

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Congressman Jake Auchincloss Joins TEDxBerkshires 2026 Lineup Exploring Human Potential, AI, and the Future of Longevity

Event returns to the Berkshire Innovation Center on Thursday, October 8, with talks spanning artificial intelligence, brain repair, authenticity, embodied movement, and wild food

PITTSFIELD, Mass. — TEDx Berkshires returns to the Berkshire Innovation Center for a fourth consecutive year on Thursday, October 8, 2026, at 45 Woodlawn Avenue, Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

TEDx Berkshires continues its tradition of bringing bold ideas, original thinkers, and transformative conversations to the Berkshires through a locally organized TEDx experience inspired by the globally recognized TED platform.

The event runs from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., including a reception featuring speakers, innovators, entrepreneurs, educators, and community leaders. This year's program explores the intersection of human potential, technology, health, and conscious leadership — from the policy decisions shaping American innovation to the science of aging, the repair of the human brain, and the wisdom held in our own bodies and landscapes.

"When we founded TEDx Berkshires, our goal was to build a stage where bold ideas could inspire action and bring people together across industries and generations," said Ethan Berg, Founder and Curator of TEDx Berkshires. "Each year I'm reminded that the Berkshires attracts and is home to remarkable thinkers and changemakers whose ideas deserve a wider audience — and this year's lineup reaches from the halls of Congress to the frontier of artificial intelligence, from the repair of the human brain to the open fire and the dance floor."

Featured Speakers

Congressman Jake Auchincloss — U.S. Representative, Massachusetts' 4th District — "The Wild Horse and the Jockey" Auchincloss has represented Massachusetts' 4th Congressional District since 2021. A Newton native, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2010 to 2015, holds degrees from Harvard and MIT's Sloan School of Management, and served on the Newton City Council before his election to Congress. His legislative work has focused on drug pricing, biotechnology policy, and the impact of social media on young people. In his talk, he will explore novel approaches to innovation and collaboration for improving the health of Americans.

Matt Onsum, Ph.D. — Head of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Calico Life Sciences, Alphabet's (Google) Longevity Research Company — "How Advances in ML/AI Are Enabling an Unprecedented View of Aging and Aging-Related Disease, and the Impact This Will Have on Drug Discovery" Onsum leads the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning to the biology of aging; his team's work was recently featured in Google DeepMind's "Co-Scientist" aging research collaboration. His talk will explore how machine learning and AI are opening an unprecedented view of aging — and what that means for the discovery of new medicines.

Jean Hébert, Ph.D. — Program Manager, ARPA-H; author of *Replacing Aging* — "What If Brain Damage Wasn't Permanent?" Hébert leads FRONT (Functional Repair of Neocortical Tissue), a five-year federal initiative to restore brain functions — such as motor control, vision, and speech — lost to stroke and traumatic brain injury. A former professor of genetics and neuroscience at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, he will share a provocative vision for repairing and renewing the human brain.

Dr. Catherine Sanderson — Poler Family Professor of Psychology, Amherst College — "Sharing the Bad: Why Everyone Else's Life Seems Better Than Yours" We scroll through other people's highlight reels and quietly conclude that everyone else is happier than we are. Drawing on psychological research into social norms and misperception, Sanderson explores the gap between the lives people show and the lives they actually live — and why being more honest about our struggles can make all of us feel less alone. Sanderson is the author of *The Positive Shift* and *Why We Act* and created the popular Introduction to Psychology course for The Great Courses.

Toni Bergins, M.Ed. — Founder, JourneyDance; author of *Embody* — "Move Into a New Story" Bergins is the founder and director of JourneyDance, an internationally recognized expressive-movement practice, and the author of *Embody: Feel, Heal, and Transform Your Life Through Movement*. For more than 27 years she has taught at many of the country's

leading centers for holistic learning, including the Esalen Institute, Omega Institute, 1440 Multiversity, and the New York Open Center; since her first workshop at Omega in 2008, JourneyDance has become one of the most sought-after offerings in its movement program. Today she leads an international community of more than 1,500 JourneyDance facilitators. Blending dance, music, ritual, and story, her talk invites audiences to get out of their heads and into their bodies — and to discover that the stories we live by can be rewritten through movement. Bergins will be joined on stage by dancers from her movement team.

Chef James Gop — Founder, Heirloom Fire — "What We Call a Weed" Gop is the founder of Heirloom Fire, the Richmond, Massachusetts-based, sustainably minded catering and events company renowned for cooking over open fire. Most of what appears at an Heirloom Fire table is farmed, foraged, or forged, with menus built around what local farms and the surrounding landscape have to offer. Gop has cooked at the James Beard House as part of its "Rooted in the Berkshires" dinner and was featured on the nationally distributed public television series *GardenFit*. In his talk, he asks us to look again at the plants we pull up and throw away — and to see in the overlooked edges of our landscape a source of flavor, nourishment, and a deeper relationship with the land.

Aaron James

Why are household electricity bills rising even as the cost of generating power has fallen? James argues that the "natural monopoly" that once justified regulated utilities now comes down to little more than the poles and wires that deliver power, and that rethinking that model could change what Americans pay for energy.

From the Team

"TEDxBerkshires is about elevating transformative ideas that challenge us to think bigger about the future we are creating together," said Stephen Boyd, TEDxBerkshires Executive Producer and CEO of Boyd Biomedical. "This year's event will spotlight thinkers who are helping shape the future of technology, humanity, and innovation in deeply meaningful ways."

"The Berkshires has become a destination for creative thinking, entrepreneurship, and purposeful innovation," said Giovanna Fessenden-Fairbank, intellectual property attorney, TEDxBerkshires Executive Producer, and BIC Board Chair. "TEDxBerkshires creates a space where diverse perspectives come together to spark new conversations and inspire action."

TEDxBerkshires was originally launched in Lenox in 2010 by Ethan Berg, Jamie Berg, and Dr. Mark Liponis.

Tickets and Sponsorship

Tickets are available through the Berkshire Innovation

Center: berkshireinnovationcenter.com/event-details/tedx-berkshires-2026

The Berkshire Innovation Center is grateful to its sponsors who have supported innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and future-focused conversations in the Berkshires and beyond.

"Our sponsors play an essential role in making TEDxBerkshires possible," said Ben Sosne, Executive Director of BIC. "Through their support, sponsors are investing in a culture of innovation, collaboration, and lifelong learning that strengthens both the Berkshires and the broader innovation ecosystem."

About TEDxBerkshires

TEDxBerkshires is a local, independently organized event that brings the TED-like experience to the Berkshires by presenting top thinkers who are also outstanding speakers. Our goal is to bring powerful ideas to an audience every bit as interesting as the speakers.

About TEDx, x = independently organized event

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TED Talks video and live speakers combine to spark deep discussion and connection. These local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x = independently organized TED event. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events are self-organized.

About TED

TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to ideas worth spreading, usually in the form of short talks delivered by leading thinkers and doers. Many of these talks are given at TED conferences and thousands of independently organized TEDx events around the world. Videos of these talks are made available, free, on TED.com and other platforms.

About the Berkshire Innovation Center

The Berkshire Innovation Center serves as a catalyst to spark innovation and the sustainable growth of technology-focused companies. We do this through programs that promote learning and enrich people in technology-led career paths, and by providing research and innovation space for people and companies to explore new technologies, all while convening and connecting a community of like-minded people. ###