

# Outlook 2021

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BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

## In City of Homes, hometown contractor succeeds

Wonderlyn Murphy, a native of Springfield, is president and CEO of City Enterprise Inc. The company is one of the few women-owned and -led construction firms in the state.

(HOANG 'LEON' NGUYEN / THE REPUBLICAN)



### City Enterprise is one of few women-owned, -led firms

**By ELIZABETH ROMAN**  
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After recently finishing a demolition and structural repair project involving a historic building in downtown Springfield, Wonderlyn Murphy, president of City Enterprise Inc., is turning her attention to affordable housing in restored homes.

“I am a Springfield native. I have been here my whole life except for when I got

my education, and I look around and see all the wonderful architecture, the buildings that are just boarded up that have so much potential,” Murphy says. “I happen to be in an industry where I can possibly do something about it.”

Murphy founded City Enterprise, with offices located on Berkshire Avenue, in 2006. Nearly 15 years later and two decades since she first got into the industry, Murphy remains one of the few

women who owns and and operates a construction company.

She credits hard work, honesty, integrity and follow-through as the reasons her business has continued to grow throughout the years.

“The fundamentals of business are the same across the board,” Murphy explains. “You have to have honesty, integrity, communication, focus, follow-up

SEE **CONTRACTOR**, PAGE K12

## Higher ed brings value to region’s well-being

**T**HIS YEAR’S THEME for The Republican’s annual Outlook edition is one that captures the spirit of our valley and our hill towns: recovery and reinvention. Our ability to thrive as a region after this pandemic depends not just on surviving this global health crisis, but on reinventing ourselves as a people and as varied industry and nonprofit sectors.

As a region, we are learning from the pandemic and are becoming more resilient from having to respond and adapt to the unprecedented conditions of the last year. The pandemic has highlighted our resourcefulness, gener-



YVES SALOMON-FERNANDEZ

osity and ability to lift up our people and institutions during the most challenging of times – the very essence of community.

The agility that Greenfield Community College and the

SEE **HIGHER ED**, PAGE K9

## “You have to reinvent yourself. If you stay stagnant, you will be written off the face of the Earth.”

ALI R. SALEHI, PRESIDENT, COLUMBIA MANUFACTURING INC., WESTFIELD



At left, the Columbia Galaxy Puzzle Table is made by the Columbia Manufacturing Inc., in Westfield. Among the work the company has taken on amid the pandemic has been privacy screens used in health care settings, right. (DAVE ROBACK PHOTOS)

MANUFACTURING

## Switching gears to help



An original late 1800s bicycle, back, a 2017 replica bicycle, left, a 125th anniversary bike, center, and a recent replica of a military bike from the Columbia Manufacturing Inc., are on display at the company’s headquarters in Westfield. Above right is Ali R. Salehi, CEO and president. (DAVE ROBACK PHOTOS)

### Columbia adds PPE to its portfolio for pandemic response

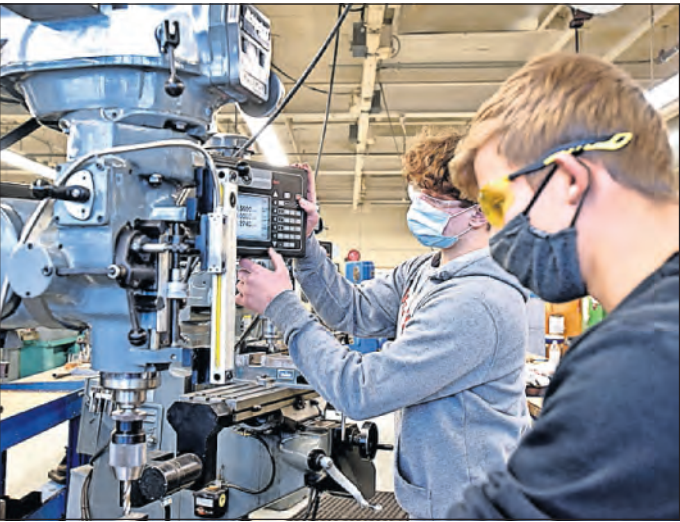


**By LORI STABILE**  
Special to The Republican

**C**olumbia Manufacturing Inc. began as the country’s first bicycle maker in 1877 and switched gears to school furniture in the 1950s, a line that became the company’s mainstay.

In 1993, so it could focus solely on school furniture, Columbia authorized another company to make bicycles.

SEE **COLUMBIA**, PAGE K14



Students Chase Boisseau, left, and Avel Vdovichenko work in the machine shop at Westfield Technical Academy. (DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN)

EDUCATION

## Tech schools adapt to COVID challenges

**By RON CHIMELIS**  
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The vocational director at Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical Academy says the last 11 months have been difficult, but could have been worse.

“Some districts were caught (unprepared for the coronavirus pandemic). They planned for hybrid last summer and then had to go back to full remote,” said Joao Alves, who

supervises the training of 1,300 vocational students in Springfield.

Those students have been learning remotely since September, and having their education delivered much differently than they’d anticipated.

“Our district made an early commitment to full remote,” Alves said. “We had time to prepare. If we can transfer to full remote,” said Joao Alves, who

SEE **TECH**, PAGE K18

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“I have been here my whole life except for when I got my education, and I look around and see all the wonderful architecture, the buildings that are just boarded up that have so much potential. I happen to be in an industry where I can possibly do something about it.”

WONDERLYN MURPHY, OWNER, CITY ENTERPRISE INC.

Contractor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE K1

and follow-through. You can get to the door, but then you have to get through the door as well. I think honesty is not discussed in business at all, and many people seem to think that successful people cut corners to get where they are, but that has not been the case for me.”

Murphy’s credentials are many. She is a licensed construction supervisor with a degree in architectural design technology from the Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston. She also earned a master’s degree in management from Cambridge College and a certification from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in program process management.

City Enterprise has grown to the point where Murphy can pick and choose what contracts the company will bid.

“We work mostly on government contracts with commercial properties, and we will take on almost any challenge as long as we know it’s something we can successfully complete,” she says.

Currently her team is working on renovating a veterans facility in Pittsfield as well as some projects on the Lowell and Amherst campuses of the University of Massachusetts.

Her most recent hometown project was the \$3.4 million demolition, structural repair and environmental remediation of the former Court Square Hotel property at 13-31 Elm St. The customer was the city of Springfield.

Peter Garvey, director of capital asset management for the city of Springfield, says Murphy’s company took on a challenging project with a quick turn-around period and was able to execute it well.

“We were under pretty rigorous time constraints, and they came through,” Garvey says. “They finished on time, on budget and did a good job.”

While Garvey dealt primarily with City Enter-



Wonderlyn Murphy, a native of Springfield, is president and CEO of City Enterprise Inc. The company is one of the few women-owned and -led construction firms in the state. City Enterprise recently completed the first phase of work on the 13-31 Elm St. project in Springfield’s downtown.

(HOANG ‘LEON’ NGUYEN / THE REPUBLICAN)



At left, a 2017 photo shows a fifth-floor office in the 13-31 Elm St. building in Springfield’s Court Square before any demolition or restoration work began. The block is to include market-rate housing on its upper stories and is scheduled for completion sometime in 2022. At right, an exterior view of the 13-31 Elm St. building.

prise’s staff, he says Murphy was always monitoring the progress being made. “I was dealing more with her team, but she called in quite a bit to make sure everything was going fine. It’s important to have that communication,” he says.

The work done by City Enterprise preserved the historical character of the building so that it can be a key feature in the next phase of the project where the WinnCompanies, of Boston, and co-developer Peter Picknelly’s Opal Real Estate, of Springfield, will fully renovate and restore the



In this photo from Aug. 27, Gov. Charlie Baker gestures in front of 13-31 Elm St. as officials formally launched the \$51 million Elm Street Redevelopment and Preservation Economic Project in Springfield’s Court Square. The first phase of the project was recently completed to prepare the building for future uses, including apartments on the upper floors, which were once hotel rooms.

(DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN FILE PHOTO)



down for their team and for any one on my team who could have been exposed, so we lost about two weeks of

work because of that,” Murphy explains. “We have had little sprinkles of exposure in my team, so they have had

to quarantine, but nothing serious and no one on my team or their families have come down with COVID, thank God.”

Murphy hired two assistant project managers as well as an operations manager in 2020, brining her staffing to a total of 15 employees.

“We got so busy it, and it got to be too much for me to do everything on my own,” she says. “I knew that in order to be effective and grow well I had to delegate and hire new staff.”

She credits the establishment of an estimating team for the success the business has had in securing contracts.

“We have an estimating department that includes my senior estimator with over 40 years of experience and in the past year we put a system in place for how we were going to reach out and do our sourcing,” Murphy says. “I really spent time shoring out the department so we had a specific way of going after bids and going after pricing for our subcontractors. We really got that department solid.”

In the months ahead, she is looking forward to expanding the residential side of the business and creating opportunities for first-time homebuyers and people looking for beautiful, affordable homes.

“One of the things that sparked an interest in me is that we did a food drive and a gloves and hats drive for kids over the holidays. I reached out to my employees, and we came up with a lot of food that we took down to the Open Pantry. I delivered it myself and when I got there I saw that there is a serious need,” she says. “It got me thinking a lot about how much need there is in the community, not only for food, but for affordable housing for people who want to own homes. We are in that industry, this is something I can do and I’m very excited about it.”



In this photo from 2014, Wonderlyn Murphy, founder of City Enterprise Inc., center, receives the Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce first place Super 60 honor for revenue growth during the prior year from Glenn S. Welch, left, and Jody Gross, right. It marked the 25th anniversary of the Super 60 recognition celebration.

(THE REPUBLICAN FILE PHOTO)



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