



Innovation takes LRI beyond Rhode Island's borders

By Nancy Kirsch '94

In June, **Matt Coupe**, Leadership Rhode Island alumni and community engagement liaison, travelled to Phoenix, Arizona, to lead a workshop at the national conference of the Association of Leadership Programs.

His message: Alumni participation and alumni dues leaped significantly when LRI expanded its footprint to include the larger community. Coupe cited several successful LRI engagement activities — the Jeffersonian Dinner series, Publick Occurrences discussion forums, Hi! Neighbor block parties — to make his point.

A month after Phoenix, **Mike Ritz '07**, executive director, and **Kevin Cooper**, strengths expeditor, took center stage at Gallup's Global Strengths Summit in Omaha, Nebraska, to tell the story of LRI's booming Make RI Stronger campaign, now in its fourth year.

You, too, can make an impact by harnessing the positive power of strengths-based thinking, they told the summit's 1,200 strengths coaches and professionals. Attendees received "All-Aboard Rhode Island" tickets, inviting them to visit what Gallup calls the nation's first "strengths-based" state.

Early this month, **Sulina Mohanty**, volunteer strengths coach, flew to Ohio to provide strengths training for Cox Business employees working in the Cleveland office. Mohanty, an LRI board member and 2006 College Leadership RI graduate, also dropped by the office of Leadership Cleveland to do some networking.

Later this month, **Michelle (DePlante) Carr '14**, deputy director, will head for Nashville, Tennessee, to plant the seeds for a national leadership movement "to help heal the generational, cultural, geographical, partisan divisions" polarizing the country.



At the 2017 annual luncheon, Governor Gina Raimondo congratulates Leadership Rhode Island on its dramatic statewide impact on workforce engagement.

Carr, who will be talking to executive directors of statewide leadership programs, is convinced that uniting alumni across the country has the potential for national impact.

AS THESE ANECDOTES illustrate, a growing record of innovative programs — all built on the Core Program's rock-solid foundation — is putting LRI at the center of

a national conversation. Staff members are not only willing to share the wisdom gained from its initiatives, they are gearing up to do even more.

The concept of sharing successful programs with community organizations far beyond Rhode Island's borders is now embedded in LRI's new vision statement.

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Letter from the Chair

Why does any organization make a fuss over the wording of its mission and vision? Because words matter.

Precision is needed to describe core purpose; imagination is needed to express what is possible. If done well, both statements should remain relevant for many years and persist through changes in organizational leadership.

LRI's previous mission statement guided the organization for decades. While its essence remains, the Board of Governors and staff felt that it did not capture all of what LRI has become. After much thought and deliberation, the board recently approved a new mission and a new vision.

Our Mission

We engage and connect people through shared experiences that positively transform individuals, organizations, and communities.

Our Vision

We see a Rhode Island that is flourishing – economically, civically, culturally – built on a foundation of ever-improving human capital whose strengths and potential we spend each day revealing and igniting.

And we see the lessons of this lively leadership experiment being shared and amplified around the country and the world to nurture the kind of fully engaged societies that create lasting, positive change.

We believe that these new statements honor our organization's great tradition and recognize LRI's efforts to encourage engagement and expand impact. LRI's Core Program, which each year brings a diverse group of established and emerging leaders together to participate in a 10-month community leadership program, continues to thrive. But your LRI provides so much more than that:

- In 2004, College Leadership Rhode Island was added to provide a career readiness program that inspires, educates and engages a diverse group of student leaders.

- In 2011, LRI added Publick Occurrences, in collaboration with The Providence Journal and Rhode Island College. Publick Occurrences encourages civil public dialogue about significant, often controversial, issues confronting Rhode Island. Since its



inception, more than 5,000 people have attended these forums.

- In 2014, LRI, in partnership with Gallup, launched Make RI Stronger, a multi-year initiative to dramatically improve Rhode Island through strengths-based training and education. LRI's efforts in this area have made us a model for the nation.

- In 2016, LRI launched a series of Jeffersonian Dinners, where LRI alumni dine together while sharing personal stories around a profound, current topic in Rhode Island and our country.

The common denominator in these efforts is bringing people of varied backgrounds and viewpoints together through engagement and shared experiences. We believe we are planting the seeds of positive change.

Your LRI is already setting an example for community-based organizations elsewhere. Organizations are reaching out, trying to understand more about LRI's successes, particularly the strengths initiative. As our new vision suggests, we are eager to share our experiences and see them amplified around the country and the world. LRI welcomes individuals and organizations to come see what we are doing in Rhode Island.

I hope you are as excited as I am about LRI's new Mission and Vision statements. I think they articulate well what your LRI is doing today and what it can be tomorrow.

Paul Oliveira

Paul Oliveira '07, Board Chair

Remembering Gary: Generous, full of heart

Gary St. Peter '92, a great champion and longtime supporter of Leadership Rhode Island, died earlier this month, a passenger in a tragic car accident in Palm Coast, Fla., where he resided with his wife, Jan, the center of his universe.

Gary served on the Board of Directors from 2000-2007, the last two years as board chair. Under his leadership, LRI developed into a community-based organization, expanding program offerings and strengthening its role as a partner with other organizations, says **Kathy Swann '99**, appointed president/CEO of LRI in 2003.

Gary was coaxed into LRI by his longtime friend **John Harpootian '88**. "I recall telling him that he would be cheating himself and all of the others he would ever interact with if he didn't apply."

"I knew he'd be in his element with a group of people who actually gave a shit (definitely the word Gary would have used!) about Rhode Island and the human condition," Harpootian says.

Carol Young, a Mu classmate, remembers how Gary's infectious personality became apparent at the retreat when everyone had to tell a story that would help remember last names. "His story was hilarious and cheeky," she recalls. "Ten months later he was a shoo-in for class speaker."

Gary's candor and sense of humor enlivened all the class discussions, adds **Lynne Urbani**, another Mu classmate.

After graduating from the Core Program, Gary became an alumnus extraordinaire, contributing legal expertise, program ideas, financial support, and whatever else was needed to help LRI achieve its mission, says Swann. Recognizing that people were LRI's greatest asset, he tirelessly recruited program applicants and worked to keep alumni engaged.

For his efforts on and off the board, LRI honored Gary with the 2009 David E. Sweet Leadership Award.

Anecdotes showing Gary's enormous generosity abound.

When LRI held auction fundraisers, Swann recalls, he would step in at the end, purchase all the remaining items and donate them. A year ago, when Young asked Mu classmates to help cover a Mu II participant's tuition, Gary responded with a gift so large it pushed the campaign over the top.

His love of people, especially those struggling, was absorbed



Gary and his wife Jan chat with Kathy Swann '99 (center) former head of Leadership Rhode Island.

early by his two sons, Chris and Matt, who created Operation Angel Planes about 20 years ago to transport sick children to medical centers for treatment.

"When you think of all of the people you have ever met that impressed you for their kindness, generosity, thoughtfulness and genuine caring nature, Gary would be at the top of your list," says Harpootian.

In her remembrance, Swann summed up Gary's life this way: "Reams can be written about his outstanding law career and advocacy and philanthropy, but it is Gary's huge heart that will be remembered most."

Class projects tackle Burrillville's opioid epidemic

By Frank Prosnitz '96

Tucked in the northwestern corner of Rhode Island, Burrillville is a quiet rural town wrestling with a huge national problem: the opioid epidemic.

The state Department of Health lists Burrillville among the communities in Rhode Island most severely impacted by the growing national drug crisis. That's why two Leadership-in-Action (LIA) teams from this year's Nu II class decided to focus their efforts in Burrillville, raising awareness and supporting a police initiative to get drugs off the streets.

Over the years, LIA projects, mandatory for Core Program participants, have spanned the state, addressing a wide variety of critical issues. The nine projects undertaken by Nu II teams, all focused on the rural towns along the Route 102 corridor, bring the number of LIA projects to 59 since 2010.

The 2016 presidential election revealed a deep political divide between residents on the state's heavily urban east coast, where a large majority of LRI alumni reside, and those living on the state's more rural western border. By targeting a section of rural

Rhode Island, LRI hoped class members would build valuable new connections and relationships, while developing a better understanding of rural concerns and culture.

"Opiate use in Burrillville, one of Rhode Island's largest communities, has increased dramatically in recent years and is directly correlated to criminal activity taking place in the town," explained **Laura Davis**, leader of the Nu II team focused on matters of crime and incarceration.

This group partnered with the local police department to further develop a

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LRI welcomes new members to staff, board

As the new Programs Manager, **Kristin Zosa Puleo** brings years of experience in event planning and program development to LRI. She is responsible for overseeing both the Core Program and the College Program. Her appointment frees Deputy Director **Michelle (DePlante) Carr '14** to assume operational growth responsibilities at LRI.

Previously, Kristin, a native Rhode Islander, was at Johnson & Wales University where she served first as event and program coordinator for the Culinary Arts Museum and then transitioned to the events office to organize high-level events for the administration and governing board at the university's Providence campus.

Kristin's top five strengths: *Adaptability – Input – Arranger – Ideation – Restorative*

Ray Nuñez CLRI '15, a recent graduate of Johnson & Wales, where he majored in graphic design and digital media, is coordinator for the expanding College Leadership RI program. Ray was chosen to be Class Speaker when he participated in CLRI in 2015. A year later, Johnson & Wales recognized his tireless, collaborative efforts to improve the student experience at the university by naming him Student Leader of the Year.

Ray's top five strengths: *Strategic – Communicator – Activator – Futuristic – Woo*

LRI's Board of Governors also welcomes two new members to its ranks.

After playing a vital role in the design and creation of LRI's new website and online alumni data base, **Vinny Gebhart '15** agreed to serve on the governing board. He is Implementation Director at Upserve, a fast-growing technology company based in Providence that has created a management platform for restaurateurs.

Vinny's top five strengths: *Input – Achiever – Ideation – Analytical – Arranger*

Michele Leone '16, Director for RI Strategy & Performance Management at National Grid RI, brings her experience in strategic customer focus to her new role on LRI's board.

Michele's top five strengths: *Strategic – Significance – Achiever – Self-Assurance – Activator*



Kristin Zosa Puleo
Programs Manager



Ray Nuñez CLRI '15
Program Coordinator



Vinny Gebhart '15
Board Member



Michele Leone '16
Board Member

4th Annual **End-of-Year Cheer**

Meet LRI's new staff & board members at the 4th Annual End-of-Year Cheer at Fete Music Hall in Providence, 6pm on December 19th! Join your LRI friends and family for celebratory toasts, boasts, and oaths... our thanks to you for a wonderful 2017!

RSVP online at: lricheer.eventbrite.com



A lively experiment: Core Program to be led by bipartisan co-chairs

By Christine McDermott '11

He's a former vice chairman of the Rhode Island GOP who has worked on Republican campaigns since he was a teenager.

She's a former state senator who ran three times as the Democratic candidate for governor of Rhode Island.

Together, **John Harpootian '88** and **Myrth York '92** will serve as chairs of Leadership Rhode Island's Core Program for 2018, in an effort to show that people with ideological differences can find a way to work together. They will lead a bipartisan program committee consisting of seven Republican and seven Democrat alumni in planning a curriculum around the theme "Leaders As Hosts."

Executive Director **Mike Ritz '07** calls it "a lively experiment" in which LRI can set an example for the class, alumni and the nation by connecting the two sides to find compromise, common ground, innovation and ideas.

"It has the potential to inspire so much in others, as leaders wrestle with maintaining their integrity and core values against contrary ideals of others while simultaneously building a better society in service to their fellow man," he said.

The idea came to Ritz after Harpootian and York shared similar sentiments at separate Jeffersonian dinners about the importance of bipartisan cooperation.

Harpootian had used the example of national health care as an effort that will not be successful without some give and take between the two parties. "You need to have some statesmanship to be able to get this done," he said.

York referred to her time in the state legislature, of which most members were people she would not have encountered in her personal life. "You're forced to have to work with each other," she said. "You would never choose it. You have to figure it out."

During a meeting with Ritz and a small group of LRI staff, Harpootian and York sparred over topics like climate change and the current presidency. But the tone was always civil and respectful.

"We are both partisan people, unabashedly," Harpootian said. "She has her well-founded, well-thought-out views that correspond to the party she's affiliated with, and so do I. You can't prevent someone from having an opposing view, and you can't vilify someone for having an opposing point of view."

The pair agreed that co-chairing a bipartisan program committee will have its challenges, but they are hopeful for a positive outcome.

"If somehow John and I being able to civilly work through creating the program for Leadership Rhode Island sends the message that people of opposing and differing viewpoints can work through their differences, then that would be a success," York said.

Added Harpootian, "I don't think the love of the state is a Republican or a Democrat issue. If you care about the future of the state – I know Myrth does, I know I do – it behooves us to have conversations about the issues of the day. If we don't, we're doomed to failure. That's really the bottom line."



From left, Co-chairs Myrth York (D) and John Harpootian (R) discuss the ground rules for a bipartisan Core Program committee with Programs Manager Kristin Zosa Puleo, Deputy Director Michelle Carr and newsletter editors Christine McDermott and Carol Young.

RI Strengths Tours

Capitalizing on the success of its Make RI Stronger initiative, Leadership Rhode Island is putting out the welcome mat for out-of-state visitors interested in learning what's going on in the nation's first "strengths-based" state.

Starting in 2018, LRI will offer "Strengths Tours of Rhode Island," an opportunity for visitors to see local businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies where strengths-based practices are flourishing. The tours will be customized to reflect the interests of each group of visitors.

The first-of-a-kind tours, says **Kevin Cooper**, LRI's Strengths Expeditor, are intended to make valuable external connections with executives and businesses, boost the economy and foster deeper levels of local pride.

LRI, which has turned its strengths initiative into a revenue-producing social enterprise, stands ready to provide consulting services to out-of-state visitors who want to introduce strengths-based management approaches in their home states.

"Sharing our story far and wide will have profound benefits and affirm LRI's role as a thought leader in strengths psychology," Cooper says.

LRI's strengths initiative was prompted by Gallup's 2013 State of the American Workplace Report which concluded that Rhode Island had the highest percentage of "actively disengaged" workers in the nation. LRI viewed the finding against the backdrop of a longstanding concern that RI suffers from pervasive negativity.

Make Rhode Island Stronger was launched in 2014 to improve worker engagement through strengths-based management and to counteract widespread negativity through strengths-based psychology. "No one had ever used strengths-based psychology to alter the culture of an entire state," says Cooper. "We did."

Gallup's most current data on employee engagement, released earlier this year, reported that RI experienced unprecedented improvements in workforce engagement. The national comparison by state shows RI moving from #50 to #15 on the actively disengaged scale, and from #49 to #1 on the workplace performance measure: "At work I get to use my strengths to do what I do best."

According to Gallup, RI's percentage of actively disengaged employees dropped enough to add at least \$112 million back to the RI economy.

The results drew high praise from **Jim Clifton**, chairman and CEO of Gallup, who said: "What you are doing is one of the most important experiments in the history of local human development



LRI Strengths Coach Claudia Cardozo '11 (center) leads an all Spanish strengths training at the United Way of Rhode Island.

– you are changing so many lives...this would be cool if this started a leadership movement across all states."

The Make RI Stronger effort was also recognized over the summer by the national Association of Leadership Programs which gave LRI its Excellence in Innovation Award. LRI's strengths initiative has even caught the attention of a professor of management at Menlo College in California who wants to use the Rhode Island story for an academic journal on workplace engagement.

To date, more than 12,000 individual Rhode Islanders have discovered their greatest strengths — referred to as their Top Five — by taking the online CliftonStrengths assessment. Of these, about 350 are Core Program participants, leaders from roughly 250 organizations, businesses and public sector agencies.

Now nearing the end of its fourth year, the social enterprise continues to gain momentum. Clients from more than 60 different entities representing the private, nonprofit and public sectors have embraced strengths-based development practices and received guidance from LRI-trained coaches.



Don't be left out.

Join the crowd and discover your Top Five strengths! It's an inexpensive way to learn some valuable information about yourself. The assessment takes about a half-hour on the computer in the privacy of your home or office. At the end, you immediately get a list of your strengths and a customized report of how to maximize them. Cost is \$10. You might even consider gift certificates for friends and family. For details, contact Kevin Cooper, LRI's strengths expeditor, at 401-273-1574, extension 111.

A Learning Moment: Get the rest of the story

By Marcus Jannitto '97

"I can't do that, Coach."

Now, coaches don't like being told by a player that they can't do something. I am pretty even-keeled, but this time, I started getting cranky.

I'm 60 years old, retired and coaching for fun, and I have this high school kid giving me pushback? Two minutes before a game? On this?

Luis was a junior transfer student and a hell of a volleyball player. Born in Puerto Rico, he grew up playing volleyball, and you could tell.

"Can't do what, Luis?"

"Put my hand over my heart. I will stand with the team on the end line but I will put my hands be-hind my back. I don't mean you any disrespect." He shrugged and smiled. "Really, Coach."

Before any sports event, but, in this case, a Division I high school volleyball match, a lot goes on: Rosters and line-ups to be submitted, stat sheets handed out, team warm-up, a final strategy talk, team prayer, and the national anthem. I went over the protocol with the team: Line up on the end line, face the flag, right hand over your heart.

This was not the time to deal with Luis' pushback. "We'll talk later," I told him.

The situation bothered me the entire weekend, and probably for good reason. For 38 years I had served in the Air National Guard, 20 years full time. I wore our flag on the shoulder of my flight suit all over the world: Central America, Panama and Granada in the '70s and '80s, Bosnia, Kuwait and Iraq in the '90s, and Afghanistan and Southwest Asia in the 2000s. At Ground Zero I saw the firefighters' flag in the rubble; I hung a large flag from the airplane while doing medical relief missions in Western Africa.

In my six years as a Brigadier General I have knelt more times than I wish to remember before family members of airmen who have died to present them a folded flag, heavy with the weight of service and sacrifice, always with eyes wet with emotion.

I had skin in the game.

A good leader always looks for teaching moments, times when we can offer insight. I like to think of them as "learning

moments," though that doesn't always happen. I was determined that this would be a learning moment for Luis.

At our next practice, Luis and I went to the corner of the gym. I felt I knew something about Puerto Rico. I knew that citizens could serve in the military. I had friends in the Puerto Rico Air National Guard and had deployed there many times.

"Luis," I said, "you know my background. You know why we stand together during the national anthem: To show respect and honor for our flag, our national anthem and the ideals of our country. You are a U.S. citizen. Why won't you put your hand over your heart?"

"Coach," he said, "here it is." He explained that he didn't see the United States as his country quite as much as he saw Puerto Rico as his country. He told me that Puerto Ricans couldn't vote in national elections and that their representatives in Congress can speak but not vote.

He told me there were three groups in Puerto Rico: those who want statehood, those who want to be an independent country, and those who want to keep the status quo as a territory. He explained how his family for generations had supported independence, and how they feared that statehood would mean the loss of heritage, culture and tradition.

It was clear that Luis had thought deeply about his action. He had decided long ago to make a stand for what he and his family believed. He wasn't disrespecting our flag; he was respecting his culture and

his heritage.

Before making judgments or decisions I feel it's important to get "the rest of the story," and I am always glad I did. This was a learning moment, but much more so for me than for one of my play-ers.

Before our next match where the national anthem would be played, I explained to the team why Luis would be standing with his hands behind his back and that I was good with it out of respect for his thought process, his family and his culture. Boys being boys, their response was: "OK, Coach ... let's play!" That was it.

Luis played again in his senior year, a year when we made it to the Division I state finals with Luis as our setter and team captain. I was very proud to stand with him as he received All-Tournament and 1st Team All-State awards, proud also to see him play in college at one of the best volleyball programs on the East Coast. I bring him back each year to work at our volleyball camp where we still have great conversations about politics, coaching and volleyball, and occasionally even share another learning moment.

Editor's note: *Marcus, retired brigadier general and head volleyball coach at La Salle Academy, shared this story at a Jeffersonian Dinner on July 12, 2016, weeks before Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers first sat during the national anthem, explaining that he could not show pride in the flag of a country that oppresses people of color.*



Marcus Jannitto, head volleyball coach at La Salle Academy, pictured with his team in 2016.

LRI Impact

By Michelle Carr '14

How do you measure the impact of Leadership Rhode Island?

I reflect on this question every time someone shares a story about how LRI changed their life. *Met their life partner . . . led to a career change . . . found a cause.*

It's possible to determine impact of a single activity — Core Program, College Program, Jeffersonian Dinner — by asking participants.

But what about measuring the impact of LRI in its entirety? Is it possible to measure outcomes of an organization, one growing in scale, scope and reach? By looking at LRI as a system of overlapping functions and activities, can one pin down results over time?

To find some answers, we took a deep dive into who we are, an effort engaging staff and governing board. We posed strategic questions and filled whiteboards with lists of the myriad of ways LRI serves its customers and the community.

We discovered that everything we do well, our organizational competencies, fall into five categories, which we call our Top Five:

Leadership Development *Advancing the personal and professional development of emerging and established leaders through the Core and College Leadership Rhode Island programs, and enhanced experiences.*

Alumni Engagement *Building and weaving authentic networks of diverse leaders across sectors and generations to form strong connections and mutually beneficial relationships.*

Civic and Community Engagement *Convening, educating and aligning community members to inspire collaboration for a better Rhode Island.*

Social Enterprise & Innovation *Developing sustainable, revenue generating solutions for societal change, such as Make RI Stronger.*

Advancing the Field *Serving as a thought leader to scale sustainable change across the community leadership ecosystem.*

We are not finished. Now we can measure how LRI's activities lead to changes in knowledge, behavior, attitude, condition and/or status. The results will help evaluate progress toward strategic goals, design scalable programs and projects, and communicate our broader transformational impact over time.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Core Program

- Retreat
- Session Days
- Enhancements
- Strengths Training
- Leadership in Action (LIA) Projects
- Socials

College Program

- Orientation
- Session Days
- Strengths Training
- Co-Chairs
- Fellowship



"I was able to step outside my day-to-day comfort zone, engaging in thoughtful, action-oriented interactions with a diverse cast of characters."

- Dana Borelli-Murray '12,
Executive Director,
Highlander Institute

2,323

total LRI graduates

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

- Jeffersonian Dinners
- Inspiring Leaders Awards Luncheon
- Dues Membership
- Nominations
- Interviews
- Committees
- Speakers
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Alumni Initiatives
- Database
- Social Events
- Alumni Enhancements
- Media & Social Media



LRI is a vital program that advances our social order. LRI is one of our hopes for uniting Rhode Island under well-informed leaders.

- Dr. Will Bundy '02,
Research Director,
US Naval War College

20%

increase in dues-paying members, 2015 to 2016

CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Leadership Central Falls
- Greatest Lil' State on Earth Convening
- Statewide Block Party
- LIA Projects
- Publick Occurrences
- Issue Based Forums
- Inspiring Leaders Awards Luncheon



A civil society is essential to the workings of democracy. The ongoing series of Publick Occurrences forums took on ambitious topics that touch citizens' lives deeply and personally, as evidenced by community interest and engagement. It is encouraging to see how this organization values civil discourse.

- The RI Press Association's Community Outreach Awards in 2014 and 2015

5,000

people convened at 16 Publick Occurrences Forums

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE & INNOVATION

Make RI Stronger

- Engagement Surveys
- Strengths Assessments
- Presentations
- Trainings
- Consulting
- Coaching Cadre
- Media & Social Media
- Strengths Meet-Ups



What you are doing is one of the most important experiments in the history of local human development . . . RI went from the worst in the country (percentage of actively disengaged employees) to 15th. "We've never seen a jump like this."

- Jim Clifton, Gallup, Chairman and CEO

\$112-\$234 MILLION

has been added back into the RI economy, according to Gallup

ADVANCING THE FIELD

- Workshops
- Facilitation Services
- Strengths-Based Servant Leadership
- Presentations
- Media Appearances
- Webinar Trainings
- Calls & Inquiries
- Awards & Recognitions



The leadership needed to 're-unite' the states of America will come from citizens. LRI has found a vehicle (Jeffersonian Dinners) to galvanize leaders. Leadership Programs across the land should take a close look at this model for possible replication.

- Ted Carroll, President, Leadership Greater Hartford

800+

leadership programs

750,000

alumni across the country



Keno Mullings, left, reports on the Government team's findings at the commencement day activities at The Towers in Narragansett. The class, at right, responds to the Health and Wellness team's light-hearted start of their presentation.

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diversionary program that "will allow a Burrillville resident to surrender himself/herself, along with any drugs in his/her possession, to the Burrillville Police Department without legal ramification," **Davis** said.

The LRI group raised \$10,000 to help launch the program, create a Burrillville Substance Abuse Coordinator position, and increase awareness among state representatives.

Another team, drawn together by interests in poverty, basic needs and quality of life, helped to spread the word "about youth substance use," expanding "the dialogue within families and within the community to stop this growing problem," according to **Amy Vitale**, team leader.

Her group found that "parents lacked awareness of the prevalence of youth substance use and the signs to identify it," Vitale said. They developed a five-minute video that drew on the "emotional impact of youth substance abuse," hoping to stimulate discussion within the community.

The video debuted at Burrillville's High School athletics orientation, followed by a panel discussion. "Our group was thrilled by the engagement of the audience in the discussion," Vitale said.

She said the two teams hope that their efforts to work alongside local organizations created a "buzz" within the commu-

nity and that the video and police program will "become a model of success for other Rhode Island communities and beyond."

Here's a brief look at the seven other projects:

- **Art and Design.** The team created a video detailing three stories of residents – owners of Mishnock Farm and two product designers – who live along Route 102.

- **Economic Development.** Working with Grow Smart Rhode Island and the Lieutenant Governor's office, this group was intent on sharing the "voice of the farmer." This group worked with a small business owner to get into distribution that started at the Hope & Main Incubator; supported and promoted Confreda Farms Advance RI Farm Forum; and worked with Grow Smart on takeaways that will help them go forward, planning for a future meeting to capsulize the group's findings, according to **Diane Bianco**, team leader.

- **Education/Literacy.** The group focused on "helping to generate awareness and engagement around three new state Department of Education-approved Career Technical Education programs that Scituate offers: Computer Engineering, Bio Medical and Health Sciences and connecting to invaluable, real work experience through corporate partnership," according to **Lanre Ajakaiye**, team leader.

- **Government.** Focusing on why women don't run for public office, the team developed a survey, which was completed by nearly 400 respondents.

- **Health and Wellness.** Working with the Coventry Teen Center, the Coventry Community Resource Center, and the Center for Resilience, the team focused on Coventry's teen population and resources available for mindfulness and resilience.

- **Housing/Homelessness.** The team supported South County Habitat for Humanity by marketing the opportunity to potential homeowners, raising nearly \$8,000 in a fundraiser and participating in a work-day to help build the home, said Susan Gunter, team leader. The team's efforts are assisting with building two family unit homes in Exeter.

- **Workforce Development.** **Jay DeRienzo**, team leader, said the group's project focused on fact-finding, a survey of more than 300 stakeholders to better understand challenges, issues, and opportunities around workforce development; and holding a community conversation, "Backpacks to Paychecks," at Bryant University. The group's goal, **DeRienzo** said, was "to spark what we hope will be an ongoing dialogue to advance school-to-work opportunities along the 102 corridor."

New website features alumni database and more

**By Alec Beckett '11 and Vinny Gebhart '15
Board Members**

The last few years have seen Leadership RI move boldly in several exciting new directions. But you wouldn't have known it by looking at the website.

Last winter a team of alumni and staff took on the ambitious project of redesigning the front end and modernizing the back end of the site. The goal was to create a web presence that reflected the brand, the organization, its impact and the tremendous alumni base that makes it all possible. And — importantly — it had to work flawlessly on the universe of new mobile devices that have appeared since the last redesign. This also created an opportunity to add a long sought-after feature to the site: a searchable alumni directory.

Through a search that included more than 15 local web firms, the committee found a match in Work-shop, a quirky (half furniture maker, half web designer!) Providence design shop. They came in with an appealing proposal and an innovative approach. Over the next few months they worked closely with the LRI team, writing copy, organizing content, collecting photos, designing and coding. The result

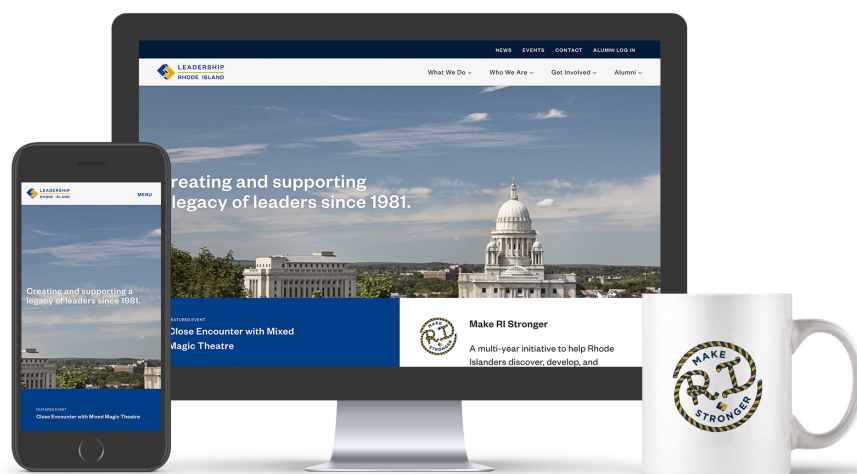
is an engaging, visually appealing, easy-to-navigate hub that tells the increasingly complex story of LRI in simple, dynamic fashion.

But for the many alums who have been asking for it for years, the “Holy Grail” feature is the alumni database. Through a partnership with Salesforce.com, a modern search interface enables alumni and staff to find each other based on a range of criteria (current position, company, class, city, etc.) while carefully maintaining privacy for our members. Alumni can update their profiles and connect securely through

private messages without having to expose email addresses or phone numbers unless they choose to.

We encourage you to explore the new site and share it with anyone curious about the organization. And please take the alumni directory for a spin. We believe it will become an increasingly valuable tool for our alumni looking to maintain and build their networks.

If you have any questions or suggestions about the site, feel free to contact us at office@leadershipri.org.



2,300+ alumni at your fingertips!

Become a dues-paying member and receive access to our new alumni database!

Connect with fellow alumni by:

- Profession - Class Year
- Interest - Strengths & more!

community.leadershipri.org





Kevin Cooper, strengths expeditor, circulates among the dozens of guests at LRI's Strengths Meet-Up at The Dorrance.

Continued from Page 1

Pamela Alarie '05, past chair of LRI's governing board, sees a move to the national level as a "win-win."

"Our country desperately needs a grassroots movement focused on that simple premise of meeting new people and finding common interests," she says. "Tapping LRI to springboard such a movement would put Rhode Island on the map as the place where big ideas are born. All of Rhode Island would benefit from that."

Others agree.

Jorge Garcia, an LRI-trained strengths coach, says Rhode Island is a "great incubator" for developing best practices, particularly in the strengths movement. Garcia oversees strengths-management approaches at Carousel Industries, where he is senior director of professional services. He also coaches some of LRI's strengths clients.

Folks will want to visit Rhode Island, he says, to learn strengths-thinking from the Rhode Island businesses, nonprofits and governmental agencies now using strengths management techniques.

"If you can achieve meaningful change in RI . . . then LRI should share [its] approach on a broader platform," says **Josh Starr**, who, as president of Starr Opinion Research, has conducted data-driven surveys for many community leadership programs, including LRI.

Starr, who grew up in Rhode Island, says LRI will benefit by expanding its reach and influence. As a leader on the national level, he says, LRI will be exposed to the best ideas and best thinkers on 21st-century dilemmas.

Ritz sees the possibilities of expansion in much the same way.

By sharing and learning from one another about best practices, problems and solutions, LRI and other community leadership programs across the country can create dynamic networks of effective, influential "leaders as hosts," he says.

The "leaders as hosts" concept comes from **Margaret Wheatley**, the nationally recognized leadership guru, who argues that "leaders as heroes" is an outdated concept. It is time to stop waiting for someone to save us, she writes. "We need to figure out how to mobilize the hearts and minds of everyone in our workplaces and communities."

LRI'S FIRST BIG move to engage alumni, Core Program participants and the larger community came in 2012 when the entire Theta II class concentrated all their team action projects on Central Falls, a city then struggling with bankruptcy. "What can we do to help?" project teams asked the city's residents, leaders, businesses and other stakeholders.

Answers came quickly.

The citywide initiative was "an example of neighbors helping neighbors, a modern-day barn raising – Leadership In Action," says Ritz.

The extraordinary effort brought statewide and national recognition to LRI, which received Common Cause's Excellence in Public Service Award and the 2014 Innovation in Excellence Award from the Association of Leadership Programs, an organization representing 200 of the nation's 800 community leadership programs.

Continued on Page 13

HARD ON THE HEELS of that success, LRI, in 2014, launched Make RI Stronger, an initiative to address what Gallup called “the most actively disengaged workforce” in the nation.

Make RI Stronger, now a revenue-producing social enterprise, has moved the needle in powerful ways by introducing positive strengths-based thinking to thousands of Rhode Islanders, and by training more than two dozen Strengths Coaches to work with clients in businesses, nonprofits and governmental agencies interested in strengths management.

This year, Rhode Island shed its rock-bottom status of having the largest percentage of actively disengaged workers in the nation and jumped to first place in a nationwide comparison of this performance measure: “At work, I get to use my strengths to do what I do best.”

Beyond dramatic improvement in workplace measures, LRI sees indications that learning about strengths can change perceptions outside the workplace as well. A remarkable 92 percent of Core Program participants in both 2016 and 2017 said that the emphasis on strengths “helped me see strengths in others.” Also, 68 percent said that learning their strengths strongly influenced their thinking about how they can contribute to making their community better.

That “is very inspiring; keep taking it higher,” urged Gallup Chairman and CEO **Jim Clifton**, when told of the results.

“You’re doing a great thing . . . a great experiment to rebuild a great American state,” he said.

IT HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE for LRI to ignore the polarization sweeping the nation, marked by the deterioration of civil conversation and the inability to appreciate those with differing values and opinions.

That concern is one reason LRI agreed in 2011 to join the Providence Journal and Rhode Island College to offer Publick Occurrences, public forums to explore significant, often controversial, issues facing Rhode Island. The award-winning effort has attracted more than 5,000 Rhode Islanders to the discussions.

Then, in early 2016, LRI launched a series of Jeffersonian Dinners, small-group discussions around the dining table. LRI solicits alumni to be hosts and selects the guests, with the goal of gathering together alumni who see the world differently. A moderator encourages each guest to tell stories that reveal personal experiences and opinions.

A stunning 98 percent of attendees say they gained “new perspectives and ideas” at a Jeffersonian Dinner.

EMBRACING THE POWER of positive thinking, conversing with strangers around the dinner table, rekindling human contact in an age of social media, examining controversial subjects in civil public forums . . . Can such deliberate human interactions have a positive impact on the nation’s psyche?

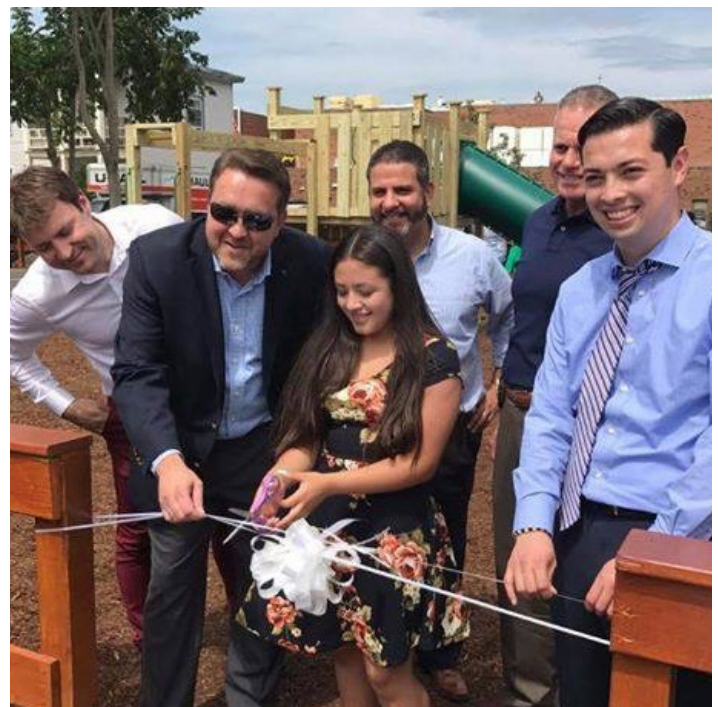
Yes, says Ritz, who sees great possibilities if the 750,000 alumni of the country’s 800 community leadership programs were to become “host-leaders,” actively engaged in the search of innovative problem-solving and good solutions.

Yes, says Carr, who sees a national leadership alumni network, united in bridging the gaps that now divide us.

With a strong Core Program foundation, a forward-thinking staff and board, and demonstrably successful programs that raise both revenue and alumni engagement, LRI is poised to lead the way.



Leadership Rhode Island is recognized by the Association of Leadership Programs in June for creative, unique, and impactful innovative strategies.



In August, Calcutt student Nancy Rodriguez cuts the ribbon with Mike Ritz '07, Victor Capellan '98, and Mayor Diossa '12 for the Chocolateville Playground, a result from LRI's Central Falls 2012 intervention.

Thank you to our 2017 dues-paying alumni!

Steward \$1,000

Robert DiMuccio, '01
Steve Duvel, '12
Bob Ferreira, '11
Kim McCauley, '14
Baldev Seekri
Richard Staples, '90

Visionary \$500

Angella Franklin, '13
Akhil Gupta, '07
Linda Lulli, '02
Darlene Major, '17
Tricia O'Neil, '09
Mike Ritz, '07
Carol Young '92

Champion \$250

Bill Allen, '87
Ernie Almonte, '88
Nicole Benjamin, '13
Jacky Beshar, '08
Jacob Brier, '14
William Bundy, '02
Ron Caniglia, '87
Peter Chung, '16
Bill Conley, '01
David Curtis, '15
Joanne Daly, '12
Lisa Dandeneau, '15
Ed D'Arezzo, '08
Jim Ferrara, '07
Kevin Gaw, '17
Kim Hall, '11
John Harpootian, '88
Tim Horan, '01
Roger Iannetta, '17
Karen King, '13
Josh Klemp, '13
Sharon Marable, '01
Mary Marran, '12
Shanna Marzilli, '08
Jennifer Massotti, '16
Bob McCann, '15
Christine McDermott, '11
John Mulattieri, '09
Kathy O'Donnell, '04
Paul Oliveira, '07
Nina Pande, '12
Jennifer Parkhurst, '11
Clark Phillip, '92
Randy Sacilotto, '04
Scott Seaback, '14
Ted Shallcross, '11
Libby Slader, '12

Members \$100

Terri Adelman, '94
Candy Adriance, '00
Pam Alarie, '05
Heather Amaral, '17
Magali Angeloni, '16
Farid Ansari, '11
Stephen Antonucci, '14
Armeny Apkarian, '90
Kim Arcand, '14
Lee Arnold, '93
Karen Asher, '98
Scott Avedisian, '97
Shameem Awan, '15
Bruce Balon, '06
Karen Barbosa, '14
Ting Barnard, '15
John Barry, '00
Kathy Bello, '88
Emilie Benoit, '83
Tim Benson, '13
Lisa Blackman, '06
David Bodah, '14
MaryBeth Boivin, '16
Adrian Boney, '11
Chuck Borkoski, '01
Laura Bottaro, '07
Scott Boyd, '16
Dan Bryant, '93
Chris Callahan, '00
Victor Capellan, '98
David Caprio, '14
Lisa Carcieri, '15
Sean Carmody, '13
Angela Carr, '15
Jesse Carr '16
Michelle Carr '14
Kevin Casey, '16
Maggie Casey, '15
Julie Casimiro, '08
Frank Champi, '82
Sarah Channing, '16
Alicia Charles-St. Juste, '15
Jason Chopoorian, '17
Arlene Chorney, '00
Lisa Churchville, '98
Mario Cirillo, '15
Ruth Clegg, '98
Brenda Clement, '97
Kyla Coburn, '14
Sandra Coletta, '93
Derek Collamati, LCF
Kevin Colman, '14
Donna Costantino, '09
Matt Coupe CLRI '12

Michael Criscione, '10
James Crowley, '92
Judy Croyle, '09
Henry Cruz '17
Jeanne D'Agostino, '02
Lisa D'Agostino, '07
Diane D'Ambra, '16
Karen Davis, '99
Deb DeBare, '95
Rob DeOrsey, '11
Richard DeRienzo, '85
Jane Desforges, '05
Colleen Dickson, '09
Brad Dimeo, '96
Jon Duffy, '98
Peter Durfee, '14
Andrew Erickson, '94
Michael Fantom, '07
Chris Feisthamel, '01
Karen Flynn, '15
Diana Franchitto, '08
Michael Friedman, '16
Greg Garvin, '08
Vinny Gebhart, '15
David Giardino, '09
Jodi Glass, '04
Rafaelina Gomez, '16
Bobby Gondola, CLRI '05
Priscilla Gonzalez, '17
Christine Goulette, '13
Richard Graefe, '82
Joan Gray, '86
Lenny Green, '02
John Gregory, '94
Susan Gunter, '17
Gilda Hernandez '17
Louise Herrington-Bright, '98
Peter Hollmann, '88
Andrea Hopkins, '88
Steve Horowitz, '96
Martha Hultzman, '91
Roberta Humble, '01
Chris Hurd, '90
Ryan Hutchins, '05
Deb Imondi, '88
Marcus Jannitto, '97
Andrea Joseph, '02
Maria Kasparian, '15
Betty Ann Kearney, '02
Theresa Keegan, '09
Brandon Keough, '10
Christine King, '16
Donald King, '02
Mike Kosiver, '16
Mary Kozik, '92

Michael Kumar, '10
Keith Lang, '01
Patricia Lang, '99
Nancy Langrall, '83
Cindy Lawlor, '98
Dave Layman, '86
Joseph Le, '98
Ian Lester, '10
Natalia Lima, '16
Tom Lisi, '07
Val Littlefield, '10
Janis Loiselle, '99
Micheline Lombardi, '15
Sal Lombardi, '97
Nick Loring, '16
Luis Lourenco, '11
Rosanne Lowe, '07
Jennifer Luxmoore, '10
Mike Lynch, '01
Shawn MacDonald, '13
David Macedo, '13
Molly Magee, '07
Rajani Mahadevan, '10
Carolyn Mark, '17
Joe Marocco, '87
Don Marrin, '06
Ron Martel, '06
Donna Martin, '09
Glen Martin, '15
Katie McDonald, '16
Liz Messier, '01
Carrie Miranda, '08
Joanne Monahan, '08
Rob Monnes, '12
Paula Montgomery, '15
Jim Moody, '16
Paul Mooney, '98
Peter Moreau, '09
Fran Mossberg, '99
John Muggeridge, '04
Jim Nellis, '13
Donna Nesselbush, '87
Jodie Neville, '05
Kelly Nevins, '06
Michele Nota, '09
Andy Nota '11
Ana Novais, '04
Julie Novak, '13
Jane Nugent, '95
Kevin O'Brien, '14
Janice Olsen, '15
John Palumbo, '93
Steven Pare, '01
Cindy Parker, '08
Prutha Patel, '16

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, '04
Matt Plain, '13
Ray Pouliot, '96
Kathryn Power, '86
Joe Pratt, '06
Fred Reinhardt, '16
Steven Richard, '03
Bobby Rodriguez, '13
Ralph Rodriguez, '01
Christine Roundtree, '91
Caroline Rumowicz, '10
John Russell, '15
Joan Sackett, '83
Chris Sanford, '10
Michelle Saunders, '09
Ford Sayre, '82
Cheryl Shaw, '16
Monica Shea, '94
John Simmonds, '14
Samuel Slade, '13
Cheryl Snead, '00
Brian Spero, '84
Michael Steiner, '17
Susan Stevenson, '14
Rob Stolzman, '93
John Stringer, '86
Bob Suglia, '05
Tom Sweeney, '98
Anne Szostak, '85
George Tager, '17
John Tarantino, '91
Michael Tauber, '05
Jill Tobak, '06
Vanessa Toledo-Vickers, '01
Stephen Ucci, '15
Dale Venturini, '88
Martin Vincent, '99
Nondas Voll, '85
Eric Wagner, '16
Bill Warburton, '88
Danielle Ward, '14
Ray Watson, '15
Sylvia Weber, '90
Lizzi Weinberg, '16
Herb Weiss, '12
Jeff Wilhelm, '13
David Winoker, '88
Eileen Wisniewski, '15
Scott Wolf, '87
Bill Wray, '96
Mary Wyatt, '98
Chris Yalanis, '12
Laura Yalanis, '09
Myrth York, '92
Sam Zurier, '04

Note: This list only includes alumni who renewed their dues between Jan. 1 - Nov. 1, 2017

Here's what some of our members have been up to

Brian Spero '84 was promoted to President/CEO of The Beacon Mutual Insurance Company. **Rajani Mahadevan '10** succeeded him as Chief Operating Officer.

Prutha Patel '16 is the new Board Chair for the PVD Lady Project.

Mark Gim '02 will soon assume the positions of President/Chief Operating Officer for the Washington Trust Company. Other LRI alumni promoted: **Bill Wray '96**, to Senior Executive Vice President/Chief Risk Officer; **Kristen DiSanto '06**, to Senior Executive Vice President/Chief Human Resources Officer, and **Tom Klump '15**, to Senior Vice President/Chief Information Officer. **David Devault '01**, Chief Financial Officer, plans to retire early in 2018.

Looking ahead to 2018, Cranston Mayor **Allan Fung '01** announced he will seek the Republican nomination for Governor, and Rep **Aaron Regunberg '17** announced he will seek the Democratic nomination for Lieutenant Governor.

Henrietta White-Holder '11 has been appointed by Gov. Gina Raimondo to chair the Advisory Council for the Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity in the state Department of Administration. Earlier this year, Henrietta, **Anne Grant '90** and **Vanessa Volz '17** were recognized as "Women of Achievement" by the YWCA of Rhode Island.

Brenda Dann-Messier '87 has been named Rhode Island Commissioner of Post-Secondary Education.

Lorne Adrain '94 left Seattle in late summer on a 3,000-mile bicycle trip to explore how communities across America are addressing the same challenges facing Providence. Among his goals is to inspire people to make a difference in their own communities. See commentary and photos of people he has met along



Spero '84



Patel '16



Gim '02



White-Holder '11



Adrain '94



Casimiro '08



O'Reilly '95



Luxmoore '10



Kane '08



Husband '12

the way by visiting Community Across America on Facebook.

Lisa Ranglin '13 announced a new micro-lending program through the Rhode Island Black Business Association.

Karen Flynn '15 was elected president of the Providence College National Alumni Association.

Rep Julie Casimiro '08 is the new Executive Director of the Kent County YMCA.

Paul O'Reilly '95, president of the Newport Restaurant Group, joined other business leaders to launch a nationwide accreditation program for employee-owned companies.

Two LRI alumni have opened restaurants in Providence: **Jennifer Luxmoore '10** expanded Sin Desserts, to include a coffee shop and bar, at 1413 Westminster St., and **Sean Larkin '16**, co-founder and master brewer of Revival Brewing Co., is one of the partners behind Troop PVD, at 60 Valley St.

Brendan Kane '08 is the new President of the board for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ocean State.

Central Falls Mayor **James Diossa '12** is now Second Vice Chairman of the state Democratic Party, replacing Joseph Delorenzo, who resigned.

Pawtucket's Financial Advisory Team now includes three LRI alumni: **John Gregory '94**, **Kevin Tracy '04** and **Lisa Ranglin '13**.

Ray Watson '15 presented *Why Culture?* at TEDxProvidence 2017.

Melissa Husband '12 has been named Deputy Secretary of State/ Director of Administration by Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea.

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



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