

Inside the January Issue

History of MLK Day of Service Continued	2-3
December Forum Recap	4
Upcoming Parent Support Programming	5
Open Position Highlight: Health & Wellness	6
Coalition Calendar	7
nbCC staff	8

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Coalition news

An update from



January 2025, Volume XXXIX, Number 7

History of the Annual MLK Jr. Day of Service

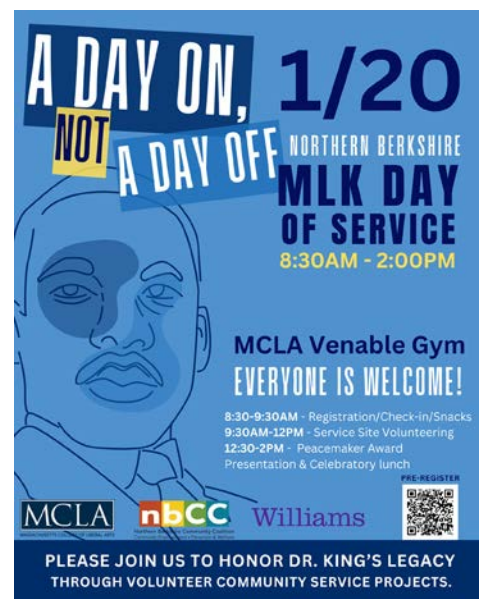
On Monday, January 20th, we will once again celebrate the life and work Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by spending the Monday holiday serving our community through various community service projects. Since 2010, the Coalition has used this holiday to organize a northern Berkshire day of service, bringing residents and groups together to celebrate Dr. King's life through volunteerism, but this event's roots go back to 1993.

Converging ideas led to the creation of the Martin Luther King Day celebration in Northern Berkshire. After a series of monthly forums about local youth violence during the fall of 1993, the Coalition considered a program for Martin Luther King Day that would promote diversity, tolerance and nonviolence. During the same period, a movement from the Northern Berkshire Neighbors staff considered how to help express the hopes and dreams for Northern Berkshire residents.

Why not use the occasion of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. to bring the region together to dream about its future? The first MLK Day celebration was held in January 1994 - during a blizzard! In spite of the weather, the strong participation underscored the theme of dreaming and working for a better future.

Energized volunteers rallied together to have a "dreamer's brunch." The organizers of the first MLK Day celebration collaborated with St. John's church to share food as well as dreams for the future. Dream catchers, tasty food and newsprint to capture the dreams for the future were in abundance. More than fifty hearty souls participated in the first celebration in the blizzard.

Through the decades MLK Day celebrations grew with vibrancy and expanded coordination with the churches and a variety of local organizations. For years the celebration was held at the Baptist Church in North Adams, where the



day celebrated Northern Berkshire diversity with songs, performances, poems, speeches, reflection and a good meal.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary's parish center and multiple locations on the MCLA campus have also hosted throughout the years as the scope and size of the event grew. In 2010 this annual celebration became an official "day of service".

(Continued on Page 2)





Our Mission

"Empowering the Northern Berkshire region to enhance the quality of life through our efforts at connecting, convening, and supporting all facets of the community."

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

- Strengthening neighborhoods and community life
- Preventing alcohol/substance abuse and supporting recovery
- Promoting health and wellness
- Helping families to be strong and resilient
- Supporting positive youth development
- Building bridges between residents and service agencies

Coalition Supporters

Public Sources

- MA Dept. of Children & Families/EOHHS
- MA Cultural Council
- MA Department of Public Health
- MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

Local Support

- Contributions from our many individual supporters

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



To submit announcements to the Coalition E-zine:

The **Coalition E-zine** is a weekly e-blast, published every Thursday, with news and announcements from Northern Berkshire agencies and organizations. Submissions must be received by 9:00 am Tuesday morning to be considered for inclusion in that week's issue. All submissions are subject to editing and should be 50 words or less. All events related to Northern Berkshire community public health will be considered for publication. Banner ads are available. For more information, please call 413-663-7588, or to submit an announcement, please email pzhine@nbccoalition.org.

(Continued from Cover)

Over two hundred residents participated in community projects both on site and at locations like the GoodWill and COTY Youth Project.

This year's event carries on these traditions. MCLA's Venable Gym will serve as host site for the morning check-in and welcome, offering a light breakfast before volunteers organize into groups for on-site projects or off-site projects at locations including the Louison House, ROOTS Teen Center, and GoodWill Industries. Participants will return to the gym afterwards for a celebratory luncheon, performances, speeches and the presentation of the annual Peacemaker Award.

The award is a great honor given to a Northern Berkshire resident who best represents the ideals of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the way they engage with our community and region. Look for an announcement for the 2025 recipient on our Facebook page or in our February newsletter. Of course, we hope you'll be able to join us to witness the presentation in person at this year's MLK Day of Service! Mark your calendar for Monday, January 20th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and we'll see you at the MCLA Venable Gym!





Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Board of Directors Fiscal Year 2025

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1Berkshire

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December Forum Focused on Caregivers' Mental Health

It was a smaller gathering of about thirty community members at the First Congregational Church of Williamstown in December, but the conversation was robust. The group gathered together to talk about the status of our community's parents and caregivers. How did we get here and why this topic?

In September of this year, the US Surgeon General published a report on the mental health & well-being of parents, "Parents Under Pressure". Our team looked at this and what was surprising, was nothing. There was nothing in this report that our team did not already know about the experience of parents. What we were surprised about was the high percentages of parents that were experiencing distress.

Despite significant increases in spending both on the Federal and State level to support issues of Health and Human Services, it seems that parents and caregivers feel as lonely and stressed as ever. If we're pouring more money into the problems why aren't they getting better? This was the overarching theme of the conversation, guiding a series of questions presented to the attendees who had divided themselves up into five groups at tables spread around the room.

The first question was "Why are parents seeking help?" Each participant was asked to share with their group what they were seeing in their professional work or in their personal lives. One participant expressed that they were experiencing families coming to them for guidance on how to handle racism in the schools, an issue that was not new to their work supporting families, but also they were seeing more families seeking their advice on how to navigate their children coming out as trans, gay and nonbinary. Another participant, Michael Smith, said they experience parents seeking quick "fixes" for their families. As this participant opined, "Fast, cheap and good... you can only have two at a time." By this they meant that when facing an issue, the fast and effective solutions are rarely cheap, and if it's a cheap and fast "fix" it is rarely effective in the long term. Caregivers are busy. The days of a stay-at-home parent in most households are in the past. With families crunched for quality time together, seeking a quick fix for issues that arise feels like a natural instinct. Unfortunately, for many of our common problems, the

solutions that create a lasting impact require time and consistency that many people don't feel like they have to spare.

A bright note in the conversation was an observation that in today's society there is less stigma surrounding asking for help, seeking therapy or taking medication. Parents and caregivers are feeling more comfortable reaching out to resources available to help them. Then the question becomes, "Are there enough resources to meet that demand?" Anyone living in our region, whether they use mental health services or not, probably has heard and felt the collective grumbling of the strain on those resources.

Another observation made about societal changes in the expectations caregivers face was that people caring for younger children feel increased pressure to constantly be present or "manage" their children. The days of unsupervised children "free-ranging" around their community streets and playgrounds are also gone... and those that do allow their children the same level of autonomy and freedom they experienced growing up, fear calls to DCF and being labeled as neglectful caregivers. Participants believed this shift has been driven by an increased perception of "stranger danger" even though that perceived danger is not supported statistically.

While the group didn't come away from the forum conversations with the big fixes to the struggles facing our community parents and caregivers, everyone did feel that the intimate group conversations they participated in were worthwhile and meaningful. If only the long term solutions were fast and easy!



▲Above: One of the four groups discuss parental mental health with each other.

January Parenting Support & Program Updates


We're embracing the new year with the beginning of two parenting support series and a few tweaks to ongoing programs. Starting with the tweaks, our Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group and FRC Parenting Together Support Group will be introducing one presentation or special speaker to their meetings, one time a month (each) at the last meeting of the month. Presentations include topics like "Scam & Fraud Prevention" or "IEP & 504 Information Session". Presentations will be different each month.

Another change to make note of is that the FRC Parenting Together Support Group will no longer meet on a weekly basis. The group will now meet only on the first and third Wednesday of the month. The time and location will remain the same, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the nbCC offices. The frequency, time, and location of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren will all remain the same, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the UNO Community Center.

For parents and caregivers looking for more structured and specific help with parenting, we have two upcoming series. The first is Active Parenting of Teens, a program providing the guidance and support you need to turn the challenges of raising a teenager into opportunities for growth. The series lasts eight weeks, meeting weekly from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the nbCC offices. Participants will learn methods of respectful discipline, skills for clear, honest communication, concrete strategies to prevent risky behavior and how to be an encouraging parent.

The second upcoming parenting series is specifically targeting fathers. The Nurturing Fathers Programs bring together men from all family circumstances (custodial, non-custodial, step-fathers, new fathers) to explore what it takes to be their child's nurturer and teacher. Fathers learn how important it is to provide loving praise and a nurturing and secure environment so that their children gain self-esteem and confidence. The program also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive supportive co-parenting relationship with the child(ren)'s mother, whether the parents are together or separated. This program will run from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the nbCC offices every Tuesday starting January 7th, 2025 through the end of March.

If you or anyone you know is interested in attending or learning more about these programs or what other parenting support programs we plan to hold throughout the year, we encourage you to reach out to us however you feel most comfortable. We can be reached by phone at 413-663-7588 or by emailing either nkennedy@nbcccoalition.org or info@nbcccoalition.org.



ACTIVE PARENTING OF TEENS
(1/6 thru 2/24)
MONDAYS 5:30-7:30PM
NBCC 61 MAIN ST., SUITE 218, NORTH ADAMS

This program provides the guidance and support you need to turn the challenges of raising a teenager into opportunities for growth.

You'll learn:

- Methods of respectful discipline
- Skills for clear, honest communication
- Concrete strategies to prevent risky behavior
- How to be an encouraging parent

To learn about our programs supporting other stages or to register for this program, please call 413-663-7588 or email nkennedy@nbcccoalition.org

Family Resource Centers
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FRC Parenting Together Support Group

This is a confidential space for parents to connect.
Snacks are provided.
Children are welcome.

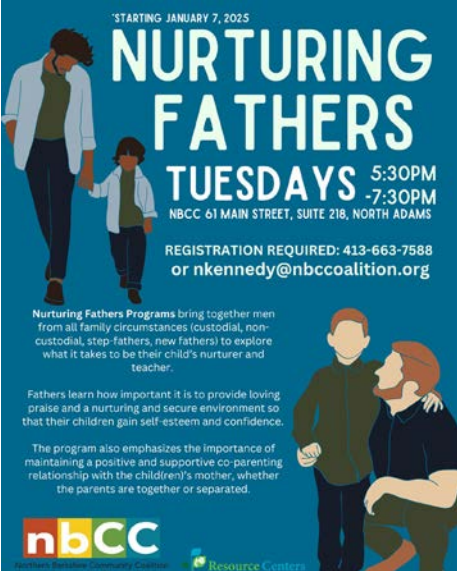
2nd & 4th **Wednesdays**
5:30 - 7:30 pm

Family Resource Centers



1st & 3rd FRIDAYS
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

COFFEE TIME
10am-12pm



NURTURING FATHERS
TUESDAYS 5:30PM-7:30PM
NBCC 61 MAIN STREET, SUITE 218, NORTH ADAMS

REGISTRATION REQUIRED: 413-663-7588 or nkennedy@nbcccoalition.org

Nurturing Fathers Programs bring together men from all family circumstances (custodial, non-custodial, step-fathers, new fathers) to explore what it takes to be their child's nurturer and teacher.

Fathers learn how important it is to provide loving praise and a nurturing and secure environment so that their children gain self-esteem and confidence.

The program also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive and supportive co-parenting relationship with the child(ren)'s mother, whether the parents are together or separated.

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Community Engagement • Prevention • Wellness

Family Resource Centers

Open position highlight: Health & Wellness Coordinator

Compensation: \$44-47k/annually, PLUS a \$1,000 sign-on bonus

Do you love being out in the community and engaging with residents? Are you passionate about all aspects of health? Do you want a career that is more than a desk job? The Health & Wellness Coordinator oversees and leads the implementation of community health work and programs to support integration of environmental, policy and systems changes to advance active living, healthy eating and sustainable systematic change in Northern Berkshire.

What does that look like in the work of the Coalition? Our Health & Wellness Coordinator is away from the desk and out in our community as much as they are in the office. They are often out checking in on some of our most vulnerable residents. Checking on how they are doing, what they might need assistance with, and connecting them with the services available to them. They coordinate and frequently facilitate our Working on Wellness (W.o.W.) workshops to engage residents in health education including foraging, holistic and herbal remedies, stress relief, healthy eating on a budget, low impact exercises to improve balance and much more!

Our Health & Wellness Coordinator coordinates and facilitates the annual Mayor's Fitness Challenge in June, organizing hikes, workshops, fitness classes and activities. All are FREE for the community to participate in. This month long series of events is run in coordination with the City of North Adams. It's a busy month, but so much fun!

They also oversee the nbCC Bike Collective, working firsthand with volunteer bike mechanics, organizing bike donations, and connecting residents with bike culture. Anyone can purchase or earn a bike through the Bike Collective and our Health & Wellness Coordinator makes sure it runs smoothly.

If this sounds like the job for you, please send us your resume! Apply via mail to Amber Besaw at 61 Main Street, Suite 218, North Adams, MA 01247 or email jobs@nbcccoalition.org. Please include a cover letter, resume, and contact information for 3 references. For more details about our open positions please visit our website at bit.ly/WorkAtNBCC for more information about these positions.



We're Hiring! Open Positions at nbCC

Apply via mail to Amber Besaw at 61 Main Street, Suite 218, North Adams, MA 01247 or email jobs@nbcccoalition.org. Please include a cover letter, resume, and contact information for 3 references. For more details about our open positions please visit our website at bit.ly/WorkAtNBCC for more information about these positions.

Family Resource Center Clinician: Rate: \$29-30/hr, PLUS a \$5,000 sign-on bonus after completion of 1 year

The Family Resource Center (FRC) Clinician will provide Comprehensive Mental Health Assessments, including the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) assessment; short term treatment; and Care Planning to Youth and Families of the FRC.

Health & Wellness Coordinator: Salary: \$44-47k/annually, PLUS a \$1,000 sign on bonus

The Health & Wellness Coordinator will oversee and lead the implementation of community health work to support integration of environmental, policy and systems changes to advance active living, healthy eating and sustainable systematic change in Northern Berkshire. The Health & Wellness Coordinator will also oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of health and wellness programming through nbCC.

Coalition Events

First Fridays North Adams: Fresh Start

Friday, Jan. 3, 5:00-9:00 PM, Downtown, North Adams

Join in the First Friday Fun! Kick-off the new year with a fresh start. Visit downtown businesses for specials, sales and check out the first gallery exhibitions of 2025.

Active Parenting of Teens (Starting 1/6)

Mondays, 5:30 - 7:30 PM, held at nbCC, 61 Main St., Suite 218, North Adams

This program provides the guidance and support you need to turn the challenges of raising a teenager into opportunities for growth.

You'll learn:

- Methods of respectful discipline
- Skills for clear, honest communication
- Concrete strategies to prevent risky behavior
- How to be an encouraging parent

To learn about our programs supporting other stages or to register for this program, please call 413-663-7588 or email nkennedy@nbcccoalition.org

Nurturing Fathers (Starting 1/7)

Tuesdays, 5:30 - 7:30 PM, held at nbCC, 61 Main St., Suite 218, North Adams

Nurturing Fathers Programs bring together men from all family circumstances (custodial, non-custodial, step-fathers, new fathers) to explore what it takes to be their child's nurturer and teacher.

Fathers learn how important it is to provide loving praise and a nurturing and secure environment so that their children gain self-esteem and confidence.

The program also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive and supportive co-parenting relationship with the child(ren)'s mother, whether the parents are together or separated.

To learn about our programs supporting other stages or to register for this program, please call 413-663-7588 or email nkennedy@nbcccoalition.org

Learn Through Play: SNOW!

Saturday, Jan. 11, 10:00 - 11:00 AM, UNO Community Center, 157 River Street, North Adams

In collaboration with Child Care of the Berkshires. Activities and circle time with sensory activities. Best for ages 0-5 years. No registration required, but we appreciate RSVPs. Contact us at 413-663-7588 or nkennedy@nbcccoalition.org

Annual MLK Day of Service

Monday, Jan. 20, 8:30AM - 2:00 PM, MCLA Venable Gym off the quad on campus

The Martin Luther King Day Committee welcomes everyone to join them on Monday, January 20th, as the Northern Berkshire community celebrates the life, principles, and ideals of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by participating in a "Day of Service". A celebratory luncheon will follow. Pre-register with our

Volunteer Signup Form: <https://bit.ly/2025nbMLK-service-day>

SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

8:30 - 9:15AM: Registration & light refreshments
 9:15AM - 9:30AM: Welcome and opening remarks
 9:30AM - Noon: Volunteer service at assigned sites (Some projects are on-site at the social center. Other locations include Berkshire Food Project, Louison House, Goodwill Industries, Habitat for Humanity and more.)
 12:30PM: Free lunch with entertainment and the presentation of the Annual Peacemaker Award
 We hope you can join us for this "day on, not off!" For more information please call us at 413-663-7588 or email lboland@nbcccoalition.org

nbCC Youth Empowerment Program

Mondays, 5:00-6:30 PM, 61 Main Street, #218, North Adams

Free and open to youth, 6-8th grade, who live in or attend school in North Berkshire. A weekly group to talk about school, emotions, navigating teen years, making friends and more. Snacks provided; transportation available. Register: call 413-663-7588

Youth Leadership Program

Tuesdays, 5:00 - 7:00PM, 61 Main Street, Rm. 213, North Adams

Free and open to youth ages 14-19 who live in or attend school in North Berkshire. Young people are changing the world and you can too. Make a positive change in yourself and the world around you. Develop leadership skills, discuss what drives you, meet other young leaders and plan projects in your community. Snacks provided; transportation available. Register: call 413-663-7588

nbCC Bike Collective Open Hours

WINTER HOURS: 1st Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 PM, The Armory, 206 Ashland St., North Adams

Bring your own bike or work on a bike at the bike collective. You'll have the opportunity to learn from other community members on basic bike fixes, or team up with more experienced bike mechanics to rebuild a bike. Tools and stands are provided. All NB residents are welcome! For more info, call us at 413-663-7588.

Teen Writing Workshop

Wednesdays, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, held at nbCC, 61 Main St., Suite 218, North Adams

Free and open to youth ages 13-19 who live in or attend school in North Berkshire. Aspiring writers and poets! Join this incredibly supportive group and get 1-on-1 help with your writing and performance style. Opportunities to perform and be published. Snacks and supplies provided; transportation available. Register: 413-663-7588

FRC Parenting Together Group

Wednesdays, 5:30 - 7:30 PM, nbCC, 61 Main St., Suite 218, North Adams

A peer-driven/peer-supported group in a judgement-free, confidential space. Snacks provided. Children welcome.

Youth Health Collaborative

Thursdays, 5:00pm - 7:00pm, 61 Main Street, Rm. 213, North Adams.

(14-19 Yrs. Old) This program is intended to engage young people in supporting the health of their peers in the region. The aim of this program is to benefit the community by directly engaging young people in the act of bettering their environments. This is the only program with a limit on attendance, as there are only ten spots available!

Participants will receive a stipend for completing this program. **Please call or email to apply:** 413-663-7588 or bmccarthy@nbcccoalition.org

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Coffee Time

1st & 3rd Fridays, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. UNO Center, 157 River Street, North Adams

This is a group for grandparents who are actively parenting their grandchildren giving them a safe and confidential space to share similar experiences with other grandparents. Coffee and snacks provided.

IT'S FARMERS MARKET INDOOR SEASON!

North Adams | 1st Sat. of the month 9AM-1PM

DOUBLES SNAP UP TO \$30/WEEK & HAS 2 HIP VENDORS, ACCEPTS WIC & SENIOR COUPONS

Williamstown | 3rd Sat. of the month 9AM-1PM

DOUBLES SNAP UP TO \$30/WEEK ACCEPTS WIC & SENIOR COUPONS

Coalition Staff

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nbCC is
supported by:



A DAY ON, 1/20

NOT A DAY OFF

NORTHERN BERKSHIRE MLK DAY OF SERVICE

8:30AM - 2:00PM

MCLA Venable Gym EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

8:30-9:30AM - Registration/Check-in/Snacks
9:30AM-12PM - Service Site Volunteering
12:30-2PM - Peacemaker Award
Presentation & Celebratory lunch

PRE-REGISTER

MCLA **nbCC** **Williams**

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
Community Engagement & Presentation & Reflection

**PLEASE JOIN US TO HONOR DR. KING'S LEGACY
THROUGH VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS.**

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
61 Main Street, Suite 218, North Adams, MA 01247

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online at www.nbccoalition.org



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