



# Alumni Connection

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*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*  
– Margaret Mead



## Next stop: Quonset

*With smokestacks from Toray Plastics in the background, a golfer chips on to green at the North Kingstown Golf Course.*

After a year focusing on the economic and social well-being of Central Falls, Leadership Rhode Island is turning its attention to a dramatically different economic venue: Quonset Business Park.

The switch from a bankrupt city to a bustling business park as the site for Leadership in Action projects has prompted some to wonder, "Why Quonset?"

The business park is clearly one of the state's great economic assets, and yet, at times, seemingly misunderstood or underrated for the value it brings to the Ocean State, says Mike Ritz ('07), executive director of LRI.

The decision to go to Quonset can be traced to the results of a 2012 survey in which alumni were asked: Where should we go next? Participants were asked to rank

a variety of regional options, ranging from urban neighborhoods and specific cities to entire regions, such as the Blackstone Valley.

Alumni who favored the business park fell into two broad categories: those who see it as a strong economic asset, one that LRI might take to an even higher level, and those who see "un-realized potential" at Quonset and think LRI might be able to "rally resources and make things happen."

"I would love to see what the curious and smart minds of our LRI leaders would propose to reinvigorate Quonset, develop cross-community partnerships and transform our state," wrote Holly Jensen, ('08).

By selecting Quonset, LRI turns its collective brainpower toward one of Rhode Island's major economic development efforts. Calls

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## Sharing treasure, time, talent

Who will provide the direction? That question, accompanied by an etching of a sailboat in choppy waters, was on the cover of LRI's recruitment brochure in 1990. Inside were the smiling faces of the Kappa class holding a rope and surrounded by quotes about their experience in LRI's core program. That provocative question inspired me to submit an application for the 1991 Lambda Class, the Best Class Ever.



Martha  
Conn Hultzman '91

LRI won an award from the National Association of Community Leadership Organizations for the design of the recruitment brochure, which was used for many years until online applications and email became the new way of life. While the method of applying to LRI may have changed, the core values of servant leadership and commitment to community outlined in that recruitment brochure have not waived since LRI's inception in 1981.

To ensure that participants wrestle with the urgent issues of the day, program content and even the session day titles have adjusted over the years. In 1991, for example, the Lambda class retreat was held a few days after Rhode Island's Credit Unions were closed down.

That left some of our classmates unable to pay their tuition because they no longer had access to their bank accounts and it propelled the Rhode Island economy into session day discussions. This year, staff made sure the controversy over using NECAP math scores as a graduation requirement got a prominent place in the Education Day program.

Still, some core experiences are too valuable to alter. Every class since 1986 has had an overnight retreat, the cost of which is the organization's largest program expense after salaries. When the current recession took hold, the board weighed the costs and benefits and agreed unanimously that the winter retreat must survive. It is an essential component of the LRI experience, a key to creating the next "Best Class Ever." The first part of the Lambda's retreat was at the Aldrich Mansion followed by sparse sleeping accommodations in the adjoining seminary with its dormitory-style bathrooms. This year the Iota IIs enjoyed the winter view from rustic semi-private rooms at Whispering Pines Lodge, dined on excellent food and took part in an illumination ceremony by an outdoor fire.

During my time on LRI's board we completed the first Alpha to Omega cycle and are a third of the way through the second cycle. It is my sincere hope that LRI will continue to find Rhode Islanders willing to provide the direction when the third Alpha to Omega cycle begins in 2029! Please continue to support LRI with your treasure, time and talent.

*Martha Conn Hultzman*

## Tell us how we're doing

How is Leadership Rhode Island doing? That's what the Board of Governors asked during its annual retreat at the Alton Jones campus of the University of Rhode Island. To answer the board's question, alumni will soon receive an online survey seeking your opinions on such issues as LRI's public image, its visibility, its value and its strengths.

"We want to hear from you. You are the voice of the organization. We value your input and guidance," says Scott DiChristofero, ('00), board chair.

The survey should show up in your email April 15. Or, you can go directly to [www.surveymonkey.com/s/LRI2013](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LRI2013) to find it. The survey will take only a few moments of your time. The information you give us will provide valuable feedback on LRI's actions, programs, strategies and directions.

## Iota II session days follow headlines

By Katie Varney

Prepped by the professionals and coached by students, members of the current Leadership Rhode Island class huddled, gathered their wits and then came out fighting for and against this resolution: "The Rhode Island Department of Education should reverse its decision to make NECAP scores a high school graduation requirement."

In a "first" for an LRI class, the Iota IIs experienced the pressure, excitement and heat of formal debate during the afternoon session of Education Day held at the Knight campus of CCRI in Warwick.

High school students, all members of the Rhode Island Urban Debate League, gave the 60 Iota IIs a crash course in the rules of debate, coaching them through the process of developing compelling arguments and counter-arguments and how to rattle their adversaries with revealing questions.

Available to arm the debaters with information to bolster their arguments were Jeremy Chiappetta, executive director of the Blackstone Valley Prep School; Jay Walsh, assistant executive director at National Education Association Rhode Island (NEA/RI); Maryellen Butke ('08), principal at MEB Strategies; Patrick Crowley ('07), government relations director at NEA/RI; and Heather Tow-Yick ('11), executive director at Teach for America Rhode Island.

Class members drew upon what they had learned earlier in the day from their interviews with eight principals representing K-12 schools with the highest and lowest NECAP scores – public, private, turnaround and charter schools.

After an hour of heated debate – actually the class split and held two separate debates on the same resolution – the teams arguing for the affirmative were declared the winners based upon the RI-UDL judging criteria.

"I am much more informed regarding



Members of the Rhode Island Urban Debate League – all high school students – gave the Iota IIs a crash course in the rules of debate during Education Day.

the NECAP and the challenges facing the education system in the state. Also, I feel like I'm ready to debate anyone! Those kids were so impressive!" Julie Maguire, a vice president at RBS Citizens Financial Group, wrote in her evaluation.

Calling Education Day the best so far this year, R.I. Public Utilities Commissioner Paul Roberti remarked, "The debate was effective and fostered team building and how to look at the issue from all sides."

Before the session day, the Iota IIs were asked whether the decision to make NECAP test scores a graduation requirement should be reversed. The class was evenly divided, with 30 percent agreeing, 31 percent disagreeing and 39 percent with no opinion.

After the session day, class members had changed their views dramatically. Seventy percent agreed, 25 percent disagreed, and 5 percent had no opinion.

The education session wasn't the only one this year closely aligned to the big news of the day. In February, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) made headlines with the announcement that two board members were stepping

down. The next day, the Iota IIs started their Economic Development Day meeting with Karl Wadensten, treasurer of the EDC board.

Wadensten, president of VIBCO manufacturing, led the class with a candid discussion about the EDC, lean manufacturing, and economic development in Rhode Island.

The class also heard from John R. "J.R." Pagliarini, new chief of staff at the EDC; Ken Block ('12), president, Simpatico Software Systems, Inc.; Ray Fogarty, director, Chafee Center for International Business at Bryant University; John Simmons, executive director, Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council; Neil Steinberg ('91), president and CEO, Rhode Island Foundation; and John Hazen White Jr., president and CEO of TACO, Inc.

"Being new to R.I., this session assisted me in gaining knowledge about R.I.'s economic development program, efforts underway at all levels to understand and address plaguing issues and to personally meet some of the key players," wrote Tim Benson, vice president of claims at The Beacon Mutual Insurance Co.



# LRI honors inspiring leaders

By John Kostrzewa, LRI '99

Nobody is anointed a leader.

"A lot of being a leader is stepping up into a void, whether it is taking up a project with your family, your church, the Little League or anything else," Neil Steinberg, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation, told 400 people at the annual Inspiring Leaders Awards luncheon hosted by Leadership Rhode Island.

"You can start small," he said, "But stay and fight. Stay and help. This is a great state. We can all make it better."

Neil, who went through LRI in 1991, received the leadership award named after David E. Sweet, the late Rhode Island College president instrumental in the original design of LRI.

Governor Lincoln Chafee, referring to the work LRI did last year in Central Falls, told the crowd: "The city has a rich history and it has been through some bumpy times, but your leadership shows bright days are ahead."

Mike Ritz, LRI executive director, made his point by walking the room, microphone in hand, stopping at tables to showcase those attending, from elected officials, college presidents and business executives to lawyers, nonprofit leaders, artists and others.

"We have to realize our potential," he told the sold-out luncheon. "There are no other leaders to wait for. We are it."

In his remarks, Neil struck a similar note. "You can't duplicate this room in any other state. We have to leverage that."

Neil, former chairman and CEO of Fleet Bank Rhode Island and former vice president of development at Brown University, passed along lessons he has learned along the way:

"Leaders are expected to inspire," he said, "but are often inspired."

Second, the job of a leader is to train new leaders.

Third, "At the end of the day, do what is right even when it is not the easy thing to do."

Carol Young, recipient of the Volunteer Award, noted that after 45 "happy years" at The Providence Journal, she planned to spend her retirement gardening. It didn't take long, however, for her phone to ring with calls from people asking for help.

Mike made one of the first calls, and Carol said she was unaware of his powers of persuasion. "I had no idea I was about to be Ritzed," she quipped.

She agreed to volunteer at LRI. Eventually she also agreed to serve on an advisory council for the president of the University of Rhode Island, on the board of Inspiring Minds, a nonprofit that helps Providence school children succeed in school, and to work with the Rhode Island Library Report, a new online journalism effort.

"There are plenty of nonprofits out there doing important work and every single one of them could make good use of your time and your talent, your interest, your enthusiasm ... your money!" she said.

"As an LRI alum, you have become stewards of our state. Volunteering is one way to fulfill your obligation," she concluded.

Kobi Dennis, founder of Project Night Vision in 2010, received the Rhode Island Community Service Award. The Providence native and U.S. Navy veteran talked about a mythical "Hope Grant" that motivates him and allows his program to continue, even without much public funding.

The program, a collaboration of law enforcement, community groups and businesses, draws out the potential in urban youth through athletics, team building, education, mentorship and community service. About 1,500 young people are engaged.

The moneyless "grant" means that those associated with Project Night Vision struggle to pay the rent and work long hours.



Four hundred people attended the Inspiring Leaders Awards luncheon. "You can't duplicate this room in any other state," said award winner Neil Steinberg.

"All you need is heart" for this important work and the "grant of hope," he said.

Ysanet Batista received the Emerging Leader Award, which recognizes a young person whose vision, dedication and leadership inspires others to create community change.

Ysanet, a senior at Johnson and Wales University, is an immigrant from the Dominican Republic. Soon after arriving at Johnson and Wales in 2008, she began volunteering at the RI Welcome Center at Dorcas Place, where she works with immigrants as a mentor and career development coach. She also tutors school children through Inspiring Minds.

"Even though in our daily lives, our time is consumed with work schedules and other tasks, it is very important to give back to the community in which you live and advocate for the people," she said.

## So, who are you?

Dear LRI Alumni,

In this newsletter, you'll not only get a glimpse of *who* we are, but you'll learn *what* we're doing and *why* we're doing it. And for the first time in years, we're asking you, our alumni, to not only renew your annual dues of basic membership, but to increase your membership level to ensure LRI's advancement. Please see the enclosed brochure for details.

I've spent most of my life pondering who I am and what makes me tick. The answers at different points reflect my evolution as a person. This year's theme – (L)RI: Who are we? – is intended to provide the lens through which the Iota IIs perceive critical topics, current events and themselves. Our theme provokes a similar existential experience for Leadership Rhode Island, an organization that, too, is evolving.

Our strength begins and ends with you. We are you. So, who are you? It's indisputable that we are a vast Rhode Island network of talented, dynamic leaders from multiple sectors, bound together though a common experience, a bond steeped in servant leadership. We want what's best for Rhode Island.

*"The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."* – Robert K. Greenleaf

Our service and commitment to Rhode Island is passionate and strong. Rhode Islanders read about us in the newspaper. They hear about us at functions. They feel our positive energy when we congregate. We grow more confident and are flattered when others attempt to emulate us. We built our knowledge, our character, our confidence, our empathy, our network and our loyalty in service to our home – Rhode Island. In many ways, our LRI relationships and experiences have made us who we are today.

As we take bolder actions to benefit Rhode Island, safeguarding our independence is more important than ever. Independence was inherent in the brilliant design of our founders and has been enhanced over the decades by the consistent nurturing of our alumni. Our business model relies on financing from multiple sources, the largest being fees for service, i.e. tuition. We are free from the dominance of a single donor or sole financial benefactor. We like it that way. Our independence requires it.

Elevating your membership dues contribution this year guarantees our self-sufficiency and signals authentic support for our invigorated, action-oriented direction. The unique nature of our independence will always rest in your hands. You are Rhode Island's champions, visionaries and stewards. You are Leadership Rhode Island.



Mike Ritz '07

## Iota II class hits the ground running in Quonset Business Park

Continued from Page 1

from every quarter piled up last year urging a full court press to create jobs, reduce unemployment, create a skilled workforce for the future and develop leadership.

The Quonset Business Park is a success story and we seek to better understand why that is, what more can be done, and what lessons learned could be offered to other economic ventures in Rhode Island, Mike explains.

As part of the reconnaissance necessary before choosing team projects, the Iota II's have toured the park, reached out to more than 175 businesses and conducted extensive interviews with

roughly 60 individual businesses and organizations in and around Quonset.

Through the interview process, the Iota II's have learned that companies are pleased with the availability and affordability of space at Quonset, its convenient location, proximity to Narragansett Bay and access to Route 95.

When asked what might improve the business park, many businesses cited the need for restaurants, more and improved signage and better communication.

A spokesman for the Quonset Development Corp. says the agency is satisfied with the current signage which was developed with the advice

of an established consultant. As for the lack of amenities, the spokesman says the QDC expects a good restaurant will open in the area when market conditions are right.

All of the information gathered by class members is being compiled and shared to guide the eight Iota II teams as they design their Leadership in Action projects.

LRI's activity is already contributing to the business park's visibility by generating four Quonset-focused media stories. Also, the Iota II's are talking to state legislators, encouraging them to visit and tour Quonset, many for the first time.

The 60 class members also are sharing their

initial findings and thoughts with members of the Rhode Island Economic Development board and the agency's current and former directors.

Whether focusing on Central Falls during economic crisis or seeking economic success at Quonset, LRI is fulfilling its mission of responding to the challenges facing the state, says Mike.

"When we, Leadership Rhode Island alumni, truly understand who we are, we as an organization of overachieving leaders, are faced with our own potential," he says.

"With that realization comes great obligation to all our fellow citizens from Central Falls to Quonset and beyond."

Michael Ritz, II



# Chocolate bars raise \$10K for students

Set up a community garden, run an after-school dance club, equip children with laptops, build a playground.

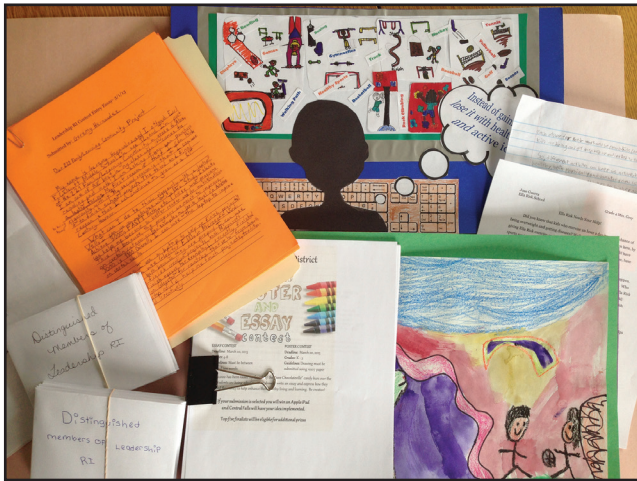
Asked by Leadership Rhode Island for ideas on how to promote healthy living and learning, the children of Central Falls came up with lots of constructive answers.

Students in kindergarten through third grade conveyed their visions in pictures and posters. Those in grades 4 to 8 described their proposals in writing.

The 45 top proposals are now in the hands of a panel of judges who will announce five finalists during Central Falls' annual Earth Day celebration April 20.

LRI proposed the competition to find the best way to spend \$10,000, the proceeds from the first year of sales of the Save Chocolateville candy bar. The grant money awaits the best idea and a new iPad awaits the youngster who comes up with it.

It is possible, says Mike Ritz, LRI executive director, that other donors can be found to execute more than one of the final proposals.



Central Falls students submitted creative proposals for how to spend the money raised through Save Chocolateville.

Think of the Save Chocolateville bar as a sweet bridge linking colonial history to modern times. Central Falls got the unofficial name of Chocolateville back in the 18th and 19th centuries when it was home to the state's first chocolate maker. In the 21st century, the city is home to Garrison Confections, a gourmet chocolate business.

Last year, Mike and Andrew Shotts, chef and owner of Garrison Confections, formed a nonprofit partnership to market the Save Chocolateville candy bars, with proceeds to benefit Central Falls

children. The venture coincided with a yearlong LRI effort to bring positive change to Central Falls.

The chocolate bar debuted at the University Heights Whole Foods store in Providence just before Valentine's Day in 2012.

Save Chocolateville bars may be purchased at AAA headquarters, 110 Royal Little Drive, Providence, and at AAA locations in Cranston, Warwick, Boston and Hamden, Conn. The bars also are sold in Central Falls at the Adams Memorial Library and at [buywithheart.org](http://buywithheart.org).

## 'We're not the only ones who care about Central Falls'

When he signed up for Leadership Central Falls, Randy Sacilotto, vice president of business development for Navigant Credit Union, wasn't optimistic about the future of the bankrupt city. In fact, he arrived at the first session with an "overwhelming feeling of despair."

But "all those dire feelings" were blown away by the burst of "fresh air" he experienced as his 21 classmates introduced themselves and expressed their passion for the city.

"Things aren't that dire after all. There's



Randy Sacilotto  
'04/LCF

energy, there's commitment here," he remembers thinking. "From that very first meeting I knew it was a good decision to participate."

He felt confident that "we're not the only ones who care about Central Falls."

Randy works at Navigant's corporate headquarters in Smithfield but spent years in Central Falls at the credit union's original home on Broad Street. He believes that investment in community development can be a win-win situation: good for the community and good for his business.

"It's paying off already just in the connections I've made," he says. And, he hints, there are a couple of things in the works that will be tangible evidence of Navigant's support for the city's fiscal turnaround.

Graduation for the class of Central

Falls residents and stakeholders was a highlight of the LRI awards luncheon last month.

Randy graduated from LRI's core program in 2004.

Asked to compare the customized, city leadership program with LRI's statewide program, Randy says the focus was obviously different, but the learning experience was similar. In LRI everyone had "the chance to ask questions and share ideas without fear" and the same essential trust was apparent throughout the monthly Central Falls sessions as well.

While LRI was a life-changing personal experience, he says he failed to find a way to become a steward for the greater betterment of Rhode Island. "But after Leadership Central Falls. I feel like I could make an impact on the city."

# (L)RI: Who are we? Here's what some of our members have been up to

Keith Tucker (2013 Iota II), major in the Providence Police Department, has been named R.I.'s first casino operations and compliance manager. He will work for Lottery Director Gerald Aubin ('85).

Mayor Scott Avedisian ('97) of Warwick and Mayor Allan Fung ('01) of Cranston recently joined up to raise money for the annual Gaspee Days celebration.

Hugo Figuero (LCF) has been appointed to the Central Falls School Board.

LRI Executive Director Mike Ritz ('07) has been named to the R.I. Historical Society Board of Trustees where he joins Barry Hittner ('85), board chair, and members Roger Begin ('87) and Barbara Hart ('11).

Paul Roberti (2013 Iota II) starred in an installment of "America's Unearthed," a series on The History Channel, broadcast last month. The show featured the Narragansett Rune stone.

Mayor Angel Taveras ('99) grabbed the Grand Prize for Providence in the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge.

Four alumni and one current class member are working on projects funded through the R.I. Foundation's "Make it Happen" campaign. They are Buy Local with Maria Tocco ('07); DesignxRI, Christine West ('10); Historic Tax Credit Advocacy, Scott Wolf ('87); Regulatory Reform, Leslie Taito ('06) and Urban Economic Development Planning, Lisa Ranglin (2013 Iota II).

Peter T. Ginaitt ('07), emergency preparedness director for Lifespan Health since 2007, was nominated to serve on the RIPTA Board by Gov. Lincoln Chafee.

Mitch Edwards ('11) and Stephen Duvel ('12) are new members of LRI's Board of Governors.

Carol Hamilton ('11) is now senior vice president of Berkshire Bank. Though working in Massachusetts, she is keeping Rhode Island as her home.

Joseph P. Pratt ('06) is the new deputy treasurer/ chief of administration in the State Treasurer's office where Ashley Gingerella O'Shea (CLRI '06) is associate director of communications.

Bob DiMuccio ('01), CEO of Amica, was recently interviewed on best practices in customer experience on Forbes.com.

Wil Hill (2013 Iota II) has been promoted from major to Lt. Colonel, third in command of the R.I. State



Ginaitt



Husband



DiMuccio



Kugler



Gross

Police. First in command is Col. Steven O'Donnell ('04).

Rosamaria Amoros ('09) has been named the chief public affairs officer for the RI Department of Transportation.

Jen Shimkus ('07) is now vice president of the Board of Directors of the West Broadway Neighborhood Association. Rebecca Rossi Baruzzi ('10) and John Taraborelli ('10) are new members of the board. Kari Lang ('97) is the executive director of the WBNA.

Terrence 'Terry' Gray, P.E. ('01) is now associate director for environmental protection for the state Department of Environmental Management.

Albert T. Klyberg, ('85), who served three decades as the director of the RI Historical Society, wrote an essay on "Revolutionary Wartime Providence" for the city's 375th Anniversary. To read the essay visit <http://bit.ly/essay375>.

Richard Widdowson ('11) has left Rhode Island and CVS Caremark to become a vice president at JC Penney.

Melissa Husband ('12) is now executive director of Community Action Partnership (formerly ProCAP).

Jeffrey Stoler, Esq. ('89) has joined the firm Holland and Knight LLP as partner.

Terry Dale ('87) signed a three-year contract extension as President of the U.S. Tour Operators Association.

Anne Kugler ('11) was at the White House recently to accept the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from First Lady Michelle Obama on behalf of AS220 Youth. Anne serves as youth director.

Teny Gross ('03), executive director, and Nondas Voll ('85), board member, at the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, accepted Excellence in Affordable Housing awards from the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation. The institute was honored for "extraordinary work" guiding youth and families and "fostering a community where peace prevails."

James Brayton Hall ('12) has been named deputy director of the Norton Museum of Art.

Steven Corrales, (LCF) was elected to the Central Falls City Council, filling the seat vacated by James Di-Ossa ('12 and LCF) when he was elected mayor.

The Dorrance, owned by Michael Lester (2013 Iota II) and family, was recently listed among the top 100 U.S. restaurants by Opinionated About Dining.

Want to share some good news from the Best Class Ever? Email us at [office@leadershipri.org](mailto:office@leadershipri.org).



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### April 19:

*Leadership Chat with Commissioner Deborah Gist, 5-6pm, Gracie's, Providence*

### April 23:

*Rotunda Roundup with Common Cause RI, 2:50-5:30pm, Rhode Island State House, Providence*

### May 20:

*Education Forum featuring Harvard Graduate School of Education Prof. Paul Reville and Rhode Island Education Commissioner Deborah Gist, 10:30am-12pm, Providence Journal Auditorium, Providence*

### May 22:

*LRI Alumni Social, 5:30-7:30pm, NAIL Communications, Providence*

### June 12:

*Iota II Appreciation Night (by invitation), AQUA at the Providence Marriott, Providence*

### July 14 :

*LRI Summer Series – PawSox vs. Rochester Red Wings, McCoy Stadium, Pawtucket*

### August 8:

*2014 Kappa II Class Open House, 5-8pm, Location TBA*

### September 2:

*2014 Kappa II Applications Due*

For event details or to register, please visit [lrievents.eventbrite.com](http://lrievents.eventbrite.com).

Do you want to know what's going on? Send your email address to [office@leadershipri.org](mailto:office@leadershipri.org) to get on our email list, check LRI's very active Facebook page or join our Twitter feed.

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