

‘ An unbelievable organization ’

GREENFIELD

Community Development Corp.’s Western Mass. Food Processing Center named Manufacturer of Year

By JULIAN MENDOZA

Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — As chopped onions and a wet floor set the scene, state Sen. Jo Comerford presented the Franklin County Community Development Corp.’s Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center with the Manufacturer of the Year award on Tuesday morning.

Nominated by Comerford through the Legislature’s Manufacturing Caucus, the center received the award for excellence in manufacturing in the Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester Senate district that Comerford represents.

“This is an unbelievable organization,” Comerford, D-Northampton, said in her speech at the 324 Wells St. facility. “Exceptional, unbelievable work.”

For Director of Operations Liz Buxton and the center’s staff, the Manufacturer of the Year award is a testament to day-in, day-out work that remained consistent even through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEE FOOD A8



State Sen. Jo Comerford D-Northampton, left, praises employees at the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center at the Franklin County Community Development Corp. in Greenfield on Tuesday.

STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ



Workers process onions at the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center on Wells Street in Greenfield on Tuesday.

STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Food processing center honored

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“I’m so honored,” Buxton said. “Through COVID, we’ve been here every day to keep the local food system alive and healthy.”

Buxton said the Food Processing Center has worked with more than 400 companies and has serviced 18 local farms this year. Annually, she said, the facility processes 150,000 pounds of locally sourced vegetables for freezing, makes sauces and prepares other food products.

“We have a mission to help these farms and local businesses,” Buxton explained. “One of our overall goals is to help people understand and shop local.”

“We think this is an example of manufacturing at its very best,” Comerford said. “It’s completely dedicated to the local economy.”

With the Food Processing Center marking its 20th anniversary this year, the facility’s tradition of helping farms and local businesses is a long-standing one.

“For 20 years, we’ve had this food specialization, which is so important for our region,” said Community Development Corp. Executive Director John Waite.

In addition to its commitment to efficiently manufacturing healthy products, the Food Processing Center serves the community by participating in Hampshire County’s “re-entry” program and Franklin County’s “early release” program, services that provide incarcerated

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people with job experience.

Although the idea of an environment like the Food Processing Center might not excite everyone, Buxton said the facility deserves appreciation.

“It’s a hidden gem that we want people in our community to see,” Buxton said.

On Oct. 23, the Food Processing Center is holding an open house from 1 to 3 p.m. Vendors, all clients of the Franklin County Community Development Corp., will be in attendance outside the Wells Street facility. *Reach Julian Mendoza at 413-772-0261, ext. 261 or jmendoza@recorder.com.*



State Sen. Jo Comerford presents John Waite, director of the Franklin County Community Development Corp., and Liz Buxton, director of operations at the CDC’s Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center, with the Manufacturer of the Year award.

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