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BUSINESS BRIEFS: Great Barrington Public Theater names Managing Director; Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum awarded; Ventfort Hall awarded; Elizabeth Freeman Center relocation; Berkshire Museum to begin construction; Kripalu membership for Berkshire residents; MountainOne Bank participates in 'ONE+' program; Shlok Spirits Corp purchases SPIRITED Wines

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Serena Johnson. Courtesy Great Barrington Public Theater.

Great Barrington Public Theater names Serena Johnson as Managing Director

Great Barrington— Great Barrington Public Theater announced that as of January 2025 the company's founding Managing Director Tristan Wilson will hand off responsibilities to Serena Johnson. Her appointment has been in the works and expected since Johnson joined the company as Director of Development earlier this year.



Johnson is active in Berkshire business and cultural communities. She came to GB Public by way of the Berkshires Leadership Program. A classically trained singer and stage performer originally from California, Johnson was a member of the team that successfully developed funding and operations for the Antaeus Theatre in Glendale, CA. She brings proven theater management expertise to her new role and plans to expand audience, donor, and corporate relationships throughout the Berkshires and adjacent towns. "I'm thrilled to take on more responsibilities and play a larger part in realizing the company's potential," Johnson says, pointing out, "Great Barrington Public is made up of a dynamic, vibrant group focused on bringing new work and talent to the Berkshires, and has quickly defined itself as a high-appeal addition to the Berkshires' cultural portfolio."

GBPT Co-Founder and Artistic Director Jim Frangione said, "Serena's skills and energy are a great match for our culture and future. She's already kicked the ball ahead quite a bit since joining us, increasing our donor base and playing a key role in our success during the 2024 season. We're extremely fortunate to have had Tristan at the helm these past several years. His experience and leadership has been instrumental to the organization's success and his positive attitude and unflappable nature in the face of inevitable theatrical crises will be sorely missed."

On stepping aside, Wilson says, "I am happy and proud to have helped expand GB Public's production and business profile through Covid and four outstanding seasons of terrific new plays. I look forward to helping where I can as the company grows and continues to bring professional opportunities and breakthrough productions to audiences in the Berkshires and beyond."

Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum awarded Mass Cultural Council grant

Adams— The Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum has received a grant of \$9000 from the Mass Cultural Council through its Operating Grants for Organizations Program.

This grant signifies that The Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum provides significant public value through its programs and services. Last year alone, the museum brought Susan B. Anthony's inspiring story to over three hundred students. With a 59% increase in programming and museum attendance, the museum intends to continue to grow and expand its immersive and experiential learning capacity. In the coming year, the museum will welcome six college interns, hold numerous free public programs, and continue to draw tourists to the Berkshires with its events and guided house tours.



Courtesy Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum.

"Public support enables the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum to provide quality educational programming for students, immersive experiential learning for college students and adults, and free public programs for the entire community," stated MA State Senator Paul Mark.

Rep. John Barrett III stated that "These funds will help preserve Susan B. Anthony's historic birthplace in Adams, MA, and will allow for expanded guided tours, school outreach, and free public programs for people of all ages."

Ventfort Hall Gilded Age Mansion & Museum awarded Mass Cultural Council grant

Lenox— Ventfort Hall Gilded Age Mansion & Museum has received a grant of \$15,300 from the Mass Cultural Council through its Operating Grants for Organizations Program.

State Representative Smitty Pignatelli said, "I am thrilled to see Ventfort Hall receive this well-deserved grant from the Mass Cultural Council. As a treasured historic site, Ventfort Hall plays a vital role in educating our community, preserving our local

heritage, and enriching our cultural landscape. This funding will provide critical support for their ongoing efforts to engage and inspire visitors, ensuring that future generations can experience the beauty and history of this remarkable landmark.”



Courtesy Ventfort Hall.

Executive Director for Ventfort Hall, Wendy Healey, said, “We are deeply honored to receive this generous grant from the Mass Cultural Council, which recognizes our ongoing efforts to preserve Ventfort Hall and the vibrant history it represents. This support is vital to our mission, which goes beyond restoring this magnificent Jacobean Revival Gilded Age mansion. It allows us to celebrate and honor the diverse individuals and eras whose stories are intertwined with this remarkable place. Thanks to the visionary generosity of organizations like the MCC, we are able to continue writing a new chapter in Ventfort Hall’s legacy, ensuring that this once-exclusive Lenox “cottage” remains accessible and welcoming to all.”

Elizabeth Freeman Center announces relocation of Pittsfield office to better serve survivors of domestic and sexual violence

Pittsfield— Elizabeth Freeman Center (EFC) is thrilled to announce that the organization will be moving its main office from 43 Francis Avenue to 66 Allen Street on December 16. Its satellite offices at 168 Main Street in Great Barrington and 61 Main Street in North Adams will continue to operate as normal.

This move addresses challenges posed by the current office, which no longer has the capacity to address the growing needs of survivors and the community. After months of searching for solutions, Elizabeth Freeman center completed the

purchase of the building, made possible by a mortgage from Lee Bank, on August 19th.



Courtesy Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum.

EFC is the primary domestic violence program and rape crisis center for Berkshire County. The organization has staff sited in four county courts, two police stations, Berkshire County Kids' Place, and Berkshire Pride, as well as a safe shelter. EFC serves over 4,000 survivors and their families every year and provides violence prevention/sex education to approximately 600 youth in Berkshire County schools. Additional information is available at www.elizabethfreemancenter.org.

Berkshire Museum to begin construction work on major renovations

Pittsfield— Berkshire Museum will begin construction work on major renovations to our first floor starting Monday, January 6th.

Updates to the museum will include fresh and engaging interpretations of the museum's diverse collections, a lecture hall, lobby, and more. The centerpiece of the work will be a state-of-the-art aquarium set to open in 2026.



The centerpiece of the work will be a state-of-the-art aquarium set to open in 2026. Courtesy Berkshire Museum.

During this time, the museum will not be open for admission, but will be going “mobile” with a variety of off-site programs and events. Of note will be the museum’s use of their Mobile Museum Units (MoMUs), the 11 STEAM-curated displays drawn from their collections. The beloved MoMU displays – or “mini-exhibitions” – feature science, technology, engineering, art and math components that complement the K-12 curriculum.



“While our staff is already thinking about the innovative ways the Berkshire Museum will live in its new space, it was equally important to reimagine the museum experience during the height of construction,” said Jesse Kowalski, Berkshire Museum Chief Curator. “It was a unique experience for our staff to think ‘outside the walls’ to deliver a host of new viewing opportunities to all members of the community, and we are grateful for the many partner organizations and educational institutions who have enabled us to be creative in showcasing the collection in new ways.”

The public is encouraged to visit the museum [website](#) and social media pages to stay up-to-date. If you are a museum member and have a question about your current membership status, please email membership@berkshireremuseum.org or call 413-443-7171.

Kripalu introduces all-new membership for Berkshire residents

Stockbridge— Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health is announcing the launch of Kripalu Neighbors Circle, a new membership program designed exclusively for Berkshire locals.

This first-of-its-kind offering allows residents to bring the transformative magic of Kripalu into their daily lives with flexible drop-in yoga classes during the week and access to a variety of wellness amenities.

“For many years, local residents have asked for a way to make Kripalu a part of their daily lives, and so we are thrilled to answer that request with Kripalu Neighbors Circle,” said Robert Mulhall, CEO of Kripalu. “We want to give residents the opportunity to make Kripalu their home away from home. This new offering underscores Kripalu’s commitment to serving all people in realizing their full potential through the transformative practice of yoga.”



Courtesy: Kripalu

To learn about membership benefits, including discounts, 20+ live-streamed classes a week, 2,000+ on demand classes, more than 100 breathtaking acres of hiking trails, walking paths, and more, visit <https://kripalu.org/content/kripalu-neighbors-circle>.

MountainOne Bank is a proud participating lender in 'ONE+' mortgage program

Berkshire— MountainOne Bank is proud to be a participating lender in the ONE+ Mortgage Program, now offering both ONE and ONE+ Mortgage products to eligible homebuyers in Massachusetts.

Through the new ONE+ Mortgage program, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP,) MountainOne helps income-eligible first-time homebuyers achieve their dream of homeownership. The program is designed to empower low-moderate income households to achieve homeownership by removing barriers to homeownership.

"We're excited to offer these highly sought after mortgage products to the communities we serve," said Jay Bianchi, AVP, Community Mortgage Lending Specialist. "MHP programs provide Massachusetts homebuyers additional financing options and benefits, including significantly discounted fixed rates, low down payment requirements, and down payment and closing cost assistance. By

providing access to these products, we are supporting our community's financial goals and strengthening the path to sustainable homeownership."



Courtesy MountainOne Bank.

More information on the ONE and ONE+ Mortgage programs and benefits can be found [online](#).

Shlok Spirits Corp purchases SPIRITED Wines in Lenox

Lenox— Generational Group announces the sale of International Beverage Center, Inc., dba SPIRITED Wines, to Shlok Spirits Corp. The acquisition closed on August 20th.

Located in Lenox, SPIRITED Wines, is a premium wine and spirits retailer. The store offers a curated selection of wines, craft beers, gourmet foods, liquors, and more. Known for its personalized service and extensive product range, SPIRITED Wines caters to both connoisseurs and casual consumers alike. The store also hosts events like wine tastings and dinners, enhancing the customer experience. Shlok Spirits Corp., based in Lenox, is led by Mr. Vishil Patel, who serves as the principal buyer.



Courtesy SPIRITED Wines Facebook page.

The acquisition of International Beverage Center, Inc. represents a strategic move that is advantageous for both parties. The seller is highly satisfied with the outcome

of the transaction, reflecting a successful and mutually beneficial agreement. Ryan Binkley, CEO of Generational Group said "This transaction highlights our commitment to facilitating deals that create lasting value for both parties. At Generational Group, we are proud to have played a role in bringing together two organizations poised for continued success."

