

Berkshire voices

BIC to host global climate conference

PITTSFIELD — In an era defined by rapid technological advancements and shifting economic landscapes, the Berkshire Innovation Center prides itself on fostering thought leadership and serving as a catalyst to propel economic growth.

Bringing together entrepreneurs, researchers, and industry leaders from various disciplines, we serve as a crucible for collaboration, idea exchange, and the convergence of diverse expertise, helping create a vibrant ecosystem where novel ideas are conceived, incubated, and refined. Committed to the idea that “collective wisdom always wins,” we believe that the cross-pollination of ideas sparks innovation and can lay the groundwork for solutions to the challenges all around us.

It is in this spirit of disseminating knowledge and fostering thought leadership that we welcome the 2024 Global Interdisciplinary Green Cities Conference to the BIC this coming June. This is the first time the GIGCC will be held in the United States.

The GIGCC, which brings together leading minds in business, engineering, art, architecture, design, political science, international relations, and applied science and technology, was first held at the ICN Business School in France in 2018 and then the following year at the Wroclaw University of Economics and Business in Poland. After the 2020 event was canceled due to the global pandemic, it returned in 2021 in a virtual format based out of the University of Augsburg in Germany. In 2022, the conference was held at the Lucerne University of Applied Science & Arts in Switzerland and in 2023 it was held in person at the University of Augsburg.

Historically, the conference has brought together hundreds of industry participants and faculty members from universities across the globe who share scientific knowledge and research related to the energy transition and efforts to achieve a green and sustainable planet. The goals of the conference are as follows:

- To provide education that achieving sustainability is a multidisciplinary field: Business, Engineering, Art, Architecture, Design, Political Science, International Relations, Applied Science



Ben Sosne
News
from the BIC

and Technology.

- To gather researchers from across the globe to share knowledge and information regarding sustainability.

- To educate our students and community in regards to the different dimensions of the field of sustainability.

- To have our students and community be involved in the implementation of sustainability principles to ensure the achievement of a net-zero carbon emission economy by the year 2050.

We are honored and thrilled to be hosting the GIGCC at the BIC this year. It's not just because we can welcome leaders from around the globe to our community here in the Berkshires, but also so that we can include the voices of our local and regional partners in such a critical conversation. Though I am potentially a bit biased, I can think of no more appropriate place to host this event.

Here's why.

First of all, while the Berkshires contain around 2 percent of the population in the entire commonwealth of Massachusetts, the county makes up 12 percent of the state's total land area. We have a very rich history of people who care tremendously about the landscape, and who have settled and remained here to enjoy all that these hills have to offer. It is in our blood, and thus not surprising that so many residents and visitors are absolutely enamored with the newly launched “Berkshires Outside” — a fantastic new resource for outdoor enthusiasts coordinated by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. (Information: <https://berkshiresoutside.org/>).

Second, the Berkshires quite literally connect two of the innovation hubs currently driving the climate tech revolution — Boston and Albany, N.Y. The Boston area ranks as one of the most innovative and research-intensive regions in the country. Since the climate tech revolution is being driven by talent and innovation, Boston has become ground zero for the future of energy, drawing billions of dollars of private investment. Albany, the center of New York's Capital Region, has long been a national leader in climate technology and clean energy and now boasts a growing cluster of compa-

nies and institutions leading the way and rapidly scaling a clean energy workforce. Berkshire County is well positioned to realize economic benefits from these thriving innovation economies to its west and east, particularly when it comes to climate technologies.

Third, while the recent COP28 climate change conference in Dubai was headlined by 76 participating countries and numerous multinational corporations, there are many reasons to believe that the energy transition will be led by innovative startup companies and smaller, more nimble governments.

Large global corporations can be slow to adapt and, in many cases, maintaining the status quo is in their financial interest. Innovative startups, by contrast, are often designed as disruptors. Their founders and investors predict market changes and try to position their firms and products and leaders in the new normal. In the world of climate tech, it is the innovative startups that are most eager and most incentivized to lead a global energy transformation.

Similarly, large governments have, for the most part, been slow to react. As we have seen in our country, public opinion can be very diverse and the complex web of influential stakeholders can grind meaningful action at a Federal level to a halt. On the other hand, smaller governmental entities — like the state governments in Massachusetts and New York — have set some of the most ambitious climate goals in the world and are showing solid progress.

We see the GIGCC as an outstanding opportunity to celebrate the achievements of innovative companies locally and regionally and the achievements of the Commonwealth as a whole. While Massachusetts still has a long way to go to meet its 2025 goals, our recently released — and first-ever — “climate report card” showed solid progress in terms of electric vehicle (EV) adoption, heat pump installation, and consumption of clean electricity.

There is no question that significant challenges lie ahead, but Governor Maura Healey has pushed climate innovation as the next big investment and the initiatives her administration has implemented are quickly becoming

Information/volunteer opportunities: BerkshireCenterforJustice.org, 413-854-1955.

BRPC is coordinating new outdoors website

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is coordinating a new website, berkshiresoutside.org, which will provide a centralized, comprehensive catalog of over 550 access points to outdoor recreation in the Berkshire region.

The new site will serve as a companion to berkshires.org, the region's official tourism website operated by 1Berkshire. The online portal lists over 400 parks owned and operated by nearly 100 different organizations, all within Berkshire County. It was built and will be coordinated by Gemini Creative of Stockbridge.

The site contains a clearinghouse of trailheads, boat launches, and other access points. Users can narrow their search with filters for whether the location is dog-friendly, family-friendly, or has restroom or picnic facilities.

The site was created with input from several outdoor recreation stakeholders, including 1Berkshire, along with Berkshire Natural Resources Council and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. berkshiresoutside.org offers a filter to identify sites within a quarter mile of Berkshire Regional Transit Authority routes throughout the county.



FILE PHOTO

The Berkshire Innovation Center will host the 2024 Global Interdisciplinary Conference's Green Cities Conference in June. It is the first time this conference has been held in the United States.

models that other governments are learning from and mimicking.

In her inaugural address, Healey spoke of building a “climate corridor that stretches from the Berkshires to Barnstable” that would harness “research, innovation and manufacturing” to create “thousands” of new jobs. In previous articles in Berkshire Business Journal, the BIC has committed to being the western anchor of this climate corridor. Like the governor, we see tremendous benefits for our workers, our economy, and our planet. Hosting the GIGCC is an amazing opportunity to dig into this commitment.

To learn more about the conference and find ways to participate, visit www.berkshireinnovationcenter.com.

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Provide your expertise in the Berkshire Business Journal. Do you have the answer to a persistent question about business and the Berkshires? Do you have ideas and suggestions on how our business community can grow? If you have a comment to make about doing business in the Berkshires or if you're looking to raise an issue with the business community, this is the venue for that. We welcome letters up to 300 words and commentary up to 600 words. Send these to Tony Dobrowolski at tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com.

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Business updates

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BCArc offers a broad range of community-based services to individuals with developmental disabilities, brain injuries and autism. Brandon Page, a training specialist at BCIARC, worked with BCC to coordinate the training sessions.

“BCArc reached out asking if we would consider providing in-service training for their staff,” Moon said. “This was a great way for us to be in the community building partnerships.”

SVMC nurse is recognized for positive impact on patients

Victoria Flynn, a registered nurse in Southwestern Vermont Medical Center's Medical-Surgical Unit, has been honored for her positive impact on both patients and their families.

Flynn was recently presented with a Daisy Award, an international recognition program that honors clinical excellence and compassionate care that are provided by nurses. SVMC selects honorees for the award through patient, family, and co-worker nominations.

Flynn joined the SVMC Medical-Surgical Unit in 2014, where she has excelled in patient care over the past decade. She received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Russell Sage College and her master's degree in nursing from the Universi-

ty of Massachusetts Amherst.

“I'm just so grateful for the people I work with and the families and patients I care for,” Flynn said in a news release. “I'm also so proud to be among the wonderful nurses who have won this award in the past.”

Berkshire Center for Justice offering legal help for elderly

The Berkshire Center for Justice has been awarded a \$24,000 Title III grant from Berkshire Elder Services Inc. to help fund its Justice for Elders program.

The money is earmarked to provide free legal services to income-qualified people 60 and older, with a focus on those residing in South Berkshire County. The grant period is from Oct. 1, 2023, through Sept. 30, 2025.

Clients will be served on a first-come, first-served basis in areas of real estate transfer, deed construction, family, landlord/tenant, wills/power of attorney/medical proxy document construction, bankruptcy, educational debt, among other areas of law.

The Berkshire Center for Justice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, charitable organization that provides legal, educational and mentoring services that promote social and community justice. The organization has been in operation since 2006 and is well known for offering free legal clinics and other legal services throughout Berkshire County.