

1BERKSHIRE

BERKSHIRE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Community Engagement Session Biographies

April 4, 2019

Amber Besaw

Executive Director, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
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A northern Berkshire resident, Amber Besaw has a Master's Degree in Community Mental Health and Counseling, as well as an undergraduate degree in Sociology. She has been working with children & families in New York and Massachusetts for the past 20 years. Amber has lived and worked in Berkshire County for the past 12 years, initially as a Clinician with the Brien Center's Child & Adolescent Division, then the Brien Center's Community Service Agency, until moving to the Coalition to build The Family Place, family resource center program in 2011. Since that time, Amber has moved into the Executive Director's position and is focused on leading the Coalition in fulfilling its mission of empowering the region to enhance the quality of life through its efforts of connecting, convening, and supporting all facets of the community.

Officer Darren Derby

Patrol Officer, Pittsfield Police Department
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Officer Derby has been in Law Enforcement for 19 yrs. In that time, he has worked for the Lanesborough Police Department, Sheriff's Department, and currently at the Pittsfield Police Department.

In addition to his traditional duties as an officer, he is heavily involved in community outreach, both on and off duty. Through a variety of tactics, his goal is to give Pittsfield's at risk youth and young adults a more positive outlook on life. He has successfully engaged the community through events such as Cones with a Cop, Pumpkins with the Police, after school pizza parties, 1 on 1 mentorships, Operation Copsicle (department owned Ice Cream Truck), and outdoor movie nights (including Popcorn with the Police) in low-income housing complexes. Officer Derby is also the Berkshire County Coordinator for the Law Enforcement Torch Run For Special Olympics of Massachusetts.

Alison Peters

Executive Director, Dalton CRA

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Alison Peters graduated from the University of Vermont with a Bachelor's Degree in business administration and management. After spending more than 20 years in corporate America as an Information Systems consultant, she made the move to the non-profit world. In 2009, Alison joined the Community Recreation Association as the Executive Director. Under her leadership, the CRA has seen program and staff expansion, including after school programs, specialty camps, a youth advisory board and a fitness center expansion. Many capital improvements have taken place in recent years, including the gym renovation, installation of a lift and a major renovation of the Youth Center.

Over the past two years and with the assistance of a strong board, the CRA has developed a robust strategic plan which is providing them a path to follow as it approaches its 100th anniversary (2023). In addition, the CRA is excited about its latest project, the acquisition of the Kittredge House. This strategically located property will connect the CRA to the DYC and create an extended campus for the community.