



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**RAILROAD STREET YOUTH PROJECT RECEIVES \$5,000 GRANT
FROM BERKSHIRE BANK FOUNDATION**

Grant funds help fund Railroad Street's apprenticeship program

PITTSFIELD, MASS, December 12, 2011 – Berkshire Bank Foundation announced today it awarded a \$5,000 grant to Railroad Street Youth Project in Gt. Barrington, Mass. to help fund their Apprenticeship Program. The program, now in its 6th year offers students two focused apprenticeship programs, one in culinary arts and the other in cosmetology.

The culinary arts program under the leadership of head chef's Brian Alberg and Dan Smith of The Red Lion Inn and John Andrews Restaurant have led the program which culminates in a semi-annual public fundraising dinner where the youth use their newly acquired skills to cook for paying supporters, parents and friends.

The cosmetology program, now in its 7th season is currently taking place at Michele's Salon and Day Spa and Studio Day Spa. The program instills a sense of pride, inspiration, and excitement that builds with each class as the students become more confident in their abilities and talents.

"We are thrilled to be the recipient of a \$5,000 grant from Berkshire Bank Foundation. It is an honor to have the ongoing validation and support of such a well-respected and well-established organization for the work that we do at Railroad Street Youth Project to empower young people by supporting the creation of youth-generated activities that promote self-worth, responsibility and intergenerational respect and communication." stated Brenda Barlow executive director of Railroad Street Youth Project.

"We cannot do this important work without the support of community partners such as Berkshire Bank. On behalf of the youth that we serve our staff and board members I wish to extend our profound thanks and appreciation for this generous support helping us turn inspirations into reality," added Barlow.

While Berkshire Bank Foundation's priorities are education and community/economic development projects, it also donates to youth, cultural and human service organizations. A complete list of Berkshire Bank Foundation supported organizations in 2011 can be found by visiting www.berkshirebank.com/foundation.

In addition to financial support, the Foundation also administers the bank's growing Employee Volunteer Program that carries out group community service projects benefiting schools, nonprofit organizations

and communities within the bank's service area. In 2010, more than 350 employees donated over 17,000 hours of service to benefit community organizations across the bank's markets.

Background

Berkshire Bank Foundation Inc. the charitable arm of Berkshire Bank, [America's Most Exciting BankSM](#), is a leader in philanthropy and community involvement. The foundation's mission is to enhance the quality of life in Berkshire Bank's footprint by providing priority funding to education and community/economic development projects. It also funds programs dedicated to the arts, education, and human services. Since its inception, the foundation has awarded more than \$15 million to nonprofit organizations in its footprint. For more information, visit www.berkshirebank.com/foundation, "Like" them on www.facebook.com/BerkshireBank or call Peter J. Lafayette, Executive Director at 413-447-1722.

Berkshire Hills Bancorp is the parent of Berkshire Bank, [America's Most Exciting BankSM](#). The company has \$4 billion in assets and 60 full service branch offices in Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont. The company provides personal and business banking, insurance, wealth management, private banking, and asset based lending services. Berkshire Bank provides 100% deposit insurance protection for all deposit accounts, regardless of amount, based on a combination of FDIC insurance and the [Depositors Insurance Fund](#) (DIF). For more information, visit www.berkshirebank.com or call 800-773-5601.

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