In what can only be described as a “Super Party,” Leadership Rhode Island will hold its largest alumni bash of the year at 111 Westminster Street, aka “The Superman Building,” in Providence, Wednesday, Oct. 23, from 6 to 9 p.m. “Leadership Rhode Island is soaring to new heights in its 33-year evolution, so it makes perfect sense to celebrate it in Rhode Island’s tallest building,” said Scott DiChristofero ’00, Chairman of LRI’s Board of Governors. “We thank owner, David Sweetser, for allowing LRI to use it.”

Recent controversy surrounding the closure of 111 Westminster Street combined with eye witness reports of an unidentified flying object (U.F.O.) by guests at a recent LRI rooftop party drew LRI’s attention to the 26-story Art Deco skyscraper.

Riding the high from being recognized with the Excellence In Public Service Award by Common Cause Rhode Island, LRI’s Executive Director, Mike Ritz, says the Super Party will likely generate visions of an energized organization “able to leap tall buildings in a single bound” while creating a stronger Rhode Island. “We encourage everyone, alumni and non-alumni alike, to attend our Super Party,” said Ritz. “We’ll congratulate our 2013 Iota II graduates with an incredible 20-piece big band, exquisite food, an impressive amount of Rhode Island’s leaders in attendance, and a few tantalizing surprises.”

The New Providence Big Band, named “Most Musical” in Providence Monthly’s 2013 Superlatives issue, will take party guests back in time with its ensemble of blaring horns, romantic melodies and foot stomping rhythms while being seduced by the dulcet tones of Miss Katie Kleyla.

The Iota II graduation ceremony will be held earlier in the day. The Iota II who is selected class speaker will save his or her remarks for all the guests at the Super Party. This year’s Leadership In Action projects focused on the Quonset Business Park and its environs.

Tickets to LRI’s Super Party may be purchased online at www.LRISuperParty.eventbrite.com or by calling Danielle Gaboury, Development & Special Events Coordinator, at 401-273-1574 x105. All proceeds will fund Leadership Rhode Island’s soon-to-be-revealed three-year initiative.
Steering LRI into the future

He’s the retired general manager of Texas Instruments and author of “Organizational Turn-around with a Human Touch.” He has more than 40 years of management experience in countries with diverse cultural philosophies. Recently, Baldev Seekri became the first non-alumnus to join Leadership Rhode Island’s Board of Governors and is poised to make a major impact as Chair of the new Futures Committee. Seriously, I feel good that my efforts can positively impact others.

I was introduced to Mike Ritz by a mutual friend who felt that there was a synergy between the message of my book and the direction in which Mike was trying to steer LRI. Our first meeting led to a seat on the LRI advisory council. Because “no good deed goes unpunished,” I found myself embracing it with strength, smartness, wisdom and courage.

Since you have not gone through the core program and you live across the border in Attleboro, how – and why – did you get involved with LRI?

What do you see as LRI’s areas of opportunity?

What do you see as Rhode Island’s biggest challenges? What about assets?

What are Rhode Island’s biggest challenges? What about assets?

Rhode Island has enviable assets, but the prevailing cynicism masks its potential, dampens its winning spirit and makes its people focus on excellence in isolation rather than excellence in totality. Until and unless the self-esteem of this state and its people is re-kindled, any meaningful winning spirit and makes its people focus on excellence in isolation rather than excellence in totality. Until and unless the self-esteem of this state and its people is re-kindled, any meaningful winning spirit and makes its people focus on excellence in isolation rather than excellence in to

thriving and exciting for the next three to five years. Rather than leapfrogging to obvious and conventional answers, the committee will follow a disciplined four-step process: IS (What are LRI’s strengths and gaps?), CAN (How can LRI become a stronger, smarter, wiser and daring organization?), MUST (What are the most realistic opportunities?), and WILL (What are the strategies and milestones for the next three to five years?). The intended outcome is to define our destiny for the next five years and embrace it with strength, smartness, wisdom and courage.

ABOUT BALDEV

Favorite spot in RI: Newport
Favorite restaurant in RI: Ray’s Pavilions
Family: Wife Kamlesh Seekri, 4 kids and 9 grandkids
Favorite quote: “I strongly believe in luck; harder I work, more I get it.”

Baldev Seekri

Leadership Rhode Island 1570 Westminster St., 1st Floor Providence, RI 02909 401-273-1574 www.leadershipri.org

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Common Cause lauds LRI for public service

By John Marion ’11

For 25 years Common Cause Rhode Island has used our Annual Meeting as an occasion to present the Excellence in Public Service award to citizens and organizations that have made a difference for our state by furthering the values we embrace. Improving our democracy through promotion of open, ethical and accountable government is at the heart of what Common Cause does.

When Central Falls entered bankruptcy in 2011, it was not only a financial crisis, but also a crisis of democracy. The City Council and mayor were stripped of their control, a loss of power that also removed representation for citizens. It was left to individuals and civic organizations to take the lead in reimagining the democratic institutions of Central Falls.

Leadership Rhode Island rose to this task. In its 30th year, LRI embraced the challenge of helping weave back the civic fabric of Central Falls. For the first time in its history, LRI focused its resources and the skills and talents of its class on a single municipality. Over an 18-month period, LRI led the way by creating opportunities for increased civic engagement. Partnering with Common Cause, Leadership Rhode Island hosted public debates for mayoral and General Assembly candidates. LRI also managed the entire charter review process, which resulted in 100% of the suggested changes approved by voters in November 2012.

LRI also offered a special Leadership Central Falls program. Participants included almost all the candidates for mayor as well as a cross-section of stakeholders, forming a class of dedicated community leaders truly representative of Central Falls.

“We are proud to honor Leadership Rhode Island with our Excellence in Public Service Award,” says Amy Doss, President of the Governing Board. “Our shared effort in Central Falls is a testament to the power of collaboration among nonprofit organizations. I look forward to strengthening the connection between Common Cause and Leadership Rhode Island in the years to come.”

The Excellence in Public Service Award will be presented to LRI at our 43rd Annual Meeting October 16 at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston. The keynote speech, “Connecting the Dots: Why America’s Political Crisis Requires Rethinking our 18th Century Constitution,” will be given by Professor Sanford V. Levinson of the University of Texas at Austin School of Law. Also, one of our Distinguished Service Awards will be presented to LRI alumna Doree Goodman.

Tickets are available by calling Common Cause at 401-861-2322 or online at www.commoncause.org/ri/43rdannual.

John Marion is the Executive Director of Common Cause Rhode Island.
Alumni gave Leadership Rhode Island a thumbs up, often in huge numbers, in an online survey seeking to find out “How is LRI Doing?”

Nine out of 10 alumni responding to the poll said they agreed or strongly agreed with the characterizations of LRI. They knew of the key issues facing Rhode Island; it has connections to key leaders, and it is a relevant and credible organization. 

The overwhelmingly positive response came when alumni were asked whether their LRI experience had added value to them personally. In all, 91 percent said yes; nine percent said no. That question triggered an outpouring of testimonies.

“I am a better leader because of LRI. I understand and appreciate others’ views better and lead from within . . .” wrote one alum. LRI was a “great deal” and a “formative experience,” wrote two others. Many mentioned “networking” as a lasting benefit.

LRI’s increasingly active presence in the community – a reference to ventures into Central Falls and the Quonset Business Park – won the approval of three-fourths of the respondents. “A welcome change said one; it’s important “to get together for one common goal – making news both resonant and memorable. LRI is a resource that is a state asset. We want more opportunities to experience the educational programs of the current LRI class. We want to give back to our communities so they may benefit from our individual and collective talents.”

The official launch of a new alumni association will take place for the Super Party Oct. 23 as alumni from the last 31 years join the newly graduated class, He said.

The Association, which will be led by a new Alumni Council for Engagement, will provide LRI graduates with opportunities to keep our alumni network strong and vibrant while we reach for that common goal. It also will allow us to assist the current LRI organization in its mission.

Opportunities for alumni to gather throughout the year for educational programs, community service and general camaraderie are being planned. Our goal is to reach alums throughout the years to champion alumni engagement within their own classes. There has already been a unique move to bring alumni back to the Super Party. It is definitely exciting an time for Leadership Rhode Island and your participation at our events and programs will be what will keep us strong.

We invite your thoughts and comments for future alumni programming and we welcome your assistance.

It is a new beginning for all of us as we join in the celebration. We invite your thoughts and comments for future alumni programming and we welcome your assistance.

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Iota IIs build community in Quonset

By Katie Varney

When Lisa Ahart reports to work at Toray Plastics America, she brings along memories from the time the Quonset Business Park was one of Rhode Island’s grand military bases.

Calling herself a “military kid,” Ahart remembers when her father was stationed at Quonset. Now she is vice president for human resources at Toray. She marvels at the transition to what she calls “an epicenter of business for the state.”

Ahart offered her “then and now” perspective for a video being produced by an Iota II project team to promote the Quonset Business Park. The promotional video highlights the accomplishments at Quonset over the last 10 years.

Team members did some of its filming during the Quonset Ground Show, another Leadership in Action project. The community-building event for employees and employers at Quonset was held Sept. 12 in partnership with the Rhode Island Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

“Based on interviews with over 80 Quonset tenants, it became evident that the park lacks a sense of community. This issue appeared to be exacerbated by the lack of social gathering spaces, incubators, and entrepreneurial expertise to the various co-op workspaces, incubators, and entrepreneurial centers around the state.”

The Quonset Development Corporation worked with each team in some capacity to provide guidance, expertise, and also to help ensure their success. Steven King, Managing Director and LRI alumni Katherine Trapani, ‘07, Planning Manager have expressed appreciation for the Iota IIs’ efforts.

Class Notes

Maeve Japoon, CLRI ‘12, won first place for her idea for a SoapSaver, a silicone casing for holding bits and pieces of bar soap for reuse. Her winning entry was part of the yearly design competition for students and professionals by Décor Craft Inc. and A Better World by Design.

Providence Police Lt. Luis San Lucas, ‘12, has retired from the military after 29 years of active and reserve duty. He began his military career in 1984 in the United States Marine Corps.

Letitia Carter, ‘92 and Julie Rawlings, ‘02 were honored recently as “Women of Achievement” at the 2013 YWCA awards luncheon. British-born Richard Widdowson, ‘11 has become a United States citizen.

Almost Human, a film produced by Anthony Ambrosino, ‘11, has been accepted for showing in the Toronto International Film Festival.

Military veterans had the chance to “speed” chat with prospective employers at the Ground Show, held at the Quonset ‘O’ Club and organized by a team of Iota IIs.

Want to know the latest LRI happenings?
Send your email address to office@leadershipri.org to get on our list, check LRI’s active Facebook page or join our Twitter feed.

Want to share some good news from the Best Class Ever?
Email us at office@leadershipri.org.
Congratulations to the 2013 Iota II Class!

Jacques Afonso, National Grid
Nicole Benjamin, Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C.
Natalie Benkovich, AIPSO
Timothy Benson, Beacon Mutual Insurance Co.
Jake Bissaillon, Chief of Staff, Providence City Council
Ken Burke, Rhode Island Water Resources Board
Mike Busam, Gilbane Building Co.
Ryan Campbell, Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Newport
Capt. Sean Carmody, Cranston Police Department
Matt Cedor, GTech Corp.
Michael Coelho, Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket
Dave Corbett, Baker Corbett & Geary LLC
Gayle Corrigan, MMS Inc.
Al Dahlberg, Brown University
Susan Daly, Marketing Consultant
Deirdre Denning Norton, WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care
Margaret Devos, Southside Community Land Trust
Henry Diaz (LL ‘04), D@D Consulting Services Inc
Cicely Dove, Crossroads Rhode Island
Christine Foisy, House of Hope Community Development Corp.
Angella Franklin, CVS Caremark
Karen Fuerherm, GTech Corp.
Joe Gleason, Envision Technology Advisors
Chris Goulette, Rhode Island Department of Health
Anna Haas, Sojourner House
Major Wil Hill, Rhode Island State Police
Karen King, DiPrete Engineering
Joshua Klemp (CLRI ‘04), Cranston Public Schools / SkillsUSA Rhode Island
Gil Lantini, Rhode Island Small Business Journal
Dennis Leamy Jr., Amica Mutual Insurance Co.
Harvey Lee Jr., Cox Business
Michael Lester, MS Walker
Sarah Lobdell, University of Rhode Island Alumni Relations
Derek Lombard, Embrace Home Loans
Shawn MacDonald, Dimeo Construction Co.
David Macedo, Amica Mutual Insurance Co.
Julie Maguire, RBS Citizens Financial Group
Christopher Marsella, Marsella Development Corp.
Lisa Martinelli, Rhode Island Department of Transportation
Patti Melaragno, Butler Hospital
Colin Murphy, Providence Design
Jim Nellis, waybetter media
Julie Novak, Community College of Rhode Island
Amy Oakley, Roberts, Carroll, Feldstein & Peirce Inc.
Kate Pickman, LIN Media - WPRI TV
Matt Plain, Barton Gilman LLP
Lisa Ranglin, Bank of America
Paul Roberti, Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission
Bobby Rodriguez, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island
Jessica Salter, Amos House
Dianna Shaw, Long Term Care Consulting
Sam Slade, USI
Andrea Sullivan, (add)Ventures
Keith Tucker, Rhode Island Lottery
Chris Vedro, TD Bank
Doug Whiting, Johnson & Wales University
Jeff Wilhelm, Envision Technology Advisors
Carrie Zaslow, Local Initiative Support Corp.