

penalized by being able to reduce their federal income tax liability. Contact BerkshireWorks to see if your company qualifies.

### SMALL IS BETTER

Everyone has heard of Black Friday, and some people have heard of Cyber Monday. But in between them is Small Business Saturday, which took place yesterday. A promotion by American Express, Small Business Saturday is held

to celebrate and support everything that small businesses do for their communities. Don't forget, these firms make up the majority of all American enterprises, and are quite literally the backbone of our economy.

There are currently 23 million small businesses in the United States, and that number has increased 49 percent since 1982, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration and American Express. They account for 54 percent of all U.S. sales. Franchised small businesses have created 8 million jobs since

1990, and account for 40 percent of our country's retail jobs.

When we support small businesses, jobs are created and local communities preserve or develop a unique culture. The money spent at small business also stays local because it goes back into the local economy. That's important.

So, let's all do our part to help Berkshire County's small businesses do what they do best: grow their business, create jobs, and ensure that our communities remain as vibrant tomorrow as they are today.

### GRATITUDE

Employee recognition and appreciation is always a crucial element of any company's strategy — but it's particularly notable during the holidays. This is the opportune time to show your employees that you are thankful for their hard work. Here are a few ideas that just might supply the secret gravy that is needed to help cultivate a grateful workforce:

- Recognize achievements and simply say, "thank you."
- Write a note of thanks to show appreciation.
- Pitch in and help whenever necessary.
- Pay it forward — grati-

tude is contagious.

- Have a celebration — lunch or an ice cream social.
- Take a field trip together — to get coffee or visit a museum.
- Provide incentives and perks (offer flex time) or arrange specialized training. This is a great way to boost morale.
- Thank people who never get recognition.

Cultivating a culture of gratitude might be the best way to help a workplace prepare for stresses that come with change, conflict, and failure.

Practicing gratitude is a non-monetary way to support

your employees. A little appreciation and respect goes a long way. After all, recognizing your employees for the value they add to your organization is critical to minimizing employee turnover and maintaining long-term productivity.

So this holiday season, I honor our veterans, keep Thanksgiving Day spirit, and remember the meaning behind Small Business Saturday. Enjoy all of the holidays with gratitude!

*Heather Boulger is the executive director of the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board in Pittsfield.*

# Business

Sunday, November 27, 2016 | The Berkshire Eagle

## INSIDE THE JOB MARKET

# What are you thankful for?

By HEATHER BOULGER

**PITTSFIELD** — For many, the month of November provides us with an opportunity to show our appreciation and thankfulness for our friends, family members and loved ones. For some, however, gratitude can be difficult to find when there are so many people to help, so many meetings to attend, so many deadlines, so many obligations, so much daily stress, and just not enough time in the day.

One of my goals for this busy time of year was to document something daily that I am grateful for. #30DaysOfGratitude has been challenging, but it has helped to keep me focused and positive.

What are you thankful for? As we ponder our blessings this holiday season, it is important to remember that we are able to celebrate our freedoms because of the sacrifices of our military veterans. Veterans Day should be honored not only on Nov. 11, but all year long! Veterans protect us, keep us safe, provide humanitarian aid, perform under pressure, serve as role models, and provide leadership. These brave men and women make enormous sacrifices for all of us, as do their families, and we should be grateful for that every day.

According to the U.S. Census, there are 10,419 military veterans

living in Berkshire County. The majority (35.1 percent) are from the Vietnam War era, but there are roughly 13 percent from both the Korean War and World War II, and smaller amounts from the current fighting in the Middle East, and from the 1990-2001 Gulf War.

The labor force participation rate for veterans in the Berkshires is 72 percent. The unemployment rate is 9.8 percent, while 7.6 percent live below federal poverty rate standards, and 28 percent have a disability. The BerkshireWorks Career Center provides priority services to veterans and can help access employment and training opportunities for them. The BerkshireWorks veterans representative is David Nash who can be reached at dnash@detma.org or at 413 499-2220 ext. 211. He can help veterans with job searches, and access to benefits, help them design an employment plan, assist with resume preparation and develop job leads.

Interested in hiring a veteran? Massachusetts employers may be eligible for a federal tax credit through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program if they hire a qualifying unemployed veteran. The goal is to enable targeted employees to move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency. Participating employers are com-

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