

# Outlook 2022

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**MARK KEROACK**

## Baystate adapts for new world post-COVID

**W**E ALL FIND IT HARD TO LOOK FAR into the future during a crisis, but I believe that 2022 will be a year of hope and healing.

We know that all pandemics wind down, and this one will do so, too, accelerated in part by the highly contagious omicron variant that has circulated in

our community. Sooner rather than later everyone will be exposed to the COVID-19 spike protein, either through vaccination or infection.

Serious infections caused by the virus will become rarer, since nearly all in our community will have some level of immunity. Periodic booster shots every few years will become routine, just as they are

with influenza.

For these reasons, I firmly believe that early in 2022, COVID-19 will stop disrupting our lives. We will stop being afraid and begin to move forward.

Baystate Health will adapt to a new world in which COVID-19 will remain a low-level threat, a world

SEE **KEROACK**, PAGE L2

"I ONLY WANT TO GET BIGGER. BUT YOU HAVE TO GROW IN STEPS, OTHERWISE YOU CAN OUTGROW YOURSELF AND YOU CAN HURT YOURSELF IF YOU GET TOO BIG TOO QUICK."

DERRICK TURNBULL, AUTUMN MIST FARM, AGAWAM

**AGRICULTURE**

## Autumn Mist Farm keeps beef fresh, local

Big Y partnership helped save farm amid pandemic

By **STAASI HEROPOULOS**  
 Special to The Republican

**W**hen 40-year-old Derrick Turnbull walks out the front door of his home in Agawam he steps into the office he's always dreamed of having: the 100-acre Autumn Mist Farm awash in sun or rain, depending on the vagaries of the New England weather.

"This isn't a job. It's a lifestyle and a lot of work," he says.

Turnbull owns and operates the family farm with his fiancé, their two daughters, and his parents.

He owns 100 acres of land and 130 cows, each giving birth to one calf per year. He leases another 500 acres and purchases several hundred calves which he raises, has processed and sells their meat.

"We're a small family-run operation. We raise all-natural beef cattle with no hormones, antibiotics or steroids in our animals,"

SEE **FARM**, PAGE L17



Autumn Turnbull, 5, is greeted by Curly during a morning feeding at Autumn Mist Farm at 300 North West St. in Agawam. The cattle farm is named in her honor. Inset, Derrick Turnbull, owner of Autumn Mist Farm, and his fiancée Tracy Allen, run the family-owned 100-acre farm. His herd includes some 130 cows, each giving birth to one calf per year. He leases another 500 acres and purchases several hundred calves which he raises, has processed and sells their meat. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)



**CHARLES D'AMOUR**

## Big Y makes trust key to business

**T**RUST IS FOUNDATIONAL and underpins any successful business. As a family market and company, we are keenly aware that trust is the cornerstone for connecting with our customers, our employees and our farmers and suppliers.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, I have continued to reflect on the importance of "trust" in our business and in our community. For over 86 years, our company has endeavored to continue the legacy established by our founders, my father Gerry and my uncle Paul that began when they opened their tiny 850-square-foot neighborhood market in the village of Willimansett in Chicopee.

Striving to offer the best value and the finest quality and freshness for their customers, they understood that caring and trust were integral in all their dealings and engagements.

As I traveled our stores during the height of the pandemic, I was struck by two things. First and foremost was the caring and resilience of our 12,000 employees. Their heroic efforts

SEE **D'AMOUR**, PAGE L17

**RETAIL**

## Thornes, an 'experience unlike any other mall'

Patrons shop in ACME Surplus store at Thornes Marketplace on Main Street in Northampton. The mall was created more than 40 years ago in what was once McCallum's department store.

(HOANG 'LEON' NGUYEN / THE REPUBLICAN)



By **JANICE BEETLE**  
 Special to The Republican

The three co-owners of Thornes Marketplace will never forget the morning of March 14, 2020. Jody Dole, Rich Madowitz and Russell Jopson made the painful and unprecedented decision to close the iconic mall in downtown Northampton in response to the surge of COVID-19 cases. In the days following, area businesspeople asked them, "What were you thinking?"

The answer was not about the

bottom line but the safety and protection of 25 shop owners, their employees, and customers, all of them the heart of the Thornes brand. The center that began in 1874 as McCallum's Dry Goods survived the pandemic solely because of that altruistic mindset.

Thornes staff continued to receive full pay throughout the closure and later received bonuses to recognize the perils of working in retail in a pandemic. From April

SEE **THORNES**, PAGE L12



Big Y co-founder Gerald E. D'Amour, left, with co-worker Roland Moreau at the original Y Cash Market in Chicopee.

(BIG Y PHOTO)

Baystate Health  
**Beat**

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Derrick Turnbull, owner of Autumn Mist Farm, joins fiancée Tracy Allen and children Bailey Howard and Autumn Turnbull at the farm located in Agawam. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)

## Farm

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says Turnbull.

Turnbull got his first taste of raising beef cattle for sale when he was 11 and a member of 4-H. He's been working the family farm ever since.

The farm was only a handful of acres and several head of cattle when he was a child. But he's grown it into the large-scale operation it is today.

Things were going very well, says Turnbull, until COVID struck in early 2020.

"The whole thing fell right on its face. We didn't do anything for a few months," he explains. "We just kept on feeding the cattle and didn't have anywhere to go with our beef."

Until the pandemic swept across the world, Turnbull had been selling his beef to one primary customer, Dole & Bailey, a Woburn-based purveyor that sells meat to colleges and restaurants. But when colleges closed and restaurants stopped serving customers, Turnbull's business with Dole & Bailey ended.

Turnbull was desperate to find a new market for his beef, so he contacted Springfield's Big Y Foods and invited company representatives to visit his farm.

"We reached out to them and told them what we had to offer. Because there were meat shortages across the country, they wanted to come out and talk to us," says Turnbull.

Turnbull also had his all-natural approach to raising cattle going for him as he sought to market his beef further. "Everybody is into the locally grown farm-to-table stuff now. It's really taken off everywhere across the country and that fit the bill," says



Tracy Allen checks on Bear at Autumn Mist Farm. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)

Turnbull. "It's been a blessing that Big Y has come into the picture and is now buying our product."

The relationship with Big Y, adds Turnbull, literally saved the family farm.

Says Norman Vernadakis, Big Y's director of meat and seafood, "Derrick truly has a great story, and his product is very good. He uses top quality feed. ...It is one of the best tasting local beef we have."

Autumn Mist fit perfectly into Big Y's "Fresh & Local" effort, he added. "It's part of our culture," said Vernadakis. "We work hard to work with local farms."

Autumn Mist Farm's business with Dole & Bailey, meanwhile, is slowly coming back, but it's only 20% of what it used to be. Turnbull's long-term plan is to continue growing the business along with his relationship with Big Y.

He's also purchased 911 Burgers and Dogs and has plans to grow the landmark Agawam restaurant's takeout

business and sell his beef direct to consumers there. "I only want to get bigger," says Turnbull. "But you have to grow in steps, otherwise you can outgrow yourself and you can hurt yourself if you get too big too quick."

Trust is embedded in everything we do and will continue to be the foundation for our continuing future growth and success.

## D'Amour

CONTINUES FROM PAGE L1

to show up each and every day is something that will always be a source of pride and gratitude for me.

Through it all and continuing to this day, we have tried to honor their trust in us by providing a safe environment for them and our customers. We have recognized their efforts and dedication with "thank you" and holiday bonuses to acknowledge their extraordinary efforts, and we have tried to ease the challenges and stresses by reducing their workload and providing for improved work-life balance.

The second thing that struck me was the importance of the grocery store in our communities. Time and again, grocery stores play an important role in the everyday lives of our customers and all the more so during power outages and weather events. In much the same way as we all dealt with the pandemic, our stores were the familiar places in an otherwise chaotic and upended world.

Our customers were able to interact, albeit through masks sometimes, with our caring employees whom they knew and trusted. Our customers thanked us for our cleaning and sanitizing efforts and for keeping them and our employees safe. We acted early to ramp up our already rigorous sanitation and cleaning procedures.

All the while, we reached out to our local farmers and suppliers to be a resource not only to ensure a steady flow of supply but to share with them our best practices and learnings as we all dealt with the effects of the pandemic. Here again, the mutual trust engendered by our partners was



Big Y's president and CEO Charles L. D'Amour helps distribute holiday meals and toys to families in need at the Springfield Police Training Facility on Dec. 22. (HOANG 'LEON' NGUYEN / THE REPUBLICAN FILE PHOTO)

integral and key to navigating uncharted waters and to continue our regular sources of supply for our customers.

None of this happened overnight, of course, but was born of the continuing legacy established for us over 86 years ago. From that small village market, our family company, now led by a team which includes members of the third generation of our family, has grown to include 72 supermarkets located throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut.

This past year, our pharmacy team has administered over 100,000 vaccines. Our gas and convenience division has grown to 14 locations and operates two car washes. We have expanded our Table & Vine liquor division to include a total of nine locations, stretching from the Berkshires to the Greater Boston area and includes our flagship store in West Springfield.

Our Fresh and Local Distribution Center encompasses over 450,000 square feet of state-of-the-art refrigerated and dry distribution space and allows us to partners with over 500 local farmers and producers. And, finally,

we are embracing the future with our 10,000-square-foot automated robotics micro fulfillment center connected to our Chicopee store housing our MyPicks online ordering group.

For 2022, we will be opening our 73rd supermarket in Norwood and beginning construction of two new supermarkets in Uxbridge and Pembroke. We will also be opening a Big Y Express gas-convenience location in Milford, Connecticut, adjacent to our supermarket there.

My father would say that, although we sell food, ours is a people business! And as a "People Business", we couldn't exist without the trust and caring of our wonderful and highly professional employees, the loyal customers and communities we serve and the farmers and suppliers we depend on.

Trust is embedded in everything we do and will continue to be the foundation for our continuing future growth and success.

Charles L. D'Amour is president and CEO of Big Y Foods. To learn more about Big Y, go online to [bigy.com](http://bigy.com).



Derrick Turnbull, owner of Autumn Mist Farm in Agawam, right, works on his new restaurant and retail business with his dad, Gary. Turnbull bought the former 911 Burgers and Dogs restaurant in Agawam, where he will sell his all-natural meats. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)

"Everybody is into the locally grown farm-to-table stuff now. It's really taken off everywhere across the country and that fit the bill. It's been a blessing that Big Y has come into the picture and is now buying our product."

DERRICK TURNBULL, AUTUMN MIST FARM



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