

NORTH CENTRAL

TOP STORIES OF 2019



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Fitchburg States University IdeaLab at the Theater Block on Main Street held it's ribbon cutting on Jan. 29, 2019. Cutting the ribbon are, from left, Fitchburg's state Rep. Stephan Hay, FSU senior Jules Stackhouse, FSU President Richard Lapidus and Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale.

Theater Block finished first phase of renovations, gets major funding boost

FITCHBURG » This year, Fitchburg State University celebrated the grand opening of its new game design studio and entrepreneurship lab in the city's Theater Block, as well as a \$3 million grant award for the project.

The game design studio and entrepreneurship lab opened in January, marking the end of the first phase of the project.

Fitchburg State purchased the Theater Block in 2016 with hopes of completely transforming the area.

The university is working with NewVue Communities on the Theater Block. Construction for Phase One of the \$2.8 million project began in the fall of 2017.

For the second phase, the university hopes to bring businesses to the building's seven bays by recruiting outside businesses or possibly using some of the spaces as incubators for the entrepreneurship program upstairs.

Though several businesses have come and gone from the Theater Block's storefronts in recent years, the facility remained largely unoccupied since a movie theater and former live show space shut its doors in 1987.

The third phase includes the renovation of the 28,235-square-foot theater space, which at its peak seated 1,751 patrons.

On Dec. 5, city officials celebrated the announcement of a \$3 million MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant, which will help the university put businesses into the Theater Block.

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SOCIAL MOBILITY

Studies: FSU grads enjoy high return on investment

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University graduates experience strong social mobility and get high returns on their educational investment, according to recent national studies.

The latest U.S. News & World Report college rankings examined, for the first time, social mobility.

Because of its service to disadvantaged students, Fitchburg State was named a top

performer on social mobility in the magazine's Best Colleges 2020 rankings.

Fitchburg State was the highest-ranking public institution in Massachusetts relative to social mobility, according to the magazine.

The issue reports that low-income students are less likely than others to finish college, even when controlling for other characteristics. But some col-

leges are more successful than others at advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students awarded with Pell Grants. The vast majority of these federal grants are awarded to students whose adjusted gross family incomes are under \$50,000.

That analysis is echoed in a newly published report by the College Board.

“Education Pays 2019: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society” found that college education increases the chance that adults will move up the socioeconomic ladder and reduces the chance that adults will rely on public assistance. Among the report's conclusions:

■ Individuals with higher levels of education earn more and

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FSU

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are more likely than others to be employed. Those with bachelor's degrees will earn \$400,000 more over the course of their lifetimes than those with just high school diplomas.

■ College education increases the chance that adults will move up the socioeconomic ladder and reduces the chance that adults will rely on public

assistance.

■ Median earnings increase with level of education.

■ Having a college degree is associated with a healthier lifestyle, potentially reducing health care costs. Adults with higher levels of education are more active than others and are more involved in their children's activities.

Another recent analysis, created by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, demonstrated a

strong return on investment for Fitchburg State graduates.

That study looked at federal data to estimate the “net present value” of a college education over time, and found Fitchburg State scored higher than most other public institutions in Massachusetts.

Fitchburg State Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Alberto J.F. Cardelle said the analyses reflect the university's commitment to quality pre-professional programs

that are built upon solid liberal arts foundations.

“Our students graduate with skills for the job market as well as the critical thinking and ‘soft’ skills necessary to navigate their future years in the workforce,” Cardelle said. “These reports show the long-term return on investment of higher education.”

To read more, visit the U.S. News site, Georgetown's site and the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard.

COLLEGE TOWN

New path for business degree

By **Scott O'Connell**

Telegram & Gazette Staff

FITCHBURG – Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College have announced a new articulation agreement for students pursuing a degree in business administration.

Under the pact, students in Mount Wachusett's associate degree program for business administration will be guaranteed admission to Fitchburg State's baccalaureate program for the same major.

"We both agree that regionalization is important," Fitchburg State President Richard S. Lapidus said in a statement. "The smoother we can make the transition for our students, the better it is for them. Providing clear pathways makes sense."

"This region is really on the cusp of a renaissance in local business," Mount Wachusett Community College President James Vander Hooven said. "We need to have opportunities for budding entrepreneurs to have that educational component."

In addition to being guaranteed admission to Fitchburg State, Mount Wachusett students going through the pathway will have access to university representatives to help them navigate the process. The academic credits they earned in their associate program at Mount Wachusett will be applied toward their bachelor's degree, per the rules of the state's Mass Transfer Pathway initiative.

OPINION

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MIDEAST INSTABILITY

U.S.-Iran confrontation leaves Iraq's fate uncertain – yet again

By Joshua B. Spero, Ph.D.

As the early dramatic days of 2020 temporarily subside from flooding the news cycles regarding the U.S.-Iran confrontation, the precipitous, destabilizing developments over the status of U.S. Military forces in Iraq remains increasingly uncertain – and crucial.

Against the unceasing cacophony of politicians and policymakers over breathtaking developments regarding Iraq and Iran, we're caught in unending partisan recriminations, just when America stands at a critical U.S. foreign policy juncture.

Even if the higher potential for war against Iran momentarily decreases, we face long-time challenges defining end-points for wars in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the latter two our longest approaching two decades.

Yet, Iraq's constantly destabilized nation-hood remains integral to the U.S. – tied now more so to the 2020 presidential election cycle – as Iran's power may yet grow regionally, like it's done since the 2003 U.S.-British led invasion of Iraq.

We're again witnessing Iraq's destabilization, but this region's centuries old animosities between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and non-Arabic Muslim Kurds, now increasingly overlaps with expanding conflicts enmeshing Persians and Turks, let alone Christians, Jews, and Hindus across North Africa, Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia.

Most outside of Iraq-Iran's region fail to consider the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war's impact with approximately one million deaths and estimated two million wounded. In supporting Iraq's Saddam Hussein against Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and USSR raised the stakes for that war's United Nations-negotiated

ceasefire – by then opposing Saddam Hussein's 1990 Kuwait invasion.

And now, power dilemmas entrap Iraq's caretaker government, threatening its continued U.S. support and countered by its embrace of Iran, options fated to the U.S.-Iran confrontation.

Consequently, the 2015 "Iran denuclearization" agreement's unraveling – and deterioration of negotiations with Iran by the U.S., China, Russia, European Union, and UN – also remains fated to Iraq's uncertainty: America's 2018 withdrawal from the agreement, subsequent "maximized" pressuring of Iran, and push for other signatories to abandon the denuclearization framework.

This fated crossroads parallels the stark realities of Iran ridding itself of most of the agreement's constraints, the U.S. requesting NATO allies do more to avoid another Iraqi civil war, and the regional powers around Iraq of Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia considering possible territorial annexation of Iraq.

Amid this historical sweep affecting early 2020, we careen from tweet and news flash as the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Brigade Combat Team of 4,000 response force soldiers immediately deployed from Fort Bragg, North Carolina's 82nd Airborne Division into and around Iraq.

For the father of a 24-year-old son scheduled to deploy to Iraq from another of these 82nd Airborne's Infantry Brigade Combat Teams, this gives me great pause.

For I remember that two-year old sitting on my knee when I'd bring him over in the mid-late 1990s from the Pentagon Daycare Center – and into the intensity of the strategic/scenario planning officers of the Joint Chief's extraordinarily dedicated Joint Staff.

We appreciated what military contingencies entailed and

recognized the grave realities involving operations, keenly planned with our Central and European Command counterparts. Those recommendations provided the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs advice to the Secretary of Defense and the President.

Further deployments from the 82nd Airborne Division in the weeks and months ahead give me even greater pause for it's difficult to remain dispassionate.

This said, one final assessment remains essential to our understanding: the boiling cauldron that might ignite a wider Middle East war – between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Prioritizing how Iran and Saudi Arabia might avoid war remains imperative as their regional power plays endanger Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Israel, and Jordan, the most prominent tripwires.

And, pausing to strategize the foreboding implications for how a volatile Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict seriously impacts the revival of al-Qaeda and Islamic State international terrorist networks, potentially engulfs the U.S., Russia, and other great powers more.

We've been part of these power dilemmas well before Sept. 11, 2001.

Even as the 2020 electoral cycle re-envelopes us, we need to plan more clearly if our allies and friends will continue alongside us in overseas commitments.

Like our constant challenges abroad, when allies and friends need our help, requesting we remain or return to their lands, hopefully we can decide more diplomatically, peacefully on such solemn commitments.

Joshua B. Spero, Ph.D. Professor of International Relations at Fitchburg State University (Fitchburg, MA) Formerly, Senior Civilian Strategist, Joint Chiefs of Staff (1994-2000)

education before they graduate high school,” Cardelle said.

The Early College program is part of the Massachusetts Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership (CDEP). Fitchburg State participates in the program as part of a unique consortium it helped establish with North Central Massachusetts regional institutions, including Mount Wachusett Community College, the Sizer School, and Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster High Schools.

“I feel more confident in my dreams,” said Tremaine Pinnock of Leominster, an Early College student enrolled in the university’s business administration program. Pinnock spoke at a summit meeting in the fall about the new North Central Massachusetts consortium. “I know now I can definitely achieve what I’ve always wanted to.”

High school students interested in learning more about a post-secondary education are encouraged to speak with their school counselors about CDEP opportunities.

ple all of the great recipes and talking to the contestants about their creativity and how they were inspired.”

All finalists receive a chef coat, apron and hat.

The winning recipe from the event will be entered to win a national competition in late March.

Last year’s Future Chefs winner was Isabella Maldonado.

Chad Garner is the schools’ communications director.

\$12,300 GRANT

FSU’s Early College program gets boost

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University announced that the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education awarded it \$12,300 to support its Early College program designed for first-generation, low-income students to earn college credits while still in high school.

“Please accept my personal gratitude for the critical contributions your campus has made to the Early College initiative,” said Commissioner Carlos

E. Santiago. “Further, I applaud your work to ensure that early college is thoughtfully designed to move us toward greater racial equity on our campuses and across the commonwealth.”

Fitchburg State Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Alberto Cardelle said many students often struggle to adapt to the new expectations and responsibilities inherent in college life. “Early college is a way for students to learn how to navigate the waters of high

FSU » 6A

COLLEGE TOWN

By Scott O'Connell

Telegram & Gazette Staff

Early College funding

Fitchburg State University has received \$12,300 from the state Higher Education Department to support its Early College programming for local high school students.

Early College courses allow students to earn college credits while still in high school, giving them not only a head start on their college courseload but also a preview of the academic expectations they'll encounter in college. Fitchburg State's program is specifically designed for first-generation, low-income students, and is part of a partnership with Mount Wachusett Community College, the Sizer School, and the Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster school systems.

"Early college is a way for students to learn how to navigate the waters of high education before they graduate high school," said Alberto Cardelle, the university's provost and vice president for academic affairs.

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EDUCATION

More than 600 graduate at FSU's winter commencement



COURTESY OF FSU

Graduate Student Leadership Award-winner Eman Warraich-Gibson of New Jersey speaks at Fitchburg State's winter commencement ceremony.



COURTESY OF FSU

Fitchburg State University held its winter commencement ceremony on Dec. 20.



COURTESY OF FSU

Valedictorian Nicholas Powell of Gardner addresses his fellow graduates at Fitchburg State University's winter commencement ceremony on Dec. 20.

Submitted Article

FITCHBURG» More than 600 undergraduate and graduate degrees were conferred at Fitchburg State University's 123rd commencement exercises, winter ceremony, on Dec. 20.

Attending graduates, including those who had completed their studies online and never before set foot on the university's physical campus, hailed from Massachusetts as well as Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin and the Northern Mariana Islands. The university has seen huge growth in its online accelerated degree programs.

In his commencement address, President Richard S. Lapidus highlighted three of the graduating students, who embodied the university's core values including perseverance and dedication.

Jessica Shea, who works in the university's Expanding Horizons Program, serves a population of first-generation students with learning disabilities or other challenges. She found the post when she was in search of a job, but instead discovered a passion. Shea completed a master's of education in curriculum and teaching.

Anna Farnsworth took her first college course in 1982 before a long hiatus. In 1997, on the eve of a divorce and in need of additional career skills, she began her studies anew, balancing one course at a time with the demands of raising her children. Over the course of more than 20 years, Farnsworth built a career as a graphic designer and physical trainer while supporting her children through their own educational paths. Decades after beginning

her degree, she crossed the stage to collect her undergraduate degree in business administration, with her sons and granddaughter in the audience.

Kirsten Perham is a survivor. When her first attempt at college was not successful, she decided to follow in her grandfather's footsteps and joined the military, only to be medically discharged when a

training accident broke both of her hips. She returned to college but struggled again, realizing her hardships were rooted in unresolved trauma from a previous sexual assault. With the support of faculty and counseling, she endured, rebounding academically to the dean's list, and now is committed to inspiring others to know that facing and overcoming challenges makes us stronger. She completed an undergraduate degree in psychology.

Also recognized at the ceremony was valedictorian Nicholas Powell of Gardner, who completed a degree in English studies with a concentration in professional writing. Powell likened the graduates to the rare blossoms of cacti.

"For some of you, this is the moment you bloom and your little cacti mind finally comes together," he said. "For others, this is just another stepping stone. For the rest, they fire in all directions and hope for the best. To me, the beauty of your cacti blooming — of watching everything you've learned finally come together, to me, is the feeling I chase every time I wake up, and I hope that maybe I've convinced you to do the same — even if it may take a lot of work to get there."

The Graduate Student Leadership Award was presented to Eman Warraich-Gibson of New Jersey, who completed an MBA. Gibson works at the substance use treatment organization Integrity House in New Jersey, where her duties have expanded to include administrative and leadership roles starting in 2013 and she is now involved in strategic planning, oversight, finance, and human resource and development. Gibson completed the university's accelerated online MBA in nine months.

"Like many of my fellow graduates, getting here tonight required some sacrifice," Gibson said. "My homework often kept me away from my family, even when I was in the house, and I missed other family birthday celebrations. Still, the experience has been rewarding. As a direct result of my participation in the MBA program, I was recently appointed chief clinical officer at my organization, overseeing all 18 of our treatment programs, and with responsibilities that stretch from client care to financial

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Graduation

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sustainability.

"The knowledge I gained from the faculty and my classmates is immeasurable and most applicable to the real world."

Graduation List

Ashburnham: Lyndsy Butler, MBA, Business Administration

Ashby: Chelsie Clarkson, BS, Biology; Kristina M. Osborne, BSE, Special Education

Fitchburg: Ana G. Aguilar, BS, Exercise and Sports Science; Jon W. Barto, BS, Geographic Sci & Technology; Danielle M. Berthiaume, MED, Middle School Education; Travis W. Child, BS, Psychological Science; Paul S. Comaskey, BS, Biology; Zachary T. Davis, BS, Game Design; Margaret L. Desilets, MED, Special Education;

Also, Steven C. Desmarais, BS, Business Administration; Rebecca M. Fortin, MED, Special Education; Renee A. Gaitan, MA, English; Lisa P. Gilchrist, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Kyle Hanson, BS, Criminal Justice; Jillian Jenkins, BS, Business Administration; Thepnmith Kiattisack, BS, Business Administration; Ryan P. Leblanc, BS, Exercise and Sports Science; Bria R. Monette-Harris, BS, Sociology; John R. Montaquila, BS, Mathematics; Deborah K. Oriku, BS, Nursing, RN to BS; Keenan I. Park, BS, Business Administration; Kirsten N. Perham, BS, Psychological Science; Debra A. Rennick, MED, Special Education; Emily M. Rooney, BS, Interdisciplin-

ary Studies; Anne P. Saball, BS, Biology; Jessica L. Shea, MED, Curriculum and Teaching; Eric T. Tran, BS, Communications Media; Nicolas C. Van Landeghem, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Erika M. Ventura Molina, BS, Human Services; Brianna L. White, BS, Business Administration

Gardner: Sarah A. Chatigny, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Connor B. Doyle, BS, Biology; Sarah W. Farrell, MED, Special Education; Samantha G. Haskins, MED, Special Education; Rebecca A. Martin, MED, Special Education; Andrew F. Navaroli, BS, Biology; Ovilla R. Plouffe Jr., BS, Communications Media; Nicholas C. Powell, BS, English Studies; Connor M. Puchol, BS, Industrial Technology; Samantha L. Richard, BS, Environmental & Earth Science; Cristian Sanchez, BS, Business Administration; Sadie R. Serrano, MED, Special Education; Kaitlyn J. Silvia, BS, Business Administration; Jessica St. John, BS, Business Administration

Lancaster: Anna K. Arisco, BA, English Studies; Brian W. Farmer, BS, Business Administration; Kate Savell, BS, Psychological Science; Maxwell A. Schryver, BS, Industrial Technology; Zachary D. Weber, BS, Computer Science

Leominster: Celeste L. Alvarado, BS, Criminal Justice; Olivia J. Amirault, BS, Exercise and Sports Science; Amanda R. Benner, MED, Special Education; Angela R. Bhowmik, BS, Psychological Science; Sara E. Cardinal, MBA, Business Administration; Lucas J. Cardwell,

BS, Communications Media; Janice D. Castro, BA, Biology; Kimberly M. Dawson, MED, Special Education; Dakota J. Dupuis, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies Educ; William Fisher, MBA, Business Administration;

Also, Kayleigh Force, MED, Special Education; Brianna M. Fournier, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies Educ; Selena D. Goncalves, BS, Criminal Justice; Danielle M. Haas, MS, Criminal Justice; Danny D. Hernandez, BS, Business Administration; Yahaira Herrarte, BS, Human Services; David J. Hilton, BSE, Technology Education (5-12); Ashley E. Jollimore, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Mary L. Kelly, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies Educ; Kasey L. Mammone, BS, Psychological Science; Kathryn L. Oldfield, MED, Special Education;

Also, Kennedy O. Owino, BS, Economics; Danielle A. Patton, BS, Exercise and Sports Science; Rebecca J. Quintong, BS, Biology; Nicholas J. Roger, MED, Curriculum and Teaching; Julia E. Salmond, BS, Criminal Justice; Shauna M. Soroka, BS, Business Administration; Bryan Stella, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Kaitlyn M. Storro, MED, Special Education; Markayla S. Tansey, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies Educ; Angelica L. Tata, BSE, Early Childhood Education; Cassidy Vargas, BS, Nursing - BS; Kyle V. White, BS, Comp Info Systems; Taylor R. Williams, BS, Exercise and Sports Science

Lunenburg: Meghan C. Bruce, MED, Middle School Education; Jacqueline L. Campbell, BS, Business Administration; Mar-

cela P. Coronel, MBA, Business Administration; William J. Iannacci, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Sarah Mcghee, MBA, Business Administration; Amanda L. Montuori, BS, Biology; Matthew V. Osgood, MBA, Business Administration

Princeton: Abigail A. Buckley, MED, Special Education

Shirley: Jessica A. Bailey, MBA, Business Administration; Jennifer A. Collins, BSE, Elementary Education 1-6; Kenneth D. Howell, BS, Game Design; Ashley B. Hyde, BSE, Elementary Education 1-6; Matthew Lance, MED, Special Education; Emily A. Olson, BS, Communications Media; Muaau Pau, BS, Business Administration; Amelia Rainville, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies; Wendy V. Autino, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies Educ; Sarah K. Gray, BS, Biology; Shayla N. Kelleher, BSE, Elementary Education 1-6; Jacob C. Ovaska, BS, Sociology; Alicia M. Silver, BS, Nursing - BS

Sterling: Caitlin M. Miller, MED, Special Education; Patrick M. Printz, MBA, Business Administration

West Townsend: Jennifer M. Stadler, MED, Curriculum and Teaching; Sharon L. Whittier, MED, Special Education

Westminster: Jessica Brown, MED, Special Education; Brockton Disalle, BS, Game Design; Brittany R. Gauvin, MED, Special Education; Keith R. Korandanis, MED, Middle School Education; Kailyn E. Parker, BS, Environmental & Earth Science; Gianna J. Slack, BS, Criminal Justice; Kerry A. Volke, CAGS, Interdisciplinary Studies -GR

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THE OPIOID CRISIS

Former Marine carries on the fight to help addicts

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles written by students attending Fitchburg State University about the opioid epidemic.

By Kangsen Masango

Special to the Sentinel & Enterprise

FITCHBURG » Sarah Pinkerton is a fighter.

In 2003, she enlisted in the Marine Corps, eventually earning the rank of sergeant and being deployed to Iraq in 2008. After an honorable discharge in 2011, she took her fighting spirit to the classroom, earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in Human Health Counseling.

Today, Pinkerton is fighting



against the opioid crisis in the capacity of a Licensed Social Worker, giving help and hope to the many who are homeless and addicted.

“As a career, I’ve been doing it since 2012,” she quipped after taking a few sips of her coffee at Strong Style Coffee on Boulder Drive.

Pinkerton’s dedication to the community started in high school. Through church-sponsored outreach programs, she

volunteered at homeless shelters, parlaying her passion into a job at the Veterans Outreach Center in Gardner in 2012. Most of the veterans she worked with were homeless and were often suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and substance abuse.

This is a national trend. A study conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that combat troops were more likely to abuse opioids than non-combat troops.

Furthermore, the study noted that addicted soldiers face “an overdose rate twice that of civilians.”

Pinkerton used her military background to relate to soldiers,

helping them with sobriety plans and access to mental health.

“It’s never just one thing when it comes to addiction,” Pinkerton continued, alluding to the many risk factors associated with this trying condition.

The Center on Addiction notes that these factors include but are not limited to genetic disposition, brain characteristics, psychological make-up, and environmental influences like physical or sexual trauma. Still, Pinkerton approaches her job, using her faith, compassion, and education in order to bridge the gap between homeless addicts and the resources that can help



COURTESY PHOTO

Sarah Pinkerton, a former Marine and now Licensed Social Worker, is in the fight to help those suffering from addiction.

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Marine

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them.

Pinkerton insists that “isolation is a violation.”

Unfortunately, addicts are violated every day, many of them on the margins of society, exposed to the elements and to sexual exploitation. Studies show that there is a link between substance abuse and sexual exploitation in that many addicts use prostitution to finance their drug use.

The same studies further suggest that victims of forced prostitution use drugs to cope with their traumatizing ordeals. These circumstances lead to social isolation, exacerbating their predicament.

Rachel Wurzman, a neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania, found that isolation stresses the striatum (a part of the brain essential in decision-making), increasing the need to stimulate the brain’s reward system. It is this need that invariably leads to reuse, relapse, and fatal overdoses. Wurzman therefore believes addicts can reduce their compulsion, the likelihood of relapses, and overdoses by increasing their social connections. This belief is centered on neuroplasticity, the brain’s ability to change with new habits.

Pinkerton echoed this view, stressing the importance of support networks for addicts, adding, “we weren’t meant to be alone, we’re not meant to go at it alone, we’re meant to be in community with people.”

And it is for the community that Pinkerton is reaching into the grips of addiction and homelessness. After working for places like Our Father’s House in Fitchburg and the Family Shelter for North Star Family Services, she transferred

to the Department of Children and Families. Also, she is the founder and president of Pink’s House Inc., a faith-based home for teenagers phasing out of foster care.

“Being dedicated to the community is an active process and it’s rewarding” said Pinkerton.

She has her success stories; the time she helped a client who gave up a baby because of her addiction; the times she ran into clients thriving in their sobriety; the times she’s been able to help redirect after a relapse.

These stories show Pinkerton’s undying will to help others, and her hope that society eliminates the stigma of addiction. This is because society views addiction as a moral failing, instead of a public health crisis.

They add that such shortsightedness fosters a political discourse which uses pejoratives to describe addicts, reducing them to “junkies” and thieves.

To Pinkerton, this perspective is “...not human...brutal...”, and akin to segregation. It pays to be in the service of the people. Pinkerton sees this privilege as her payment.

“I get to have angels looking out for me everywhere,” she gushed, referring to the many homeless addicts who have given her this privilege, adding that “people need to know life and know it’s worth living.”

She wants everyone to know life is worth living, that substance abuse requires the urgency of a compassionate community response.

Addiction remains one of the deadliest epidemics of our time and without collective efforts like hers, experts say families will continue to bear the agony of its maw. It’s no wonder that Pinkerton, a former Marine, is in the fight.

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THE OPIOID CRISIS

Overcoming addiction takes resolve, plenty of support

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles written by students attending Fitchburg State University about the opioid epidemic.

By Lorenzo DeMalia

Special to the Sentinel & Enterprise

WORCESTER » The opioid epidemic has left in its wake a trail of tears and tragedy, but with resolve and support, there are also



stories of those finding recovery. With stories of people overdosing or dying or being arrested for possession every day, it is almost too easy to become complacent to

the epidemic's terrible toll on those in the grips of addiction and their family and friends who seek to help.

One of those who has experienced the depths of addiction and fought back to find recovery is Dominic DeMalia, a 26-year-old Worcester man. Today, he is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business at Worcester State University, balancing his time be-

tween studying and working a full-time job.

But the road to his recovery was long and filled with significant challenges.

DeMalia first became addicted to opioids in 2011. Although he had previously smoked marijuana recreationally, his decision to turn toward opioids was something different. It was a way in which he could avoid the respon-

sibilities which went along with growing up. The constant pursuit of getting high proved itself to be an expensive habit, and as his addiction grew, so too did his bills.

"Addiction brought desperation," said DeMalia. "Since prescription drugs are expensive, this led to substituting it with heroin and cocaine or anything I

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Support

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could get my hands on."

It became all about the next high for DeMalia.

At first, he would take 30 milligrams of pain pills per day — setting him back by \$20 to \$30 daily. At the peak of his addiction, however, he was taking up to 200 milligrams to maintain his habit at a cost of \$150 daily.

DeMalia's only source of income at the time was a minimum wage job working 35 to 40 hours per week at a local deli. It quickly became impossible for him to support his addiction this way, and as happens too of-

ten he resorted to thievery to make ends meet.

Within the span of six months, DeMalia had been arrested on three felony larceny charges for driving on a suspended license, along with two misdemeanor shoplifting charges. This led to his arrest under a default warrant after months of ignoring court summonses. By this point, his habit had not only changed his personality but was affecting his personal appearance to the point his family could hardly recognize him.

"The worst thing I experienced was the loss of trust from my family and friends — the ones who loved me," said DeMalia. "I lied to (them) and cheated

just to get money."

DeMalia was sentenced to three months in a county jail for his crimes — events which later became the turning point in his life. Being behind bars forced him to get clean. Had it not been for his jail term, DeMalia said he may very well have suffered the same fate as millions of others who have lost their lives to the addiction.

The withdrawal was brutal, he said, experiencing cold sweats after throwing up constantly throughout the long nights in jail. It was in jail where DeMalia finally began to feel like himself after three long years.

By seeing his fellow prisoners in their cells, DeMa-

lia also began to recognize the path he had been on, and in that moment it became clear to him that his life was meant for more.

After his release from jail, DeMalia began the challenge of remaining clean.

At first, it was as if he were walking on eggshells around his friends and family.

While he no longer battled with the physical desire to get high, the mental trauma still lingered.

When a person uses opioids, their subconscious develops a mental dependency on the chemical components of the drugs, experts say. In the case of DeMalia, the urges crept their way into his dreams,

causing him to relive the days in which he would get high, and the fear of this again becoming a reality led to many sleepless nights.

Through the support of his peers at Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous, DeMalia was able to remain clean and slowly work towards building his life back up from the rubble he had left behind.

Since he became clean in July 2014, five years and five months have passed.

However, the effects drugs have had on his life remain. Being a former addict means that one is never completely safe, and with every day one has to fight to prove they are

more than who they once were.

"No matter how many days you have been clean, whether it's 10 days or 10 years, it doesn't matter," said DeMalia. "You're only one day away from using again."

After nearly losing his home, family, and will to live, DeMalia no longer takes anything for granted. He lives every day in the knowledge that he now has the strength to get through to tomorrow on his own, with drugs no longer being his crutch.

There are many other people who continue to battle with drug abuse and whose stories are not being told, and who are not receiving the help they need.

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ADDICTION

A long slide and an icy grip for a mother trying to quit

Ashburnham woman overcomes relapses to get – and stay – clean

By Mary Leufstedt

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles written by students attending Fitchburg State University about the opioid epidemic.

ASHBURNHAM» The firm grasp of addiction can take its heavy toll on even the strongest of individuals. Emily Lamb knows this all too well.

A 34-year-old mother of two, a student at Mount Wachusett Community College, a sister, daughter, and avid runner – Lamb has experienced it all. Everything from innocent recreational use to full-blown addiction, to the difficulty of getting and remaining clean.

Nowadays, Lamb spends her



time working hard and raising her family. But the

journey she has traveled to get to this point was full of many twists, turns and bumps.

Originally from Fitchburg, Lamb's family relocated to Ashburnham when she was 7 years old. There she lived with her two older siblings and her mother who would attend classes during the day and work during the night in order to support her family.

Her father, who suffered from alcoholism, wasn't present in her life. His addiction ultimately left Lamb with a predisposition towards addiction. This left her to be supervised by neighbors or

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her older siblings. Dealing with the transition of being in a new place, often feeling alone, and often not being looked after, were followed by acts of rebellion.

In hindsight, Lamb knew she was an addict before she even began using drugs. Certain personality traits she possesses — such as not feeling as if she can do anything in moderation, being a thrill seeker, and having a hard time with impulse control — correlate with addictive behaviors. These predispositions, combined with a lack of guidance and the trauma she experienced all played into her original experimentation with recreational use of substances.

At the age of 13, Lamb started experimenting with what most teens find themselves using — marijuana and alcohol. This led her to partying and being influenced by the crowd she surrounded herself with. Even when she first started using drugs, it was clear to her that she couldn't just use recreationally, because she wanted to be high all the time.

In addition, her depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and other mental health issues also contributed to her drug use. Ultimately, this all led to her having an extremely difficult time in school; from which she eventually ended up being expelled and being forced to attend residential facilities.

Having been expelled from high school, Lamb felt ostracized. That's when eventually she started experimenting with other substances, such as cocaine.

However, it was when her boyfriend at the time introduced her to Vicodin

that she found the “love of her life.”

She started by using just one pill, and that's when her tolerance gradually grew, and she could no longer maintain her habit with her limited resources. She was in way over her head, and in her mind he knew she was an addict. She would wake up in the morning feeling as if she had the flu, but failed to recognize that it wasn't the flu, but instead withdrawals.

Lamb clearly recalls the times she would find herself in her kitchen thinking of all the ways she could harm herself so that she might be able to obtain more pills. Whether by cutting herself or smashing her hands in the door, she knew the hospital would write her a prescription for more.

A written prescription meant no illegal activity and free pills. However, the eventual end of her Vicodin use didn't come down to only the dreadful feelings she had about all of this, but its financial burden. Having no job and frequently needing to purchase pills, Lamb couldn't financially support her addiction anymore. This financial toll ultimately led her to her heroin use.

At the age of 17, Lamb was exposed to heroin for the first time. While looking for pills, she came across a girl on the streets who shot her up for the first time. For Lamb, it wasn't a gradual slope toward intravenous use — it began right there.

Lamb recalls these days vividly. When she first started using heroin she felt as if she was walking on clouds, describing a feeling of pure bliss. She would spend days chasing this feeling. After the first time, that feeling was all she could think about. Her days would revolve around it, and nothing else mattered — neither her family,

boyfriend nor education.

She would spend her moments thinking about how to obtain heroin, who she could get it from, and when to get it. The first thing she'd do in the morning was get high and would then proceed to continue throughout the day, until she eventually fell asleep — only to wake up the next morning thinking about it again. Ultimately it came to the point where her use was no longer about getting high but preventing herself from getting sick because of withdrawals.

It was at this time that Lamb tried to detox for the first time with the support of her mother, who was a nurse. Following this, she went to a rehabilitation center for juveniles, where she was eventually kicked out. While trying several other programs, she went through cycles of getting clean for a brief period, only to find herself back in active addiction.

At the age of 19, Lamb found herself pregnant with a daughter, during which time she was still in active addiction. However, Lamb managed to detox and maintain in recovery throughout her pregnancy. Even though she was worried the baby may have complications, she nevertheless gave birth successfully.

However, when her baby daughter was just 6 months old, Lamb started using pills again, which ultimately led her back to active use. This also began another cycle of getting clean and using again. She thankfully had the support of her mother, who would help raise her baby throughout the ordeal. However, Lamb knew that if she didn't get clean, she could lose custody of her child.

Finally, Lamb accepted treatment at a methadone clinic.

Methadone is a harm reduction medication used

for those who are addicted to opioids and haven't found success in other treatments such as AA, NA, halfway homes, or conventional therapy. Methadone, however, carries a very negative stigma. It can commonly be seen in the addiction community as switching one drug for another, but when used with other therapeutic tools it can be extremely successful.

For Lamb, this treatment became a lifesaver. It felt as if she had finally found the missing puzzle piece in her head, feeling normal for the first time in a very long time.

According to Lamb, traditional methods of treatment aren't always ideal for everyone. She believes that since there are so many people out there dying from the drug epidemic, medication-assisted treatments need to stop being stigmatized and judged so harshly, as they provide a successful method of treatment for many people who are struggling.

“In an ideal world,” she said, “all addicts would join in recovery, and be abstinent, but I know the reality for me, and I know the relapse rate for addiction, and I am not willing to roll the dice these days.”

While it may not be the ideal situation, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks for her. If all addicts were able to stay clean without medication, there would be no problem. However, those who have used drugs long-term have ultimately altered their neural chemistry, which makes it significantly more difficult to remain clean.

As with a vast amount of recovering addicts, Lamb once again experienced relapse after starting methadone. She managed to remain clean for three years, but ultimately relapsed, and ended up in a 12-month treatment facility, which she completed suc-

cessfully and was thus able to retain custody of her daughter. After arriving home, she managed to stay clean and have a happy life raising her daughter for another seven years.

“My most recent relapse was over three years ago,” Lamb said, “when I started smoking crack cocaine again, taking benzodiazepines, and intermittently using heroin. I overdosed twice in the span of the year. By far, this time was the hardest and fastest I had fell and it was also the hardest ever I have fought for recovery. After seven years of being a mom, making lunches, giving baths and maintaining a home, I went out one night to get milk and relapsed with a crack dealer in the parking lot of Cumberland Farms.”

After her most recent relapse, Lamb has been able to regain her life and fight for her recovery. Reflecting on it all, she says that she was “extremely stressed out,” and that she had abandoned her support system. “I stopped attending groups,” said Lamb. “I was vulnerable, my guard was down that night.”

After multiple detoxes, rehabs, and years of fighting, Lamb has been able to regain control of her life for the sake of her children.

“The two primary reasons why I don't use drugs is the motivation I have to be a parent to my two children,” she said. “I have a 12-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son and they are my world, when clean. I know that if I give into the impulse of this disease, and relapse, that they no longer can be in my world, and I will have abandoned them, like my father did to me.”

Nowadays, Lamb remains clean and supports her children. She is finally living the life that she believes she was meant to live. She recognizes, however, that more treatments

need to be made available. It can take weeks to get into a detox program, and she believes that it can be extremely heartbreaking when one calls a facility only to be told to “call back tomorrow, there's no available room here.”

Lamb also hopes for a world where medication-assisted treatment is more readily available and entwined with other recovery options.

“I do wish more addicts would seek treatment, in other forms than AA and NA. I believe recovery is not one size fits all,” she said.

In Lamb's eyes, the stigma needs to be broken, because everyone is different. The path to recovery doesn't matter as long as one gets there. To recover means to be able to be a productive member of society. It means to be present for one's children and a sister and a daughter. It also means feeling proud of oneself for her.

Lamb may still battle with daily temptations and triggers, but through community, she is able to overcome them.

For those who are actively struggling with addiction, Lamb advises to never give up.

She says that you are not alone, and if you fight it, others will fight alongside you. If you fall, stand back up. All you need is the desire to change. If you keep reaching out for help, know that things can get better and people are willing to help.

The advice Lamb wishes that she could have given herself all those years ago is to realize that she is worthy of living a happy and healthy life.

While in the midst of active addiction, you may feel broken and you may go through hurdles along the way. But this battle is more than worth it. One day, you too can say “I have prevailed.”

RECOVERING ADDICT OPENS UP

After hitting rock bottom, she turned her life around

This is the fourth in a series of stories on the opioid epidemic written by students attending Fitchburg State University

By Carter Hanna

Special to the Sentinel & Enterprise

SALEM, N.H.» She has experienced nearly every tragic event that occurs too often to those addicted to opioids — overdose, lost friends and family to addiction and felt the extreme humiliation of having her addiction go public when she overdosed in a public place, with her child at her side, and bystanders video recording the terrible scene.

“It breaks my heart,” said Mandy McGowan in response to hearing the general statistics of opioids, “I’ve lost so many people ... people dying every single day.”

Massachusetts is ranked one

of the top 10 states in the U.S. to have the highest rates of drug overdoses involving opioids. Over 1,900 people died from overdosing on opioids in 2017. Nationally, about 2.5 million people are addicted to these drugs.

McGowan, 39, had a rough childhood. She grew up in Lowell with her older brother and her parents, who divorced when she was three years old. As a child, McGowan and her family moved many times.

She was 24 when she was first introduced to opioids in 2004 after she had neck surgery. She was prescribed Oxycodone, fentanyl patches, Percocet, and many other pain relievers that led to a de-



pendence on opioids.

“I was prescribed it, so I didn’t think I had a problem... I was in major denial,” said McGowan.

Soon she was unemployed and began isolating herself from family events because one of the signs of addiction is dramatic weight loss, which her family clearly noticed. It caused a rift between them.

“I didn’t have a relationship with my family at all and it was hard,” said McGowan.

In 2016, McGowan overdosed in a Dollar Store in Lawrence after snorting a line of fentanyl. She collapsed in one of the aisles while shopping with her daughter, and was unconscious when help arrived. To reverse the over-

dose, McGowan was administered Narcan.

The tragic situation was video recorded by someone also shopping in the store, which led to McGowan’s addiction becoming public while facing charges of neglect and reckless endangerment of the child. She pleaded guilty to those charges and was placed on probation for two years. If she stays clean for those two years, the charges will be dismissed.

“I knew I had a problem, but I didn’t think it was serious because I wasn’t shooting heroin, I wasn’t an addict. But I was an addict all along,” she said.

It was with this terrible experience that she realized that she needed help and sought treatment. She continued treatment towards recovery for almost two and a half years.

McGowan has been through multiple treatment programs and she has completed every one of them. The first treatment center provided her with a welcoming atmosphere.

“All the staff there became my family,” she said. “They helped me in so many ways. I was able to figure out who I was as a person.”

She remained at the treatment center for six months, until she transferred to a sober house. She was doing well at the sober house, but during this time she lost her daughter’s father and her stepson to an overdose. As a result, McGowan checked herself into a mental health unit to cope with the tragedies. Later, she went to another halfway house, but it did not work out.

“I was not doing OK in my head, so I put myself back into a

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Addict

FROM PAGE 1A

psych unit,” said McGowan.

Soon after, she enrolled herself in several different treatment centers and programs to seek the help that she needed. She has been out of treatment for one year and has been very in-

involved in the community during that time.

“I try to help as many people as I can,” McGowan said. “There’s not enough beds, there’s not enough facilities, there’s not enough help.”

McGowan currently does outreach for the Boston Public Health Commissions. She picks up needles off the streets of Boston and helps other people get

into treatment.

She is also part of the Waltham Overcoming Addiction Committee.

They help raise scholarships for opioid addicts to have the opportunity to get into a sober home. She has also recently completed her training as a recovery coach.

Recovery coaches help people with addiction, or who are in recovery, from

drug-related addictive behaviors.

They provide guidance and support for those who are treating their addiction.

McGowan has experienced very hard times throughout her life. She has fought the battle with opioid addiction, dealt with losing her relationship with her family, and lost those who have fought

the battle she appears to be winning. But she has been able to overcome her struggles and change for the better.

“I’m happy today. Completely different. I’m free. I’m not involved in horrible, horrible relationships with men,” said McGowan.

McGowan was with her daughter’s father for nine years. He was also an addict. She said it was “horri-

ble” and that she never thought that she was “worthy of love” at that time.

She explained that the stigma of drug addicts is that they are “low-life junkies.”

“We’re human. We have feelings. We have families. We have children. ... It’s not like when we wake up, we want to go get high and ruin our whole lives. It’s a serious horrible disease.”

RESIDENTS FIGHTING TO SAVE POOL AT FSU



FILE PHOTO / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Fitchburg State University officials could possibly close the pool used by local and regional schools for swim meets.

By Daniel Monahan

*dmonahan@sentinel
andenterprise.com*

FITCHBURG» The Fitchburg State University Recreation Center Pool, used by local and regional schools for swim meets, is reportedly in danger

of closing down; but a group of concerned residents and alumni are fighting to keep it open.

Though Fitchburg State University has not officially announced that the pool will be closing, groups who frequent the facility believe the

facility is heading in that direction.

The school is reportedly concerned about the price tag associated with potential repair costs, a lack of revenue and declining attendance at the pool.

Nancy Foss-Yasko, a univer-

sity alumni, said she was tipped off about the potential closing after discovering that the pool's heating system wasn't working correctly and might need important repairs.

As a regular user of the facility, Foss-Yasko was alarmed

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Pool

FROM PAGE 1A

by the news and quickly formed the Concerned User Committee for Continuing Operation Committee, made up of other alumni and regular pool attendees. She is also the sitting chairperson.

The committee's primary goal is to understand why the pool would be closing and to offer the university suggestions for preservation and improved operation.

"We're trying to give them solutions to the problem, but we don't know what the problem is exactly because no one will tell us," said Foss-Yasko. "It's just going to be a shame if we lose this pool."

Beverly Cronin, a university alumni who frequents the facility, said she was told the university is not committed to keeping the pool open.

"It's just a beautiful space and I really don't want it to shut down," said Cronin. "It's a good resource for the community and promotes healthy living and a healthy lifestyle."

In the interest of preserving the pool, the committee met with university Vice President of Finance and Administration Jay Bry on Friday. State Sen. Dean Tran (R-Fitchburg), Rep. Natalie Higgins (D-Leominster) and Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale were also in attendance.

According to Stephen Holt, a committee member, the group offered several solutions that would provide additional revenue to the university and help maintain the pool. Options included youth swimming classes, membership programs, exercise programs and rentals.

The committee contends the pool, built in 2000, is a valuable asset to the community and the replacement cost would run Fitchburg State about \$1 million.

According to Foss-Yasko, the committee was told by university officials that the pool needs \$400,000 in additional funding for the repairs. However, she said no estimate was provided to confirm the price tag.

She said the water heater appears to be broken because the water temperature is currently sitting at about 70 degrees, when it should be nearly 8 de-

grees higher.

Foss-Yasko said the university offered the following explanations as to why the pool might be closing in the future: poor attendance, low student interest and it does not meet the competitive collegiate standard length of 25 meters.

However, she said there is plenty of interest from both the public and external swimming teams. She said the university would benefit financially from opening the pool up to public use.

Foss-Yasko said the university could do more to promote the pool and help it bring in more revenue.

"The only way things will work out is if the university opens the pool up to the community," she said.

Several committee members said Fitchburg State University officials have not been forthcoming with details about potential pool repairs or the looming closure.

Francis Freel has been the coach for a local combined swim team for about five years and regularly schedules meets at the facility.

Freel said he wants Fitchburg State University to be transparent about its intentions for the pool and the problems it's facing.

"It's an asset to the community but it's just not being promoted or marketed well," said Freel. "I would just hate to see financial issues rob these kids of the team they've helped build."

Members of the committee said they understand the pool is university property but they believe losing the pool would negatively impact the city and surrounding towns.

"It's their choice. It's their pool, their property, and I respect that," said Freel. "I don't feel there's any maliciousness behind their intentions, we'd just like to know so we can make other plans."

Freel's swim team includes students from Leominster High School, Fitchburg High School, Lunenburg High School, Monty Tech, North Middlesex and Parker Charter School.

"If we had to relocate, we're going to lose people and I'd hate for that to happen," he said.

Jay Bry and other university officials could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts.

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FITCHBURG

\$3M grant to help transform downtown

Two-way Main St., theater rehab, new housing in works

By Daniel Monahan

dmonahan@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG » An abundance of housing, a two-lane Main Street, and a thriving Theater Block are memories residents have of the city years ago.

Now, city officials are aiming

to make those images synonymous with Fitchburg once again with funds from the \$3 million MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant announced on Thursday.

City officials say the money will be used to transform Fitchburg's downtown into a more pedestrian- and business-friendly area.

"Our downtown is seeing tremendous growth," said Mayor Stephen DiNatale. "This project will send an important message

about our downtown resurgence, as we continue to create an environment which is going to promote thriving development."

The project will include a focus on new housing, mixed-use developments and the rehabilitation of the Fitchburg Theater.

The overhaul includes converting Main and Boulder streets from one-way to two-way streets, reversing a City Council decision made in 2016. The move, officials said, would increase traffic safe-

GRANT » 6A



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Fitchburg leaders listen to Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito announce a \$3 million MassWorks grant Thursday at the Fitchburg State University IdeaLAB game design studio in the Theater Block on Main Street.

Grant

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ty and circulation, creating a walkable, bikeable business district.

DiNatale said the project is going to have a profound effect on what happens downtown.

These improvements will spur the rehabilitation and renovation of the Fitchburg Theater on Main Street, a nearly 24,000-square-foot building that is already home to Fitchburg State University's small business ideaLab.

Up to five commercial storefronts are planned for the first floor of the theater property.

"It's another piece in the puzzle as we continue to build this out," said Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus.

Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito said the project will have a high impact on the community and, more importantly, will lead to more housing.

"You have to re-imagine how you're going to reuse these buildings and who can live in this downtown," she said.

She said Fitchburg has embraced housing as a key part of its community development strategy.

The project will support the housing and mixed-use developments already planned in the city's downtown 40R Smart Growth District, which was approved by City Council in the fall.

These developments are expected to generate at least 139 units of housing, 62 units of live-work artist housing, and street-level commercial and retail opportunities.

This year, the Baker-Polito administration awarded \$72 million in Massworks grants to support projects in 35 communities.

Since 2015, the Massworks program has awarded over \$358 million to

support 177 projects in 128 communities.

Fitchburg State purchased the Theater Block in 2016 with plans to renovate it in three phases.

The university is working with NewVue Communities on the Theater Block. Construction for Phase One of the \$2.8 million project began in the fall of 2017.

The first phase, which added a game design studio and entrepreneurship lab, was completed in January.

Lapidus said for the second phase, the university hopes to bring businesses to the building's seven bays by recruiting outside businesses or possibly using some of the spaces as incubators for the entrepreneurship program upstairs.

The third phase includes the renovation of the 28,235-square-foot actual theater space, which at its peak decades ago seated 1,751 patrons.

DiNatale said Fitchburg State has been a good partner, especially in driving economic development downtown.

"Fitchburg State's investment in the Theater Block, along with our plans for future phases of its renovation, complement the city's efforts to beautify the downtown and improve traffic flow and safety," said Lapidus.

"This grant will move our collective efforts forward."

"A great percentage of people in this country today don't believe their government is serving them," said state Rep. Stephan Hay, a Fitchburg Democrat.

"If you look at what's happening here today, our government is serving you. Your city government and the state government have joined together to help this city move forward."

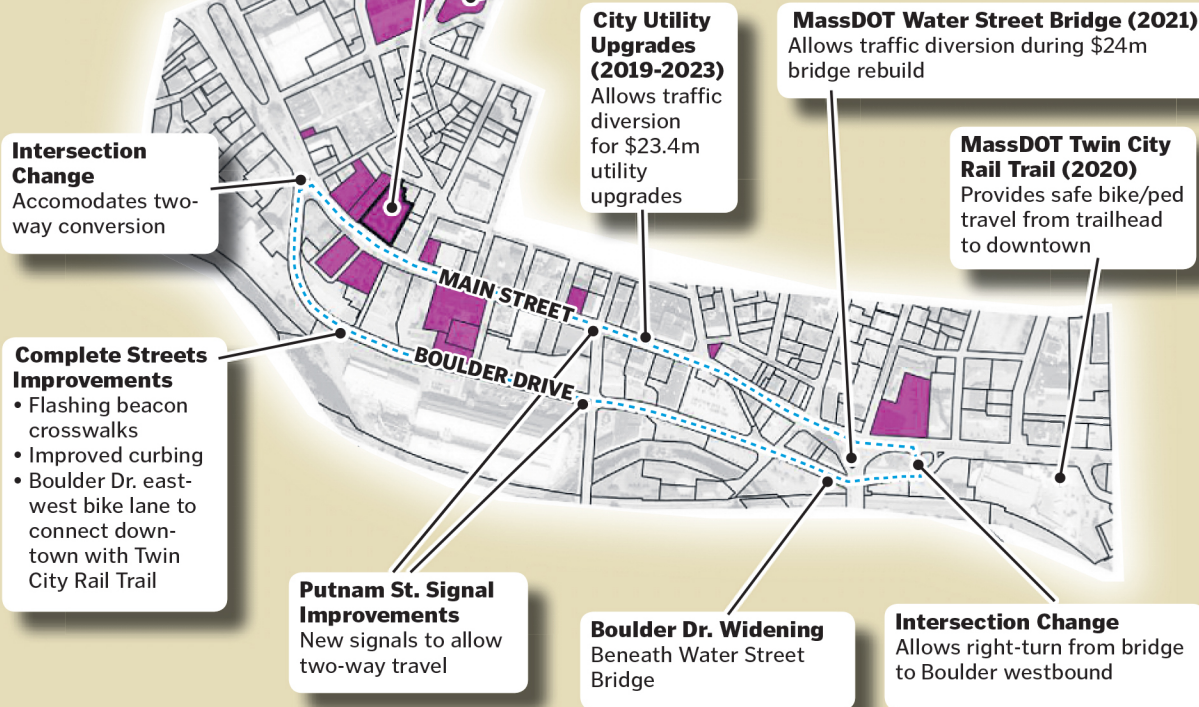
Though several businesses have come and gone from the Theater Block's storefronts in recent years,

Downtown Fitchburg transformation

Private development project: Fitchburg Theater
\$50m development: 1,300 seat theater, 3-5 storefronts
(planned construction start: 2021)

Other planned investments

- 179 housing units, 12 buildings, 7-10 storefronts
- Stacked resources: Smart Growth (40R) HDIP, Opportunity Zone and TDI District



JEFF WALSH / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

the facility remained largely unoccupied since a movie theater and former live show space shut its doors in 1987.

The Theater Block property is among ongoing redevelopment projects within the city, which include the Fitchburg Arts Community and City Hall renovations.

"This is an important project for the revitalization of the City of Fitchburg," said state Sen. Dean Tran, a Fitchburg Republican.

"The commencement and completion of the project will not only provide safety improvements but also attract businesses to the area."



JOHN LOVE / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus chats with Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito just before the grant announcement Thursday.

BANK MOVE

Fidelity gives former HQ to FSU

Merger with Family Federal proceeding; relocation in February

By Daniel Monahan

dmonahan@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG» Fidelity Bank will soon be shutting down its branch at 675 Main St., once the bank's headquarters and only location, and donating the building to Fitchburg State University while it completes its merger with Family Federal Savings Bank.

The Main Street location will permanently close at the end of business Feb. 21 and reopen at

the converted Family Federal Savings Bank at 130 Whalon St. on Feb. 24.

"This gift honors the commitment of both Fidelity Bank and Family Federal Savings Bank to serving the people of Fitchburg and the other communities they serve," says Fidelity Bank Chairman and CEO Edward Manzi Jr., who used to work in the building.

Manzi Jr. said the move is consistent with the bank's promise of being a team of caring people who provide solutions for clients wherever they live and work.

"We are grateful for Fidelity's generosity in making this space available to the university," says Fitchburg State President Richard S. Lapidus. "This property

and its proximity to the Theater Block and ideaLab will create strategic opportunities for future programming in this vital stretch of downtown."

Fitchburg State purchased the Theater Block in 2016 and plans to renovate it in three phases.

The university is working with NewVue Communities on the Theater Block. Construction for Phase One of the \$2.8 million project began in the fall of 2017.

The first phase, which added a game design studio and entrepreneurship lab, was completed in January.

For the second phase, the university hopes to bring businesses to the building's seven bays by recruiting outside businesses or

possibly using some of the spaces as incubators for the entrepreneurship program upstairs.

The third phase includes the renovation of the 28,235-square-foot theater space, which at its peak seated 1,751 patrons.

Fitchburg city officials said they are grateful for the donation, assessed at approximately \$700,000.

"This generous gift will help revitalize an important section of the downtown and help Fitchburg residents and students build a brighter financial future for themselves and their families," Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale said. "It marks an exciting new chapter in Fidelity Bank's relationship with the city, which

started almost 140 years ago."

Andy Van Hazinga, Ward 4 City Councillor, said in a recent post on social media he was disappointed with the move.

"I like going downtown and want to go downtown to do my banking," he said. "The Main Street location is convenient and the staff there is always great to work with."

Van Hazinga said he moved his accounts to Fidelity primarily because of its investment in the downtown area.

He commended the bank for donating the building to Fitchburg State University, but added that he would be happier if it kept its business on Main Street

FIDELITY » 8A

Fidelity

FROM PAGE 1A

to best serve residents.

Manzi said it is never an easy decision to close a branch.

"We took a long time to evaluate our options," he said. "We hired outside consultants to help us make a decision that is best for the most clients."

He also confirmed that there will be no layoffs because of the merger, saying that customers will see familiar faces at the new location.

The new building is more modern, accessible from Route 2, and ready to provide for clients, he said.

According to Manzi, Fidelity Bank remains committed to the revitalization of downtown Fitchburg even with the move.

"It was important to us to use the asset of the Main Street building in a positive way that benefits the community, which is what led us to donating it to Fitchburg State University," he said. "We have naming rights to the reimagined building and

will continue to have a voice in how the building is used."

Manzi said customers will not need to take any action because of the change, and accounts will automatically change to the new location.

When Fidelity Bank bought the building in 1921, the bank only had \$2.3 million in assets.

Once the merger with Family Federal Savings is completed Jan. 1, the financial institution will have combined assets of approximately \$1.05 billion.

Fidelity is the significantly larger partner in the deal, with nearly \$976 million in assets as of March 31. Family Federal had nearly \$98 million in assets, according to a regulatory filing.

The agreement with Family Federal marks Fidelity's third merger since 2014. The bank previously acquired Colonial Co-operative Bank and Barre Savings Bank.

Fidelity has offices in Leominster, Worcester, Fitchburg, Gardner, Barre, Shirley, Millbury, Paxton, Princeton and Winchendon. Family Federal's branches are in Fitchburg, Stow and Needham.



DANIEL MONAHAN / SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE

Fidelity Bank's branch on Main Street in Fitchburg — once its headquarters — will be donated to Fitchburg State when the bank moves in February.

LOCAL

Gerard Russell, Assistant managing editor
508-793-9245
newstips@telegram.com

COLLEGE TOWN

FSU students move to nationals

Fitchburg State University will be represented at the American Moot Court Association's upcoming national tournament after a strong performance at the regionals hosted at Fitchburg State last month.

Seniors Matthew Murphy and Matthew Badagliacca both earned trips to Baton Rouge next month for the nationals. Fitchburg State's teams did well overall at the regional tournament, their coach, professor Paul Weizer, said.

"I am very proud of the Fitchburg State students," he said in a statement. "All three of our teams advanced to the second day of the event and performed very well. These students worked exceptionally hard all year and it is gratifying to see that hard work pay off."

This will be the twentieth consecutive year Fitchburg State will be at the national tournament, according to the university.

LOCAL

Gerard Russell, Assistant managing editor
508-793-9245
newstips@telegram.com

Free speech on campus ‘complicated’

Schools create policies addressing use of space, invited speakers

By Scott O’Connell
Telegram & Gazette Staff

It’s a scene that’s played out on college campuses many times before: A controversial speaker gets on stage, only to be met by protest from a segment of the audience.

While Holy Cross downplayed the latest instance of that conflict – a talk by conservative author Heather Mac Donald on campus that was interrupted by a brief demonstration by students – it and other colleges in the region have begun to confront the task of figuring out how best to corral the issue of free speech.

“That’s such a critical question for all of us,” said Michele

Murray, dean of students at Holy Cross, one of several colleges in Central Massachusetts that have either already or are in the process of developing new policies on the issue. “Many folks are comparing what we’re seeing today to the social upheaval that happened in this country in the late ‘60s.”

Holy Cross, like most campuses in the region, has sided more toward allowing unrestricted speech, even if

it results in an unpopular – or some students might believe offensive – voice being heard. That was the case with Mac Donald, who was invited by the college’s Fenwick Review to speak on campus on Nov. 18.

Mac Donald, author of “The Diversity Delusion,” the subtitle of which is “How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture,” claimed she was interrupted about

15 minutes into her talk by students who opposed her particular view of racial politics in higher education. Purported video of the event shows students walking through the aisle, chanting “my oppression is not a delusion,” although college officials said the outburst was brief, and that the talk continued immediately afterwards.

See CAMPUS, B2

Seamus Brennan, co-editor of the Fenwick Review, said he was “disappointed” by the protest, which he believed “demonstrated a blatant intolerance for difference of opinion and diversity of thought.”

“First and foremost, we invited Ms. Mac Donald to campus to expose the Holy Cross community to a view of diversity that differs from the dominant narrative on campus in hopes of sparking a wider discussion,” he said. “The Fenwick Review takes pride in promoting intellectual freedom and progress on campus. We hope that all students were able to take something away from Ms. Mac Donald’s lecture even if they may have disagreed with what she said.”

Mac Donald, reached last week, did not back down from her positions, calling the protestors’ criticisms “patently absurd ... (their) blindness to their own good fortune and opportunity is pretty depressing frankly.”

Her argument, however, that minorities and other students who feel underrepresented and consequently underserved in higher education in fact enjoy great privilege as college students in America, has not been particularly well-received on campuses.

Holy Cross’ black student union, which allegedly was involved in the organization of the Nov. 18 protest, declined to comment to the Telegram & Gazette last week about the incident. But in a follow-up column published by the Holy Cross student newspaper *The Spire*, student Johanna Mackin wrote that Mac Donald was not an exemplar of the honest exchange of ideas. Mac Donald “made her purpose known when she began her speech with immediate attempts to discredit, humiliate and deny the existence of minority students,” Mackin wrote in the piece, which argued Mac Donald abused her own privilege by brusquely denying the existence of pervasive inequality in higher education.

Clark University’s Board of Trustees earlier this year approved a new freedom of expression policy that considers the potential negative effects of free speech. While the statement says “causing discomfort and even causing offense is not,



Clark University students Lyndsay Demanbey and Glynn Crum talk about free speech on campus, on Wednesday. [T&G STAFF/ASHLEY GREEN]

of itself, a basis for limiting free speech,” members of campus should also “recognize that our community norms include respecting the dignity and safety of others.”

“Historically, speech rights were developed to safeguard basic civil rights and civil liberties under the law,” the document says. “It is important to acknowledge that speech has been used to undermine these civil rights and civil liberties, especially for marginalized communities, thereby limiting their freedom to learn, their freedom to contribute, and their freedom to participate in the community.”

Consequently, the policy says Clark reserves the right to regulate the time, place and manner of expression of speech on campus.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute has a similar policy, according to spokeswoman Alison Duffy, who said “proposals to sponsor external speakers are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.”

A sampling of students at Clark revealed most agreed with the premise that free speech shouldn’t be unconditional on a private college campus.

“I think, personally, that hate speech is prohibited for a reason,” said senior Glynn Crum, who added while racist and homophobic speech may be legally protected, “I wouldn’t open up our home and our spaces to people like that.”

“I think especially at a private institution, it’s up to the (institution)” what is permissible speech, said senior Phoebe Ricker. “It should align with the university’s values.”

Harmful or offensive opinions, she added, “shouldn’t be given amplification” via an official platform provided by

the university.

On the other side of the debate, meanwhile, advocates of unfettered free speech have decried colleges’ attempts to restrict free expression. This week, for instance, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a vocal opponent of what it perceives to be attempts to infringe on First Amendment rights on campuses, criticized UMass Dartmouth for having what it called ambiguous rules for its designated free speech area on campus.

“When colleges and universities write vague and contradictory policies, it not only confuses students but also gives administrators the power to interpret the rules however they see fit,” Laura Beltz, senior program officer for the organization, said in a statement. “The potential for abuse is huge.”

Mac Donald believes colleges are to blame for what she feels is the overly sensitive attitudes toward free speech prevalent among college students today. Too much coddling of students and their grievances, she argued, has “created resentment in those students” towards the very structures, specifically higher education, that are actually helping them.

At Fitchburg State University, however, which introduced its current “use of space” policy three years ago, officials said they were simply interested in providing structure to the process of free speech. “It’s content-neutral,” said Laura Bayless, the school’s vice president of student affairs.

“The bottom line is, we support free speech,” said Hank Parkinson, Fitchburg State’s associate dean for student development, who added the university’s stance is that it won’t deny anyone the ability to

speak on campus simply because of the content of the speech. But the school also wants to ensure those “events are uneventful as possible,” he added, which is why it crafted a policy delineating where organized events can take place – parking lots are off limits, for example – and creating safety measures to prevent excessive disruptions, like a protest that blocks a building hallway.

“It’s a topic a lot of colleges are talking about,” Parkinson said, adding Fitchburg officials looked to the University of Connecticut, which was also tackling its free speech issue at the time, to inform its policy-making process. “We feel pretty good about what we came up with.”

Bayless acknowledged students weren’t directly involved in the development of that policy, however. At Holy Cross, where college officials are in the process of drafting a “philosophy of freedom of expression,” Murray described the undertaking as community-based. The statement has already been endorsed by student government, for instance, and next goes to the faculty assembly for approval.

“All of this is very complicated,” she said of how colleges can handle the tricky area of free speech.

She and other college officials also stopped short of articulating at what point a campus speaking event – or resulting protest – might no longer be tolerable to the administration.

Brennan, of the Fenwick Review, argued a liberal arts college like Holy Cross, which “posits that all community members share a ‘passion for truth,’ “ shouldn’t be in the business of dictating what truths get to be spoken.

“No matter how strongly anyone may disagree with any given speaker’s message, the right to freedom of expression not only trumps students’ desires not to get their feelings hurt but is also central to a liberal arts education and to the pursuit of knowledge itself,” he said.

But Tyler Maren, a graduate student at Clark, suggested that principle cuts both ways. Groups that invite a controversial speaker to campus, he said “have a responsibility from giving whoever it is that platform.”

“If they face pushback, that’s justified,” he said, adding protest of speech is a “valid response.”

LOCAL NEWS

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THIS MONTH

FSU, Thisbe Theater Co. open plays

By Submitted Article

FITCHBURG » “Matches,” a series of nine short, two-person plays written by Peter Anderegg will be performed this month as Fitchburg State University’s MainStage theater production.

Anderegg’s works comprise an evening of 10-minute plays exploring themes surrounding the idea that happiness is hard to find and something is always getting the way.

“Matches” will be performed in the Wallace

Theatre for the Performing Arts in the McKay Complex, 67 Rindge Road. Admission is free and open to the public.

Donations will be accepted at the door to help fund a spring production of “Matches” in New York City, where students will be given a chance to showcase their talents as they transition into the professional world.

Performances will be at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday; 4:30 and 7:30 p.m. Wednesday; 6:30 p.m. Thursday; 7:30 p.m. Friday; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday; and 2 p.m.

Sunday.

“Matches” is presented by Fitchburg State in collaboration with The Thisbe Theater Company, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

That nonprofit is dedicated to the support and development of playwrights’ new works by offering readings, workshops, and full productions for selected scripts, and to help full-time students gain professional experience in the performance and technical aspects of production.

More specifically, it supports students in high-impact internship/capstone independent study at select venues in New York City.

The event is part of Fitchburg State University’s 125th anniversary celebration.

Throughout the 2019-20 academic year, the university will be holding programs

celebrating the breadth and diversity of the institution and the vitality of its campus community. Learn more at fitchburgstate.edu/125.



Artistic Pioneer

Artist Walter Wright is a digital pioneer, first in the '70s as an artist-in-residence at the Experimental Television Center in New York City, to more recently when he co-founded the 911 Gallery, the first all-digital gallery on the World Wide Web. All this, and he performs experimental music with ensembles such as Bats From Pogo and Egegoros. All of which makes his presentation as part of the annual Kendricken Memorial Lecture Series at Fitchburg State University an exciting and unpredictable affair.

What: Artist Walter Wright

When: 3:30-5:30 p.m. Nov. 25

Where: Fitchburg State University, 160 Pearl St., Fitchburg

How much: Free