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Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Coalition news

An update from



June 2025, Volume XXXIX, Number 12

Youth Programs Celebrate the End of Another Season

As summer approaches and another school year comes to a close, youth programming at nbCC marks the end of another season of our Youth Empowerment Program(YEP), Youth Leadership Program(YLP), Youth Health Collaborative(YHC) and Teen Writing Workshop(TWW). This year our youth workers served over sixty five teens with eight months of weekly programs.

Two of the programs, the Teen Writing Workshop and Youth Health Collaborative, mark the end of each season with public presentations, a decades old tradition. The annual Youth Led Forum has been happening since the 1990s, even before there was a formal youth focused program at the Coalition! This forum is now the end of the season presentation that the Youth Health Collaborative works on every Thursday evening from October through May. This year

their presentation reported on the findings of the 2025 Prevention Needs Assessment(PNA), a biennial survey distributed to 8th, 10th and 12th graders throughout Berkshire County. This assessment is a collaborative effort of the Coalition, Railroad Street Youth Project, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center. This data has been collected for over twenty years, following our young people through several generations of high schoolers. A selection of data slides from the YHC presentation can be viewed on page 5.

The TWW celebrated the end of their year with a showcase, presenting the creative writings and visual arts they had created throughout the season. The evening was filled with poems, fantasy, drawings and other musing. We can't wait to do it all again starting in October!

There are two opportunities for teens to try out our youth programming this summer. The Summer Session program will run weekly on Tuesdays, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. from July 1st to August 19th and the summer version of Teen Writing Workshop will happen every other week on Wednesdays, from July 9th to August 20th. Both programs are open to teens. To learn more about registering for either of these summer programs, please contact us. Give our office a call at 413-663-7588 or email us at info@nbccoalition.org.



▲ Above from left: 2025 Teen Writing Workshop presenters at their showcase at 3West Events; the Youth Health Collaborative presents PNA data to forum attendees at the Greylock Glen Outdoor Center.



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 phzine@nbccoalition.org.

A Letter from the Director's Desk

As summer approaches, here at the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, it also marks the start of a brand-new year for us. This is the time when we reflect, reset, and begin planning all of the programs and activities that will shape the year ahead. There's so much to look forward to, and we can't wait to share it with you.

One of our favorite annual traditions is right around the corner—our Annual Meeting! We hope you'll join us for a joyful gathering filled with great food, fun, and meaningful conversation. It's a special time to connect, celebrate, and envision what's next for our community.

We're also gearing up for summer basketball, a highlight of the season that brings energy and excitement for youth and families alike. And for our local teens, there are some great things in the works! Here's to a vibrant and connected summer ahead.

Warmly,

Amber



Executive Director, Amber Besaw

nbCC Bike Collective

OPEN HOURS
1st Tuesdays

(By appt. 2nd & 3rd Tuesdays)

All are welcome.

Community volunteer bike mechanics can help you fix, earn or build a bike!

MORE INFO: 413-663-7588 or INFO@NBCCOALITION.ORG





here comes

SUMMER!

nbCC Summer Programs & Events...



- **Every Wed. thru Aug 20 | 3:30-4:30PM | Drop-In Art Club!** @ UNO Center, 157 River St.
- **1st Tuesdays | 3:30-5:30PM | Bike Collective OPEN HOURS** @ the North Adams Armory
- **1st & 3rd Fridays | 10AM-12PM | Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Group** @ UNO Center, 157 River St.
- **June 13 | 11:30-1:30 | 39th Annual Meeting** @ GreylockWORKS
- **June 19 | 4-6PM | Building Belonging Conversation #3** @ Hotel Downstreet
- **June 26 | 4-6PM | Annual UNO Block Party** @ UNO Center
- **July 25/ Aug. 22 | Dusk | Family Movies Under the Stars** @Noel Field
- **July 1 to Aug. 19 | Tuesdays 2-4PM | Summer Session** -Registration required. For youth 14-19.
- **July 7 to Aug. 5 | Mon. & Wed. 5PM | Summer Neighborhood Basketball League** - Registration required. For youth 9-13.
- **July 9 & 23/ Aug. 6 & 20 | 1-3PM | Teen Writing Workshop** @ nbCC. Registration required. For youth 13-19.



All programs & events are FREE. Most provide snacks. Some provide transportation when requested. To learn more details about or register for an nbCC summer program: 413-663-7588 or info@nbccoalition.org

Other ^{FREE} June Events!

Tues & Thurs | 2:30-7PM | ROOTS Teen Center Drop-in (13-19yrs) @ 51 Ashland St., North Adams

Fridays | 7:30-9AM | Eagle Street Coffee Date, North Adams

Every 3 Thursdays | 7:30-9AM | Coffee in the Courtyard Adams

June 6 | 5-9PM | FIRST Fridays @ downtown North Adams

Saturdays

- **9AM-1PM | North Adams Farmers Market & Makers on Main Market** @ Main St.
- **9AM-1PM | Williamstown Farmers Market** @ Spring St.
- **9:30-11AM | Growing Healthy Gardens Group** @ UNO park

Wednesdays | 6:30-8PM | Concerts at the Lake @ Windsor Lake, N. Adams

Friday June 20 | 5-9PM | North Adams Pride Night @ Downtown NA



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Board of Directors Fiscal Year 2025

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Williams College

MEGAN CHILDERS
Williams College

Meet the Newest Members of the nbCC Team!



Office
Coordinator
**SARA
KEAGLE**

After spending three decades as a flight attendant and home educator, I developed a deep appreciation

for connection, storytelling, and community—three things that led me to the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. I’ve always believed in the power of local voices and grassroots efforts to make meaningful change, and when I relocated to Adams from Texas, I knew I wanted to be part of that kind of work. The Coalition’s mission to build stronger, more inclusive communities resonated with me immediately.

My background is rooted in both hospitality and service, and I bring those values into my current role as Office Coordinator—where supporting people, managing details, and keeping things running smoothly is what I love to do. I’m also passionate about creativity and communication and am constantly inspired by the stories and ideas shared by those we serve.

My favorite thing about living in the Berkshires is the pace and beauty of life here. There’s something grounding about the seasons, the mountains, the markets, and the people. It’s a place that invites you to slow down, get involved, and truly belong.



Health & Wellness
Coordinator
**JO-ANN
AULT**

My path to community work has been anything but traditional, and I’m grateful for every step that led me here. I was

homeschooled and spent much of my adolescence traveling across the U.S. In 2011, I moved to Massachusetts, attended high school, and began volunteering in local hospitals—an experience that first sparked my interest in healthcare.

I initially enrolled at MCLA as a pre-med major, but after four years of working as a CNA, I realized how much I valued direct, hands-on care and connection with patients. That experience inspired me to shift my focus toward community health. I restructured my degree and, in the spring of 2019, graduated with a B.S. in Community Health Education.

While searching for a local role in community health, I continued direct care work at BFAIR. During the pandemic, I worked closely with some of our most vulnerable residents, and witnessing the effects on their wellbeing deepened my desire to be more involved in supporting our community.

Being compassionate means not only caring for others but also equipping members of our community with the tools they need to live safely and healthily. While I may no longer be as hands-on in my work, I continue to share knowledge and health-related resources with the community. Over the past ten years living in Berkshire County, I’ve come to truly understand what my grandmother always said: “It takes a village.”

I’m grateful to be part of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and our wonderful community.

Excerpts from the Prevention Needs Assessment Presentation

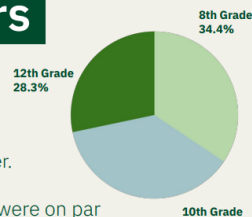
PNA: By the numbers

2,290 students took the 2025 PNA survey.

51.4% identified as female, **45.8%** identified as male, and **2.8%** identified as another gender.

The racial demographics of survey respondents were on par with averages in Berkshire County.

The exact racial breakdown of survey respondents was **71.6%** White, **12.6%** multiracial, **7.9%** Hispanic, **5.8%** African American, **1.7%** Asian American or Pacific Islander, and **1.2%** Native American.



Mental Health

In Berkshire County, **over 50% of students** surveyed reported experiencing feelings of depression five or more times a month.

13% of these students have experienced suicidal ideation.

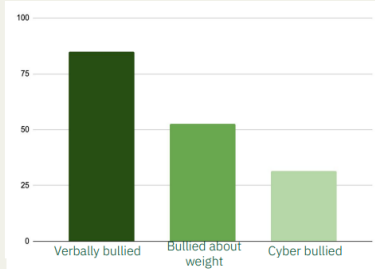
56% of students experience stress about school environments (such as grades, homework, and classes) either "often" or "very often."

Despite the frequency of these mental health concerns, **62% of students have self-reported that they have never received mental health support from a professional.**

Bullying

32% of overall students reported that they experienced bullying.

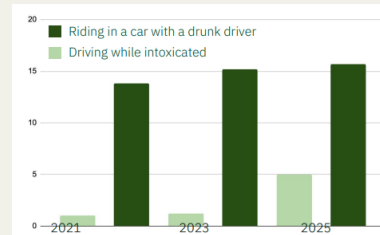
- Among those students,
- 84.9% reported being verbally bullied by their peers via name calling, teasing, etc.
 - **Over 50%** reported being bullied or made to feel uncomfortable by **adults in their life because of their weight**
 - 31.6% reported being cyber bullied



Substance Use

Fewer than 5% of students reported driving under the influence of alcohol each year.

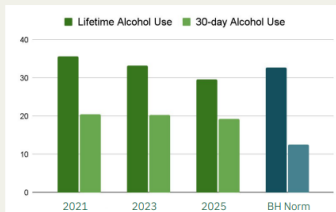
However, **many more students report being passengers in a car where the driver is drunk.**



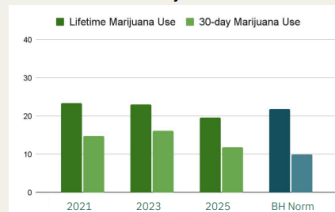
In 2025, **16.4% of students** reported having been a passenger in a car driven by a drunk driver.

Alcohol and Marijuana Use

Alcohol



Marijuana



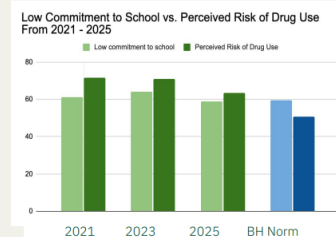
The BH Norm is a nationally representative statistic taken by averaging PNA surveys from across the country. Lifetime substance indicates if a student has ever tried that substance.

In Berkshire County, **lifetime and 30-day substance use has fallen in the last six years.**

Risk Factors

Over half of students reported feeling a low commitment to school.

In 2025, the perceived risk of drug use among students was 63.4%. **This perceived risk has decreased steadily over the past four years.**

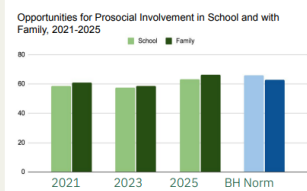


Protective Factors

In 2025, **63.4%** of students reported that they had opportunities for prosocial involvement in school.

66.4% of students reported that they had opportunities for prosocial involvement in family.

These are both increases from previous years.



Mental health struggles are more common than you think

Be sensitive to the reasons students engage in risk behaviors

Take bullying seriously – It comes in different forms

Take students seriously when they express their mental health needs

Students may be scared to reach out for help

Be patient

Take Home Points

Be aware

Adult behavior has a big impact on teens – both positively and negatively

If students are struggling, try to understand where they're coming from

Teenagers want a safe space

Be aware that students have lots of obligations

How to use SNAP/EBT at the farmers markets:

1. Visit a Berkshire County farmers market.
2. Locate the information tent or table and look for the Market Manager.
3. Swipe your EBT card to purchase as many wooden tokens as you'd like.
These tokens act as cash at the market.
4. Markets included in BAV's Market Match Fund will match **\$1-for-\$1** when you check out - up to \$30 per visit for a total of \$60 to spend!
5. Spend your tokens at any farm stand selling SNAP-eligible foods.

What do I do with leftover tokens?

Tokens don't have an expiration date! Keep unused tokens and use them next time you shop.

Tokens are specific to each market.



BAV's Market Match Fund is an economic growth & food access initiative to provide consistent funding to increase the impact of SNAP benefits at area farmers markets.

Learn more about Berkshire Agricultural Ventures' Market Match Fund and other initiatives that support local farmers at: berkshireagventures.org

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@nbccoalition.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.

Youth Support Worker: Salary: \$40-43k/annually

The Youth Support Worker is responsible for providing support, networking services, and programming to youth. The Youth Support Worker will provide services at the nbCC FRC program, in the community, and in the schools and homes of youth, when applicable.

Family Partner -Family Resource Ctr/Northern Berk. Community Coalition: Rate: \$23.31/hr

Family Partner is a staff with lived experience assigned to the Family Resource Centers to provide supportive services to families and parents to advocate, support, educate, coach, and assist families in accomplishing their Care Plan goals and to negotiate and assist families in working with the Wraparound team and to help implement the Family Support Plan. Family Partner works closely with the Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) System.

Coalition Events

nbCC Bike Collective Hours

*Tuesdays, 3:30-5:30 PM, The Armory, 206 Ashland St., North Adams

1st Tuesdays - OPEN HOURS
2nd & 3rd Tuesdays BY APPT.

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.

Drop-In Art Club Returns!

Wednesdays, 3:30 - 4:30 PM, UNO Center, 157 River Street, North Adams

Join us at the UNO Center (157 River Street, North Adams) for this FREE weekly drop-in program facilitated by MASS MoCA and The Clark.
3:30-4:30PM on Wednesdays (thru Aug. 27)
Snacks and supplies provided!
Children under 8yrs MUST be accompanied by an adult. Program facilitators are not responsible for child care. MORE INFO: 413-663-7588 or info@nbccoalition.org

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren RESOURCE FAIR

Friday June 6, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. UNO Center, 157 River Street, North Adams

This special event for GRG will offer networking with local resources like Northern Berkshire Pediatrics, Department of Children & Families, Ecu Health Care and more. Coffee and snacks provided.

First Fridays North Adams: Celebrate Pride

Friday, June 6, 5:00-9:00 PM, Downtown, North Adams

Join in the First Friday Fun! Visit downtown businesses for specials, sales and check out the new gallery exhibitions of 2025.

Reconnect Downtown North Adams Info Session Series

Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 PM, North Adams

LOCATIONS:

June 10 - UNO Center
June 17 - Elks Club
June 24 - NAPL

nbCC 39th Annual Meeting

Friday, June 13, 11:30 AM-1:30 PM, Greylock Works, 508 State Road, North Adams

Join us! The nbCC Annual Meeting is coming up quickly and we hope you'll be there to celebrate 39 years of community with us. Tickets are \$30/person, but scholarships are available. Buffet lunch will be provided. For questions or to register by phone: 413-663-7588

Learn Through Play: Farmers Market

Saturday, June 14, 10:00 - 11:00 AM, UNO 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. Contact us at 413-663-7588 or nkennedy@nbccoalition.org

Building Belonging Conversation #3

Thursday, 6/19, 4-6 PM, Hotel Downstreet, 40 Main Street, North Adams

FREE & open to the public. All are welcome!
Join us this month for a continuation on this series of conversations about building a sense of belonging in our community and region. This forum is presented in partnership with Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. The forum will include introductions and opportunities for announcements throughout the discussion. Light refreshments served. Forum will be held in the community space at Hotel DownStreet. More Information: 413-663-7588 or info@nbccoalition.org

C.O.V. Graduation!

Monday June 23, 5:30 - 7:00 PM, UNO Community Center, 157 River Street, North Adams

All are welcome to join us in celebrating this year's Community Outreach Volunteer program graduates. This group dedicated their Monday evenings for 6 months to learning more about their community and the resources available so they can better serve their friends and neighbors. Light refreshments will be served. For more information contact us at 413-663-7588 or ggglasier@nbccoalition.org

UNO Annual Block Party!

Friday June 26, 4:00 - 6:00 PM, UNO Community Center & Houghton St. Park, 157 River Street, North Adams

The UNO Steering Committee invites you to celebrate the beginning of summer with a block party. Join us at the park adjacent to the UNO Center for an afternoon of food, fun, face painting and more! For more information contact us at 413-663-7588 or ggglasier@nbccoalition.org

FRC Parenting Together Group * NEW TIMES

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 5:30 - 7:30 PM, nbCC, 61 Main St., Suite 218, North Adams

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

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.

Open to all northern Berkshire youth, ages 9 - 13.

nbCC

SUMMER NEIGHBORHOOD BASKETBALL LEAGUE

1 GAME & 1 OR MORE PRACTICES EACH WEEK

JULY 7 - AUGUST 5

FREE!

413-663-7588
INFO@NBCCOALITION.ORG



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

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Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
Community Empowerment • Prevention & Wellness

FRIDAY
6/13
11:30AM-1:30PM

39TH ANNUAL MEETING

An illustration showing four stylized figures (two men and two women) working together to assemble a large puzzle. One man is on a ladder, another is on the ground, and two women are also on the ground. The puzzle pieces are in various colors: red, orange, yellow, and dark blue.

We're looking forward to celebrating our 39th Annual Meeting this June at the event space at Greylock WORKS. We hope you can join us. Friday, June 13th, from 11:30AM – 1:30PM.

Tickets are \$30/person. Scholarships available.

We'll be honoring the North Adams & Williamstown Farmers Markets with the Northern Berkshire Heroes Award. Buffet lunch will be catered by Savory Harvest Catering. **REGISTER TODAY:**

MORE INFORMATION: 413-663-7588 or INFO@NBCCOALITION.ORG