

Syntiro celebrates leadership transition

cm centralmaine.com/2025/02/02/syntiro-celebrates-leadership-transition

February 2, 2025

centralmaine.com

AUGUSTA — Syntiro has announced a leadership transition that honors its legacy while looking to the future. After more than two decades of service, Debbie Gilmer retires from Syntiro, leaving a legacy of transformative leadership in professional development and education innovation. Jess Berry has been appointed as the new executive director, bringing her passion for equity in education and forward-thinking vision to guide the organization into its next chapter.

This milestone marks a new era for Syntiro as it continues its mission to create equitable educational opportunities and provide inventive professional development for learners and educators across Maine, according to a news release from Syntiro.

Gilmer retires after more than 20 years of service at Syntiro, including her role as president and executive director for the past 13 years. Under her leadership, Syntiro became a leader in both professional development and education innovation, equipping Maine’s educators and communities with the tools to adapt and thrive.

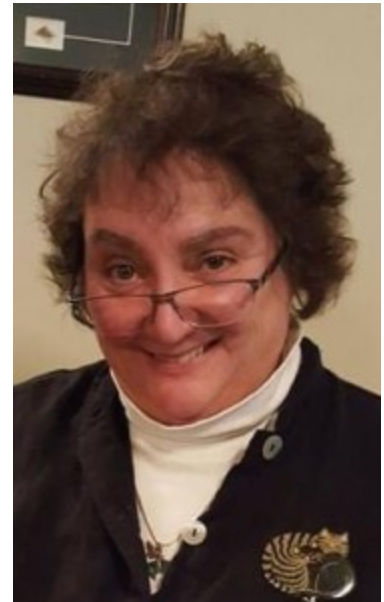
Gilmer’s career is marked by dedication to equity and inclusion, with a legacy that extends beyond her time at Syntiro. Prior to joining the organization, she served as associate director and acting director of the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, advocating for systemic change and opportunity for all learners.

“Debbie’s leadership has been nothing short of transformational,” said Rick Wilson, Syntiro board chair. “Her dedication to advancing opportunities for Maine learners, educators, and communities has left an indelible mark on Syntiro and the state. We are deeply grateful for her vision, her heart, and her years of unwavering service.”

Succeeding Gilmer, Berry brings a wealth of experience and a proven dedication to equity in education. She most recently served as assistant dean of Students for Accessible Education and Student Support at Bates College, where she championed inclusion and access for all learners. Her extensive background also includes leadership roles at the University of Maine at Farmington, where she directed the Learning Assistance Center and worked with TRiO Upward Bound to support underserved students.

“I’m excited to lead Syntiro into this next chapter,” said Berry. “Education shapes futures, and it’s a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated team to ensure Maine students and educators have the tools, resources, and opportunities to thrive.”

In her new role as executive director, Berry will also serve as the project director of GEAR UP Maine RISE, a seven-year program providing middle and high school students with academic support, mentoring and career



Debbie Gilmer Submitted photo



Jess Berry Submitted photo

exploration.

“We are thrilled to have Jess at the forefront of Syntiro’s mission and know her leadership will bring incredible benefits to students, educators, and communities across Maine” said Wilson.

Comments are not available on this story.

[Maine’s first sports betting parlor pauses wagers after state revokes license](#)

[Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce honors 3 members](#)

© 2025