



Giving Changes Everything

WINTER 2022



How would we spend \$1+ billion to improve RI?

See page 14 to find out



**The Rhode Island
Foundation
is a proactive
community and
philanthropic
leader dedicated to
meeting the needs of
the people of
Rhode Island.**

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Meet the inaugural class of the Equity Leadership Initiative (ELI). Thirty-one men and women who identify as Asian, Black, Hispanic or Latino, Indigenous or multi-racial, from across sectors, were chosen by the Rhode Island Foundation to participate in a year of focused and concentrated leadership development with the goal of building a pipeline of future leaders of color.

“I am excited to get to work to cultivate the next generation of industry leaders,” said Angie Ankoma, ELI executive director and a vice president at the Foundation. “Bank presidents, hospital CEOs, leaders in academia and education, corporate executives, policy-makers, judges and more who are people of color.”

In addition to monthly half-day group meetings, participants are receiving regular one-to-one coaching sessions, will develop a personal leadership vision and goals; will be matched with a mentor and will make high-level connections across industries.

Learn about each of the participants at <https://rifoundation.org/eli>



January, 2022

Dear Friends,

At Rhode Island's community foundation, we're welcoming 2022 with high hopes and looking back on 2021 with gratitude.

Don't get me wrong, the last year has been challenging for so many in our state, and we know that 2022 will be difficult in many ways as well. That said, our mission is clear—to meet the needs of all of the people of Rhode Island—and that inspiring charge gives our team, donors, and community partners fuel to forge ahead, even in uncertain times.

With support from the wide range of incredibly generous philanthropists who choose to invest with us, we've been hard at work turning the stark challenges that COVID-19 presents to our state into opportunities to lead lasting, structural change that will benefit the entire community.

In the pages that follow you'll find examples of that exact work—change-making through crisis—it's what we were built for, and with your support, it's what we will continue to do for generations to come.

We look forward to your continued partnership and support. Feel free to reach out any time with feedback—our doors are always open.

All the best,



Neil D. Steinberg,
President & CEO

**Now is a moment
for a sweeping
strategy that
pushes us closer to
equity—investment
in people and
places that need
it the most.**

A uniquely Ocean State solution to feeding those in need

Connecting those who know how to catch fish with those who know how to cook them

By Jenny Pereira, vice president of grants & community investments



On a crisp, late autumn morning, it's quiet in the village of Point Judith.

The tourists have gone home, traffic is minimal, and nearby beaches are deserted.

Yet the docks are awash with activity as fishing boats arrive and crews unload the day's catch. Alesia Ross and Lee Spencer of the George Wiley Center are at the dock for Handrigan Seafood where they'll pick up 300 pounds of freshly-caught squid. For free.

Through a program, partially funded by a Rhode Island Foundation COVID-19 Response Fund grant, six Rhode Island nonprofit organizations, including the George Wiley Center, have received more than 130,000 pounds of seafood since the pandemic began.

The Foundation grantee, Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island (CFCRI), buys seafood from a number of local seafood brokers at below-market rates and provides it to organizations that agree to offer complimentary pick-up meals to Rhode Islanders in need. The pilot project was developed in partnership with Eating with the Ecosystem, the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

"The project supplies fresh, healthy food to people who cannot afford to put protein on their plates while at the same time supporting the state's fishing and hospitality industries," says Fred Mattera, CFCRI executive director. "The industry has always been receptive to the needs of the community. With COVID, we asked ourselves, 'What more could we do?' Fishermen were telling me that due to restaurant and other closures, they

had no place to sell their catch. At the same time, there were people who didn't have food. It's one of those rare win-win initiatives."

"The project supplies fresh, healthy food to people who cannot afford to put protein on their plates while at the same time supporting the state's fishing and hospitality industries."

Jim Sykes is the production foreman at Handrigan Seafood which sells to fish markets from Canada to New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Of CFCRI's "Keeping the fishing industry informed and afloat during the COVID-19 crisis" project, he states, "It's a good program. I charge them (CFCRI) the least I can. It's the people who can take a whole fish and know how to cook it who benefit from the program."

The beneficiaries are clients of the George Wiley Center as well as individuals and families served by the African Alliance of Rhode Island, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Refugee Dream Center, Sunrise Forever, and Women's Refugee Care.



"Our clients love fish. Eel especially is a winner," says Lee Spencer of George Wiley Center, noting from week to week the donation could include lobster, scup, butterfish, whiting, crabs, or mackerel, as well as eel or squid.

"The price of fish is high, so people really appreciate this program," agrees Alesia Ross, explaining that individuals and families served by a health center, homeless shelter, and church in the Wiley Center's neighborhood flock to the Center when fish is available.

"We give the healthiest food to individuals who have no food. It's an amazing program, and if there's a silver lining to this terrible, terrible pandemic, this program is it," CFCRI's Mattera concludes.

The Foundation has awarded just over \$27 million in pandemic relief since March 2020 through the following: the COVID-19 Response Fund, the weR1 Rhode Island Fund, the Rhode Island Fund for Public Education Virtual Learning Challenge, the COVID-19 Behavioral Health Fund, and the Vax Challenge, as well as through the Rhode Island Nonprofit Support Fund and the Rhode Island Nonprofit Support Fund II, both in partnership with the State of Rhode Island and funded through the CARES Act.

Featured in this story, the COVID-19 Response Fund was established in March 2020 to support nonprofit organizations providing direct assistance to Rhode Islanders with financial need or demonstrable hardship resulting from COVID-19 and not otherwise covered by other resources. This has included organizations providing basic needs to Rhode Islanders, including food, relief from rent and other household expenses, and access to health care. The Fund has awarded more than \$7.7 million in 181 grants to nonprofit organizations.



An ambitious philanthropist out to make a difference in a hurry

Papitto Opportunity Connection brings a bold equity agenda to RI's non-profit community

By Neil D. Steinberg, president & CEO

With a firm belief that education and jobs skills training could empower and change lives for members of Rhode Island's communities of color, Barbara Papitto established the Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) in December 2020. She envisioned funding 10 projects in the program's first year.

But she didn't. She funded more than 50.

As the year drew to a close, the POC had funded a broad swath of investments in education, job skills training, and entrepreneurship that are geared toward Rhode Island's Black, Indigenous, and People-of-Color communities.

"We wanted to support agencies that are typically underfunded and are very necessary right now. Many of these organizations have been overlooked...unseen. We found so many people doing the work we want to do, but without the funding they so need," Barbara explains.

POC's funded organizations are a Who's Who of Rhode Island nonprofits, from The Elisha Project to Center for Southeast Asians and from Building Futures to Lifespan. POC also funds scholarships. "We think outside the box, funding solutions that are innovative and will make a difference," Barbara states.

"Listening to what the communities need has been most valuable to us," Barbara continues, noting that members of the board of advisors—consisting entirely of people from across Rhode Island's communities of color—are people who bring unique and important perspective on the needs of the various communities.

The Rhode Island Foundation partnered on several projects in POC's inaugural year, the first being the SMART (School Health Model for Academics Reaching All and Transforming Lives) Clinics through our Rhode Island Public Education Fund. SMART Clinics were brought to Rhode Island as a collaboration between the Rhode Island Department of Education, CVS Health Foundation, Partnership for Rhode Island, Papitto Opportunity Connection, and Rhode Island Foundation. SMART Clinics—which address students' and families' physical and behavioral wellness needs—have opened at Mount Pleasant High School and Roger Williams Middle School, with a third in development at George J. West Elementary School.

"If a child isn't feeling well, they're not going to learn. And if they miss school, it's hard for them to catch up. We hope having the clinics in the schools will make a dramatic difference," Barbara explains.

"If children of color could have teachers who look like them, that is going to advance their attitude toward education."

POC also has partnered with the Foundation through our Fund for the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers of Color. Through this effort—for which the Foundation raised more than \$3 million—the Providence Public Schools will hire more than 125 teachers of color in the next five years. Students of color represent 80 percent of enrollment in the district while just 20 percent of teachers are members of minority groups.

"I think this is critical in the Providence school system. If children of color could have teachers who look like them, that is going to advance their attitude toward education," Barbara states.

POC also supported the Foundation's Refugee Relief Fund which is providing support and basic needs to children and adults arriving in Rhode Island as a result of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. "Additional funds are so needed as money from the state is not enough to get these families settled and acclimated," Barbara notes.

"We're always open to ideas that make sense. It feels good to be giving and to see the appreciation and smiles on people's faces. Whenever something the Rhode Island Foundation is doing fits into our objectives and mission, we're happy to work together," Barbara concludes.

A windfall is only as valuable as your plan for it

Over \$1 billion is coming to RI
The question is where to spend it

By Neil D. Steinberg, president & CEO

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is a monumental piece of legislation that was intended to help communities across America regain their footing after being laid low by the pandemic. This infusion of federal funding offers our leaders a once-in-a-lifetime chance to positively change the direction of the state and to focus on tackling pre-existing challenges exacerbated by COVID-19.



One of the great strengths of ARPA is the freedom it gives states to decide how to use the funds to address their unique needs.

But with that freedom comes risk—we have one chance to get this right.

Which is why the Rhode Island Foundation teamed up with the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC), the Economic Progress Institute, and more than a dozen civic, business, and philanthropic leaders in the state to embark on Make It Happen: Investing for Rhode Island's Future, guided by a 16-member Steering Committee. The Committee's goal was to combine that institutional knowledge with ideas and proposals submitted by Rhode Islanders to help recommend how the state should spend its \$1-billion plus American Rescue Plan bonus. Six months of rigorous research and public input went into the process of identifying "big ideas" with long-term benefits—especially for those impacted the most by the pandemic—to guide decision-making by state leaders.

The approximately 400 ideas submitted by the public came via email, stakeholder conversations with more than 140 people, five focus groups with Rhode Islanders from communities hardest hit by COVID, and from 11 nonprofit-led, community visioning sessions throughout the state. The ideas ranged from distributing \$600 stimulus checks to working class families to converting all state buildings and facilities to renewable energy to creating a low-rise senior village on the McCoy Stadium site.



The range and quality of the ideas was energizing. But the Committee members understood that to galvanize efforts, they would have to distill this public enthusiasm down to a few big goals. So they started by emphasizing initiatives with strong evidence of large long-term, sustainable returns. And they simultaneously focused on addressing racial and economic inequity, with the understanding that those who can progress the most are those who have been left furthest behind. Ultimately, the policy experts recommended six key areas of investment: housing, behavioral health, workforce development, small business assistance, neighborhood trusts, and immediate relief. These findings have been shared with Governor Dan McKee and the Rhode Island General Assembly.

This is a landscape-altering investment, not just because of the amount of money, but because of the latitude and flexibility officials have in how to invest it. So the Make It Happen Steering Committee was, from the outset, committed to making careful but bold choices—intentional choices grounded in the principles of equity, racial justice, sustainability, and impact.

While the ARPA funding is not enough to solve every issue the state is experiencing, it presents a life-changing opportunity for Rhode Islanders if spent prudently and in full.

It will take a sustained effort by all of us to ensure that we fully reap the promise of the American Rescue Plan Act. Now is a moment

for a sweeping strategy that pushes us closer to equity—investment in people and places that need it the most. The decisions made in the coming months will determine whether that becomes a reality. We encourage all of you to get engaged with the process and contact your elected officials so you can play a part in this exciting chance to shape our state's future.



Housing \$405 million

Rhode Island continues to grapple with a decades-long acute shortage of housing—especially for those with low to moderate income. ARPA funds present a unique opportunity to invest in permanent housing infrastructure at a scale that can help thousands of Rhode Islanders for generations to come.



Behavioral Health \$225 million

The number of Rhode Islanders battling mental health and substance abuse challenges has reached epidemic proportions. Which is why the Committee recommended a dramatic expansion of services and treatments across the behavioral health continuum of care.

Six Key Areas



Workforce Development \$205 million

Solid, stable careers can change lives in ways no government program can. And with many businesses in the state facing worker shortages at the same time that many residents remain unemployed or underemployed, a thoughtful workforce development initiative would pay dividends for years. The Committee's recommendations would provide 15,000 Rhode Islanders with high-quality jobs through robust training, adult education, workforce skills services, and the elimination of barriers to employment such as lack of affordable childcare.



Small Business Assistance \$100 million

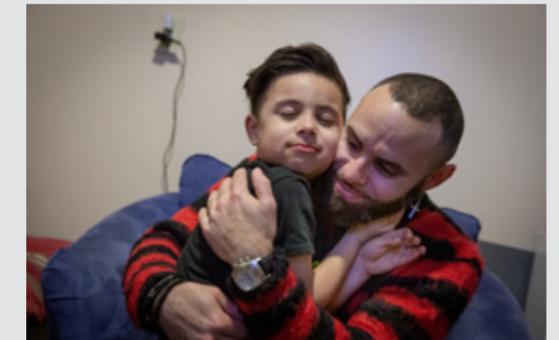
Small businesses are the backbone of Rhode Island's economy, and significant assistance in the form of low-interest and forgivable loans will not only sustain them, but help them grow.

of Investment



Neighborhood Trusts \$50 million

Communities with limited access to capital would be targeted with a place-based pool of funds that focus on large-scale efforts to revitalize and improve specific neighborhoods, with those resources directed by the people who live in that place.



Immediate Relief \$50 million

This will allow Rhode Island's nonprofits to help provide treatment for mental health services, reduce food, housing, and employment insecurity, address domestic violence, and meet childcare needs, all of which have escalated during the pandemic.

One person's mission to improve our schools

Matthew Plain's journey into RI's education system

By Aaron Guckian, development officer



Passionate about improving education, and having spent four years teaching, Matt decided to go back to school. Just maybe not the kind of school you'd expect.

Matt grew up in Rhode Island and graduated from East Greenwich High School. After earning a bachelor's degree in political science at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Matt spent four years teaching middle school earning a master's degree in education at UNC Greensboro along the way. While he loved teaching, it was the policy and legal underpinnings of the education system that fascinated him.

"I wanted to get into law to effectuate changes in education at the district or state level," he explains.

So Matt returned to Rhode Island and enrolled in the Roger Williams University (RWU) School of Law. "The law school was in its emerging years and I liked the individual approach they had to educating students. They attracted good talent to the faculty and student body."

Following his law school graduation in 2005, Matt served as a law clerk to the Honorable George E. Healy Jr., Chief Judge (ret.) of the Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Court, of whom he states, "He was the best. He was not only a mentor in law, but also as a person." Following his one-year clerkship with Judge Healy, Matt joined Barton Gilman LLP (then Taylor Duane Barton & Gilman LLP), where he began to immerse himself in education law. Now Co-Managing Partner, Matt serves as outside general counsel for several nonprofits and maintains a significant education law practice while also working as a civil litigator. The firm represents nonprofits throughout New England and more than 200 schools from Massachusetts to Maryland in issues ranging from governance to contracts and from special education matters to discipline issues. As he worked to build the education practice at Barton Gilman, Matt has been active in the charter school and education reform movements in Rhode Island.

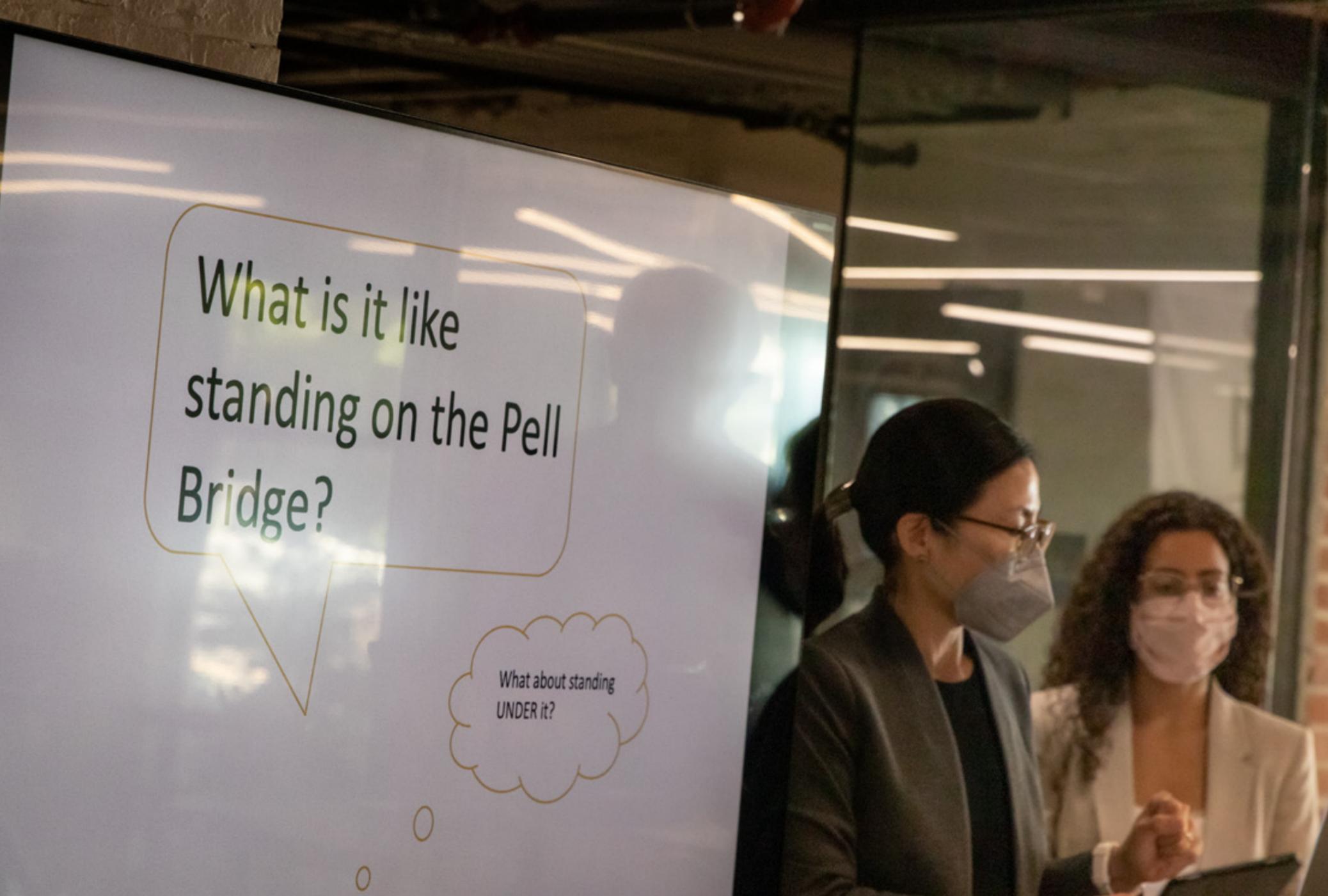
The COVID-19 pandemic impacted both his professional and personal lives. "It was my life around the clock," he explains. As a member of the East Greenwich School Committee (2016-November 2020), he approached the handling of the COVID-19 impact on schools as both his civic and legal responsibility. "In-person learning was a big debate, and we helped schools navigate this," he states: The mask and vaccine discussions continue to be a significant part of my (legal) work. Schools have done a great job of engaging their stakeholders in discussing and selling policy.

"In-person learning was a big debate, and we helped schools navigate this."

Matt's long list of professional and civic affiliations includes two years on the Foundation's Professional Advisory Council. "I interact frequently with staff at the Foundation. A number of our nonprofit clients are Foundation grantees and have received leadership development and capacity-building training through the Foundation. We (Barton Gilman) launched a four-part training series for charter school board members based on a model the Foundation established," Matt says.

He continues, "Through my practice, I've learned how the Foundation and its donors can have a significant impact on organizations and individuals. It's a great resource for our state."

And we are confident a lot of people would agree that Matt is too.



Creativity brings people joy—and jobs

DESIGNxRI puts a spotlight on Newport's vibrant creative sector

By Claudia Cornejo, strategic initiative officer

Rhode Island may be the smallest state, but we pack a lot of problem-solving talent and design creativity into our 1,214 square miles. In fact, Rhode Island has the third highest percentage of creative sector jobs per capita in the country, after New York and California. Which is why the Foundation has made supporting the design and creative community an integral part of our strategy to improve economic outcomes.

The creative sector is not just creative enterprises like museums and magazines, or artists such as musicians, painters, and dancers. Creative economy workers are employed in nearly every sector that drives Rhode Island, from the arts, to education, to technology and science, to major global brands. Between 2007

and 2012, 500 new design businesses came online in the state, despite the recession, and they create what we—and people around the world—listen to, watch, read, wear, and buy.

Thanks in part to DESIGNxRI—Rhode Island has become a hotbed for design and creativity. Founded in 2013, Foundation grantee DESIGNxRI is a nonprofit, collaboratively-built organization that has created opportunities for RI designers and design businesses, mainly through events and initiatives that nurture and connect designers to opportunities. “The Rhode Island design community is a dynamic group that has chosen to live and work in this small yet dynamic state due to its high quality of life, proximity to regional, and national and international opportunities, as well as access to a supply chain base,” says Co-founder and Executive Director Lisa Carnevale. “It’s also simply a fun, collaborative, and inspiring place where innovation and entrepreneurship can thrive.”

This year, the eighth annual DESIGN WEEK RI focused for one entire day on a unique island, literally and figuratively, with Newport Day of Design—a day of talks and tours around design, art, culture, and education. “Newport is an often-misunderstood city in Rhode Island,” says Lisa. “While there are riches, there is also entrepreneurial grit that isn’t often spoken about. We wanted to dig into what’s happening in this city by the sea during our DESIGN WEEK RI to see what might get revealed through the creative sector.”

“The 2021 DESIGN WEEK RI brought together innovative minds and creative talent to learn from and to inspire one another,” says Lisa, “once again spotlighting the breadth and depth of Rhode Island design.”

The Foundation is proud to support events like this and organizations like DESIGNxRI which celebrate and catalyze the creative energy of our state.

Newport Day of Design Itinerary

“**Crossing the Pell Bridge**”, a presentation and exhibition preview of four proposals from the Masters in Adaptive Reuse program of RISD’s Department of Interior Architecture—four visions for adapting the iconic bridge for bicycle and pedestrian access. Attendees at the Innovate Newport space heard from project leaders Liliane Wong, a professor of Interior Architecture at RISD, and renowned architect Wolfgang Rudorf. Using immersive visualization technology, the exhibit then took them for a virtual reality walk across the bridge.

An open house with Tamar Kern, a RISD-trained jewelry artist who owns Alloy Studio on Bellevue Avenue, was the next stop. Her gallery, founded in 2005, is a showplace of contemporary jewelry created by her as well as other artists.

Experiencing the emerging world of 3D printing with the Aquidneck Fabrication team. Newport native Keydell Fuller and his partner William FitzPatrick demonstrated how they use computer-aided design to transfer ideas into reality across the architecture, yacht, and prototyping industries. “Having an event during DESIGN WEEK RI was great for us. It was good to be surrounded by so many interested in 3D printing,” said Keydell, currently a student at Babson College.

At the Newport Art Museum, **an exploration of the untold and sometimes mis-told stories of African heritage entrepreneurship in Newport**. Keith Stokes, vice president with the 1696 Heritage Group, shared stories of the African makers, innovators, and inventors of the gilded age whose hands and minds helped build Newport.



168 Sponsors, hosts, designers, & firms participated

41 Events

72 Designers

24 Businesses

Presentations at the IYRS School of Technology and Trades, a post-secondary experiential learning institution that is the premier marine trades school in the United States. Renowned glass sculptor Daniel Clayman demonstrated how he incorporates 3D modeling and 3D printing into his workflow of fine art glass. And Jonathan Lord, cofounder and CTO of Flux Marine, a Rhode Island based startup, talked about his prototyping partnership with IYRS to improve ocean health through marine electrification technology—a technology that offers the first true alternative to combustion engines with applications across recreational, commercial, and military boating sectors.

Newport Day of Design concluded with “**cocktails and conversation**” at **Hammetts Hotel**, the most recent addition to the waterfront in Newport. An infill project, the development involved a mix of designers and partners in Rhode Island and is an amazing case study in collaboration and innovation.



For almost three decades, Mario Bueno, executive director of Progreso Latino, has been committed to helping Rhode Islanders succeed, easing the transition for thousands of Latino immigrants. Because of his dedication to the community, Mario has been awarded the 2021 Murray Family Prize for Community Enrichment at the Rhode Island Foundation. Under his leadership, Progreso Latino has developed programs to address social determinants of health, citizenship classes, workforce development, as well as unique needs of the undocumented community.

Lead. We have earned the trust of our donors, community leaders, and Rhode Islanders through a century of effective investments, strategic grants, and responsible decisions.

Transform. We align our fundraising, grantmaking, and leadership to inspire and engage Rhode Islanders to address today's challenges and create lasting improvements in our community.

Inspire. We challenge and encourage Rhode Islanders to become active and involved in the community, to form meaningful partnerships, and to work together for the good of Rhode Island.





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