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# DIFFERENCE MAKERS

Listed Alphabetically

In late 2008, BusinessWest magazine created a new recognition program. The name — Difference Makers — pretty much says it all; these individuals are making a difference in the community known as Western Massachusetts. The first class of Difference Makers, chosen early in 2009, accurately reflects the spirit of the program and the work being done by individuals and groups to improve the quality of life enjoyed in this region.



**DOUG BOWEN**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF PEOPLESBANK

Doug Bowen has been making a difference for decades, as an officer (now president and CEO) of PeoplesBank, and within the community. He has led the bank to consistent growth, more than \$1.5 billion in assets, a strong ranking (52nd) among all state businesses in the Boston Business Journal's list of the largest charitable contributors, and a position of leadership in a new realm within the industry — 'green' lending. In the community, he has devoted time, energy, and insight to groups ranging from the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce to Loomis Communities; from the Economic Development Council of Western Mass. to Holyoke Community College.



**KATE KANE**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE SPRINGFIELD OFFICE OF NORTHWESTERN MUTUAL FINANCIAL NETWORK

Kate Kane describes the work she does within the community as a 'gift.' However, she says she's receiving as well as giving. She gives in the form of time, expertise, and perseverance — to groups ranging from the Sisters of Providence Health System to Dress for Success; from the Women's Fund to Friends of the Homeless — and receives lessons she then puts to work in future endeavors. Her title is managing director, but her role is to teach and inspire those working with and for her to reach their maximum potential. She's been doing the same in her community work, as well.



**SUSAN JAYE-KAPLAN**  
FOUNDER OF GOFIT AND CO-FOUNDER OF LINK TO LIBRARIES

In 2005, Susan Jaye-Kaplan started an organization called GoFIT, which dedicated itself to introducing young people and women to the concept of fitness and putting them on a track to a better quality of life. The project has been a huge success, and its basic tenets have been emulated in a host of regional and national programs. GoFIT was a smash hit, but Jaye-Kaplan wasn't through making a difference. Seeing another huge need in the community — books for libraries in schools serving the children of low-income families — she moved to meet it by partnering with friend Janet Crimmins in a venture called Link to Libraries, which distributes 100 new books three times a month.



**WILLIAM WARD**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD OF HAMPDEN COUNTY

William Ward has spent his career developing a reputation as a solution-finder — and in a realm, employment, where the solutions don't come quickly or easily. As executive director of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, he's played a lead role in a number of ambitious endeavors, all with different specific goals, but the same basic mission: creating opportunities for people who have encountered barriers to employment. Such initiatives have included a minority-employment program, a private-sector summer jobs program, the hugely successful one-stop career centers in Springfield and Holyoke, and the current initiative called "Building a Better Workforce — Closing the Skills Gap on the Road to Economic Resurgence."



**YPS THE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SOCIETY OF GREATER SPRINGFIELD**

The Young Professionals Society of Greater Springfield was created in 2007 with the broad goal of helping members 'plant roots' and develop lasting connections to the region and its business community. It is succeeding with that mission, and in the process, it is truly making a difference. It is doing so through programs such as its monthly 'Third Thursday' networking sessions, a 'CEO Luncheon' program during which members can meet and learn from area business leaders, and a host of initiatives designed to connect young people to the arts, promote mentoring, and facilitate efforts to give back to the community.