, 5:30pm-6:30pm

UNO Community Center

Cooking with Low/No Carbs

Come learn to cook with low or no carbohydrates! Mary Digoia, Nutrition Coordinator with the Food Bank of Western MA, will lead a fun and interactive workshop where you'll learn simple solutions for healthful meals, eating more proteins and diet friendly recipes for people with pre-diabetes or diabetes and how to make them on a budget. Contact Amanda Chilson at achilson@nbcccoalition.org or 413-663-7588 Ext. 16 to sign up or for more information.

Save the Date!

Sat., Sept. 24

Noel Field

Voices for Recovery

Rally/Walk/Vigil

Join us for a vigil to increase awareness of the disease of addiction, get resources for help for someone currently addicted, provide a place of healing and remembrance for those that have lost a loved one due to a drug related incident and celebrate the recovery of local residents.

She Is a Fire

By Sapphire Holland

She is a fire
 Inside her is a flame
 Refusing to die out
 No matter how many times water
 Is poured down her throat to
 smother her
 She is a goddess
 Deserving of love and respect
 Things she feels she never gets
 I admire her for her bravery
 She will stand up against a
 thousand days
 She feels like razor blades
 Cutting through her very soul
 And she is there
 Ready to fight for her right to live
 For a chance to get better
 She is a queen
 Born of heartache and misery
 She never lets go of the fact that she is worthy
 And it inspires me every day
 I can see that she is trying
 lying to the rest of us
 That she is well enough to take control of her kingdom
 And shes not wrong
 In my heart I know she is strong enough
 To face the army that threatens her life
 There isn't a day that goes by that she doesn't ask herself why
 Everyone still looks up to her
 She is my hero
 My one reason for being and from what i can see
 She is perfect
 She is a girl of eighteen
 Eighteen long years at war with herself
 And the existence around her
 I found her when she was beaten down
 She laid herself upon the ground
 And I knew from the second I saw her that she needed me
 I cried over her
 Because she never gave up
 And I knew that things were rough but she tried
 And I loved her
 And I love her
 And I will always love her



▲ **TWW Participant**
Sapphire Holland

NBIAI: Letter Campaign Underway Soon; September Meeting Planned

The Friendship Center Food Pantry will be conducting its annual letter campaign drive, from late July to early August. For those of you not on our mailing list who would like to make a contribution, make checks out to The Friendship Center Food Pantry and mail them to: The Friendship Center, 45 Eagle St., North Adams, MA 01247. All contributions are tax deductible, as the Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative, parent of the food pantry, is a 501c3 non-profit corporation.

In conjunction with the fundraising drive, we will have an open house at the Friendship Center during the North Adams Downtown Celebration on Wednesday, August 10. All are welcome to stop by to get a tour and see what we're about!

In other business, it's not too early to look to September, when the Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative (NBIAI) will resume its monthly meetings for a time of prayer, fellowship and informational discussions and presentations.

To begin our new season of meetings, Kim McMann, who many of you know from when she led Project Hunger in Northern Berkshire, will speak at the NBIAI's Friday, September 16, public meeting on the anti-poverty approach "Communication Across Barriers." Among Kim's many qualifications, she is a certified speaker on this topic.

The meeting will be held at 10 a.m. at the First Baptist Church of North Adams, Eagle Street Room. The NBIAI and its Friendship Center Food Pantry are the work of people of different faiths and denominations working with others of good will to serve our community. For more information, visit <http://northernberkshireinterfaith.blogspot.com>, call Mark at 413-664-0130 or call the Friendship Center at 413-664-0123.

-Mark Rondeau

Coalition Staff

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Community Health Worker

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Rural Health Network Director

Polly Macpherson: pmacpherson@nbccoalition.org

Coalition Musings. . .

As I reflect back on the last few months, even the past year, here at the Coalition, one theme is certain to emerge, "CHANGE". This always evokes for me the realization of a million quotes on change that I have read over the years...how change is inevitable, change happens, with change comes growth, it is not change that defines oneself but how one embraces the change, etc.... I believe that it is easy to become discouraged within the midst of change or even to lose sight of the present and future context of life. I also believe that there is space to think on and consider all the benefits to change, as making a change in my own life led me to the door of the Coalition and into a place of personal and professional growth.

Many know the changes we have faced, some may not. In the past few months, Adam Hinds has stepped away from his position as the Executive Director here at the Coalition for the pursuit of a personal goal. In addition to Adam, we have also been preparing for the departure of other team members. Adam Tobin has made the decision to leave us to move west and pursue his personal dream. Jessica Sweeney has been recognized for her efforts with youth in our community, securing for her the job of Executive Director of the ROOTS Teen Center here in North Adams. Finally, we will also be saying farewell to Annie Rodgers, as she pursues the mission of community involvement and parenthood from another vantage point. Each of these team members have brought their unique talents, humor, work ethic, and incredible ideas to our organization. Each has helped us to grow and weather the challenges of our work, making us better at what we do. We are sad to see our team members move on, yet excited for each of them as they move forward in their own dreams and goals in life.

We as a team, a coalition of people who believe in and strive to see the realization of the Coalition's mission to pursue a better life for all those who live in the northern Berkshire region, are working through our internal changes and becoming stronger in our resolve to see our work grow and continue. We are committed to bring on new team members who will also help us to move forward and grow.

Change happens and it can change our staff and our work, but it doesn't change our mission. So... here is to a future of adventures, change, and work with our community to make the northern Berkshires a great place to live.

-Amber Besaw

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
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