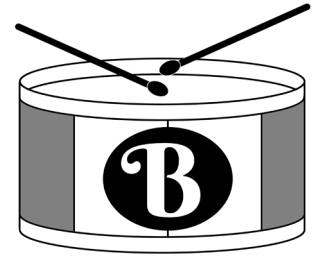


Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected

Vol. 2, No. 8 - September 2023



Time to Hit the Books: Becket Washington School Has Started

by Amy Alpert

The days are getting shorter, the weather is getting cooler, back-to-school sales are well underway and school has begun, where once again it is “all about the kids” at our very own Becket Washington School. Nestled in the heart of historic North Becket Village the school serves pre-K through 5th grade.

Becket Washington School principal Mary Kay McCloskey knows the school well, being in the district for 17 years, six of which have been as principal of BW School. Ms. McCloskey feels that what makes the school special is the community of families, students and staff and that “every decision that is made is in the best interest of the students.”



Becket Washington School; photo by Art Alpert



Mary Kay McCloskey; photo by Art Alpert

So how does that student-centric approach play out in terms of meeting the needs of all students? The school operates a fully integrated model in that all of the educational and supporting services are available on site. Staff include a registered behavioral counselor, an additional school counselor (who is shared with Kittredge Elementary in nearby Hinsdale), two tutors, a math interventionist for students who need extra help and a full-time special education teacher. If a child requires related services such as speech or physical therapy, the services are provided to the student as part of the school community.

Class sizes are relatively small – just 18-20 students for all grades. Teachers use the workshop model of instruction for reading and writing (mini-lesson, individual or small-group work time, debriefing) and “Foundations” a phonics program that teaches students how to put sounds together to form words. For math and science, students are able to use their literacy skills for understanding those core subjects.

Instruction also includes one period of art, one period of music with instruments and two periods of gym each week. Special residencies provide educational opportunities designed to expose students to different ways of learning, including African drumming lessons, acrobatics, dance and various outdoor activities.

We interviewed some students and a parent to get their thoughts on the school and this is what we heard: Ava, who is going into first grade said, “the centers of playdough and the sand table are the best and Ms. Kelleher and Ms. Jones are the nicest teachers.” Sofia, going into fourth grade said, “I like Mrs. Hough and Mrs. Chandler and having gym, library and art.” Isabella, a recent BW graduate said “I liked the small class size, science, social studies, reading and the attention you get at the school.” Jenna Bodnar, a school parent stated, “I like the small class sizes because they allow teachers to give the students one-on-one attention.”

Leslie Blake-Davis is the Superintendent of the Central Berkshire Regional School District, which includes the Becket Washington School. Ms. Blake-Davis knows the school well because she served as Principal before becoming Assistant Superintendent and assuming her current position. She is an advocate of a new structure at the BW School this year incorporating pre-K and Kindergarten into a single class. Initially driven by smaller enrollment, she says the model has been shown in other schools to promote academic

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as well as social/emotional success. From her perspective as superintendent, Blake-Davis believes that what makes the Central Berkshire Regional School District special is that “we consider students to be our ‘North Star’ and that focus defines the culture of the educational communities we create.”

To the existing educational framework within the district, Superintendent Blake-Davis would like to see more staff development through structured professional learning teams. For students, she would like more opportunities for enrichment and foundational support such as food and clothing where needed. Looking ahead, she expects to be addressing varying class sizes based on changing student demographics and student social-emotional issues. But for now, staff, parent and student focus is on settling in for what will hopefully be another successful and productive local school year.

New Eateries Revisited

by Marcia Parnell

Neon Newt has added Monday night dinner from 5 to 8pm to its existing Thursday through Sunday breakfast and lunch hours. Owner Olivia Pattison hopes to attract locals seeking a meal out on a night when virtually every other restaurant is closed. The dinner menu is small but varied and all locally sourced.

The Becket General Store, originally slated for a mid-July opening, is now expected to open in early October, according to owner Ryan Eley. Because the store had been closed for more than three years, a special permit was required from the town’s Planning Board. At its August meeting the board waived the requirement for a certified site survey for a two-year period in order to approve the special permit and facilitate the store’s opening.

PUBLIC NOTICE: BYLAW REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS SOUGHT

The Select Board seeks applications from registered voters in the Town of Becket for three members to serve on the Bylaw Review Committee. The Committee shall review the Town’s General Bylaws to ensure their consistency with any applicable law and the Town Charter, and may propose amendments or new sections of the General Bylaw to the Select Board for inclusion on a Town Meeting Warrant.

Interested Becket voters are asked to submit an Appointment Application to the Select Board. The application may be obtained from the Administrative Assistant, adminasst@townofbecket.org, Town Hall and the Forms and Documents page of the town website (www.townofbecket.org). The bylaw describing this committee is available on the Bylaw Review Committee page of the town website.

If you haven’t already, go to townofbecket.org to sign up for textmygov. Don’t miss out on this important new communication tool to keep residents safer and better informed.

Volunteers & Local Producers Needed for Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market

by Marcia Parnell

The Mobile Farmers Market will kick off on Thursday, September 14th and run weekly from 11:30am to 2:00pm at the Becket Center Town Park pavilion through November 16th. Volunteers are needed to help set up and greet customers beginning at 10:30am and to restock/maintain produce and help break down when the market closes. Depending on the number of available volunteers, it’s expected that two to three volunteers will be required each week and split their time over the course of the market. Mobile Farmers Market Manager Alyssa VanDurme will be on-site throughout managing the overall operation.

Anyone interested in volunteering (full or partial market shift) is asked to go to www.berkshireremobilefarmersmarket.org.

In addition to several Berkshire County farms, local Becket and Washington producers are also invited to participate – including apiaries, maple farms and berry growers. Those interested in selling their products should contact Alyssa VanDurme at alyssa@berkshiregrown.org.

The market ensures access to local fresh fruits and vegetables for everyone by using a sliding-scale payment structure: full retail; acceptance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the State’s Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) EBT cards and pay what you can. Mark your calendars and look for leaflets and more details at Becket Beat distribution sites and Facebook page.



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- For Town-Wide Notifications, text “**BECKETINFO**” to **91896**
- For Emergency Notifications, text “**BECKETEMER**” to **91896**



Becket Consolidated School's band, pictured in The Torch, 1955. "The uniforms made last year by the PTA have added a lot of punch to the appearance of the group." Courtesy of the Becket Athenaeum.

The Memories Linger On

by Marilyn Fish

The population of Becket may be small and widespread but our citizens have always been big on education. Until the late 1930s the town was served by four school houses but in 1938 voters agreed to build a consolidated school (where the Becket Washington School now stands) that would bring the town's 100 students together in a central location. According to an undated Berkshire Eagle article by W.D. Ballou, the project was estimated to cost between \$35,000 and \$40,000 (\$757,362 - \$865,557 in 2023), of which 45% would be covered by a Public Works Administration grant.

The Becket Consolidated School, serving grades 1 through 7, was the result of this effort. Jan Elvoria, a student from 1957-1965, recalls that the building had a few classrooms and an auditorium

upstairs; and a few classrooms, kitchen and cafeteria downstairs. While a number of Becket Consolidated alumni still feel the sting of corporal punishment (commonplace throughout America until the late 1970s and still legal in 17 states), the majority recollect that reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught with humor, creativity and compassion by skilled professionals.

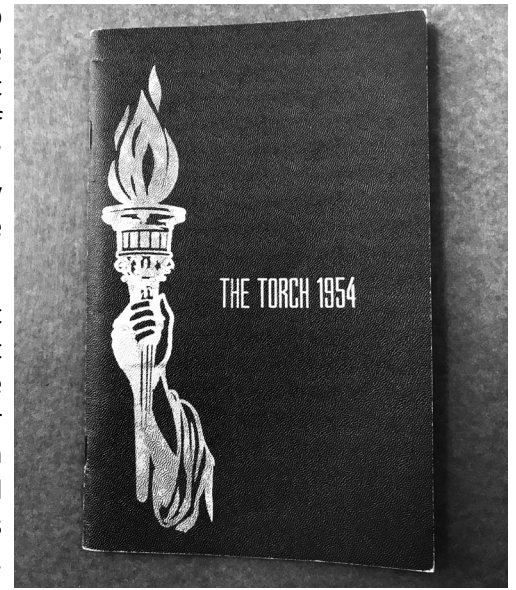
Many graduates named Mrs. Keiper as an especially outstanding teacher. Dan Lamb recalls that after his 5th grade class presented reports on Native American tribes, she rewarded them with a native vegetable stew, jokingly warning that the main ingredient was "snake." Lisa Godbout tells us that Keiper "was selfless, caring and had a heart of gold. Never once did she make me feel out of place for not understanding something." Among others admired for their compassion, Principal Pharmer ranks high. Jess Mullaly says, "I will never forget when I slammed my finger in the door of the bathroom and he picked me up and carried me to the nurse."

In September 1950 a group of parents formed the PTA and began supporting the hot lunch program, sponsoring several annual holiday parties and financing other student events. Just four years later, the school published its first yearbook, *The Torch*, a 32-page booklet celebrating student life. By then pupils were able to participate in extracurricular activities including touch football, baseball, band, safety patrol and trout fishing. In fact, in 1955 the Becket Sportsman Club stocked the brook running past the school and students eagerly competed to pull in the biggest catch. Many also recall Dr. Breit's polio vaccinations, Mr. Moulthrop's lessons in tapping maple trees, and lunch-lady Mrs. Saville's coveted peanut butter bars.

In the '50s, younger students took field trips to the Berkshire Eagle, Happyland, Mystic Seaport, and Old Deerfield Village, while the graduating class worked to raise money for their two-day sight-seeing trip to New York City. They ran a movie night, a Christmas card and gift wrap sale and a candy sale, the results of which were comically described in the *Torch* as "not so good — except for the eating angle." When the goodies from the sale ran out, Becket kids had a handy source for more. Tracy Hildner recalls, "There was a general store across from the school that had a candy counter. If we had a note from our parents, we could go over at recess. We would buy shoelace licorice and tie it together and use it as a jumping rope." When the games were over, the candy was too dirty to eat but it had served its intended purpose.

While it's fun to look back on earlier days with affection, let's recognize that the children of the Becket Consolidated School, like those of the present-day Becket Washington School, had access to everything a fine city school could offer plus the warm atmosphere that only a small town can provide.

Many thanks to Becket Athenaeum Head Librarian, Ellen Manley, and to the many alumni who posted their memories in the Becket Beat and the Becket Elementary School Facebook Groups.



The first issue of The Torch, Becket Consolidated School's yearbook. Courtesy of the Becket Athenaeum.

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Parent Teacher Organization Fills the Gaps

by Kathy Dickinson

As much as the Becket Washington School does to educate and nurture its students, there are some things beyond its reach. That's where the school's PTO plays a key role. Emily Gunn is its current president. We reached out to her to learn more about their efforts.

Thanks to funds raised by the PTO, each and every student is fully equipped with the back-to-school supplies they need to kick off the school year. In addition, the PTO helps to cover the costs of programs and educational field trips, including buses and other incidental expenses, to many of Berkshire County's exceptional local educational and cultural venues: Jacob's Pillow, Hancock Shaker Village and various museums. If students are performing a concert, the PTO supplies the funds for a pianist to accompany the students. Twice each year the PTO holds a book fair and students are able to take the books home from the one held at school year-end for summer reading.

Gunn notes that the PTO's success is dependent upon support from the community. Parents are asked to attend meetings and pitch in during fundraisers. Gunn finds parent feedback invaluable and encourages parents to share their ideas and get involved wherever they can. Local businesses are credited and appreciated for playing a role as well by providing sponsorships of school events.

The PTO meets the second Wednesday each month at 6:30pm, and there are ongoing opportunities to volunteer and participate throughout the school year. Gunn suggests checking the calendar provided by the school for information about meetings as well as upcoming events. The PTO provides an added bonus, she says, "It's a great way to get to know other members of the community, not just the school. So join in!"

BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

Becket Arts Center - Arts & Crafts Marketplace, Music and More on Tap for September

The BAC is hosting its first Arts & Crafts Marketplace at the Becket Firefighter's Pavilion on Saturday, September 9 from 11am-5pm. Jewelry makers, woodworkers, painters, photographers and more will be selling their remarkable goods. Afterwards, Bobby Sweet closes out our 2023 Music Brings Communities Together series on the BAC front lawn at 5pm. Later in the month we open our final summer exhibit (Sept. 16) and welcome Paul Mark and the Berkshire Immigrant Center as part of our Speaker Series (Sept. 17). **Save the date** for our annual oyster fundraiser, October 1 from 1-4pm with oysters provided by East Dennis Oyster Farm. Be sure to check out the BAC's ongoing schedule of events at becketartscenter.org.



Becket Athenaeum - Kids Club at Becket-Washington School & Book Sale Fundraiser on Library Lawn

If you have a child attending BW School and need after-school care, check out Kids Club. The fee is \$6 per child per day for care from 2:55pm to 5:30pm. This program is funded by the Athenaeum through yearly grants and administered by the Dalton CRA. Contact Jon Yetto at the Dalton CRA for information and to sign up (413) 684-0260 or jyetto@daltoncra.org. If the fee is cost-prohibitive, financial assistance from the Dalton CRA is available.



On Saturday, Sept 2 and Sunday, Sept 3, come to our Book Sale Fundraiser from 10am-4pm on the library lawn (weather permitting). By donation (cash or check). All proceeds support the services and programs at the Becket Athenaeum. We are not currently accepting book donations. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact booksale@bwlibrary.org and thank you!

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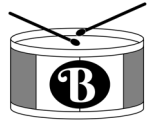
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Community Calendar September 2023

Full listing & details: www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar

see reverse
for more >>



BECKET ARTS CENTER

Sunday, September 3: Poetry Reading and Book Release: Peter Barton and Gail Thomas / 4-5pm / Free
Thursdays, September 5, 12, 19, 26: Yoga w/ Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / \$12 (\$10 for BAC members)
Saturday, September 9: Arts & Crafts Marketplace / Becket Firefighter's Pavilion / 11am-5pm
Saturday, September 9: Music Brings Communities Together - Bobby Sweet / 5-7pm / Free
Sunday, September 10: Marketplace Vendors Open Studios / 11am-5pm
Mondays, September 11, 18, 25: Sean McCusker Art Demonstrations / 1-3pm / Free
Saturday, September 16: "Veiled" Exhibition #5 Opening Reception / 2-4pm / Free
Sunday, September 17: Speaker Series: Paul Mark and Berkshire Immigrant Center / 4-6pm / \$5 for non-members
Tuesday, September 19: Monthly Music Circle / 7-9pm / Free

MORE MUSIC & PERFORMANCE

Dream Away Lodge: thedreamawaylodge.com
Papa Bob's: facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall/

BECKET ATHENAEUM

Saturday, September 2 and Sunday, September 3: Book Sale Fundraiser / 10am-4pm / library lawn, weather permitting / By donation (cash or check)
Saturdays, September 2, 16, 23, 30: Library Storytime / 10:30-11:30am / Free
Tuesday, September 5: Book Club: *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak / 1:30pm / Free
Saturday, September 9: Creative Movement and Storytime / 10:30-11:30am / Free
Monday, September 11: Cookbook Club: *In Bibi's Kitchen* by Hawa Hassan & Julia Turshen / 6-7:30pm / Free
Saturday, September 16: Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm / Free
Wednesday, September 13: Game Night / 5-7pm / Free



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Community Calendar September 2023

see reverse
for more >>



Full listing & details: www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Wednesday, September 6: Board of Health / 5pm
Wednesdays, September 6, 20: Select Board / 7pm
Monday, September 11: Finance Committee / 5pm
Tuesday, September 12: Historical Commission / 5pm
Tuesday, September 19: Energy Committee / 4pm
Tuesday, September 26: Conservation Commission / 5pm

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Friday, September 1: Free Pasta Dinner / Becket Federated Church / 5-7pm
Fridays, September 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Tai Chi/Qi Gong / Washington Town Hall / 10-11am / Free

MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Saturdays, September 2, 16: Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am
Saturday, September 2: Annual Chicken BBQ / First Congregational Church / 12-2pm / \$18
Wednesdays, September 6, 13, 20, 27: Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3
Tuesdays, September 5, 12, 19, 26: Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free
Saturday, September 23: Cops and Rodders Car Show / Washington Town Park / 10am-3pm / Free
Saturday, September 30: All You Can Eat Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10:30am / \$8



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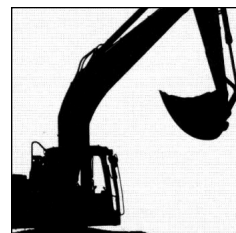


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