



LEADERSHIP
RHODE ISLAND

Rhody Strengths Tours start rolling

By John Kostrzewa '99

Business and nonprofit leaders from five states recently participated in Leadership Rhode Island's first-ever Strengths Tour to see firsthand how Rhode Islanders are embracing their strengths to improve job satisfaction, productivity and profits.

The out-of-state visitors heard from workers and managers who discovered their strengths, learned to communicate better and felt empowered to participate in workplace improvements that cut costs, raised revenues and made their jobs more enjoyable.

"The tour brought to life the statistics about the results of strength assessments," said Jim Ball, a leader of organizational development and change management at Lonza Biologics, in Portsmouth, N.H.

"I saw workers excited about their jobs and the transition of their organizations," he said, "I will go back to New Hampshire and tell the governor we need to do this."

Another attendee, Ken Barr Jr., founder of Beacon Leadership of Spring Lake, Michigan, said, "One of the biggest values of the tour was to see organization-wide embracing of the concept. I saw it done throughout Rhode Island



Focus, Positivity, Woo and other colorfully painted strengths make LRI's new 16-passenger van a real standout. Purchased with a Champlin Foundation grant, the van is used for Strengths Tours. Marcus Jannitto '97, retired brigadier general, R.I. Air National Guard, is the designated driver.

and at scale."

Like LRI's strengths coaches, both Ball and Barr use the CliftonStrengths Assessment, an online test that identifies an individual's natural talents. It is named for the late Donald O. Clifton, the Grandfather of Positive Psychology, whose research company acquired Gallup, the public opinion polling firm, in the 1980s.

Clifton identified 34 natural talents that individuals possess in various combinations and in varying degrees, and developed an online test that produces individual reports, including each person's top five strengths, such as Achiever, Responsibility, Analytical, Strategic, and Harmony.

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LRI looks to create national network

Leadership Rhode Island is generating widespread interest in the co-creation of a national organization that would harness the power of Community Leadership Programs — and their 750,000 alumni — to address societal problems collaboratively, civilly and positively.

Mike Ritz '07, executive director, and **Michelle Carr '14**, deputy director, announced LRI's intention to get Leadership United States (LUS) up and operating by the early 2020s during a conference of the Association of Leadership Programs (ALP) in Louisville, Ky. on Oct. 29.

"At a time of great divide and lack of civility in the country, I can see no better time to formally establish a coast-to-coast network consisting of four decades of leadership alumni condi-

tioned to listen, explore and celebrate different perspectives, be civilized with one another, and then take action to help find better solutions to critical societal issues too complex to solve alone," Ritz told the community leadership executives at the conference.

"The access to answers and the sharing of knowledge should not be confined by arbitrary geographic borders," he said. "Most assuredly, our nation's leadership program alumni have the talent, resources and relationships to overcome big challenges. We just need to connect them and ignite this powerful network."

For more than a year, Ritz and Carr have been exploring the idea of a national organization with colleagues at community leadership programs in other cities and states. Nearly 50

executive directors of these organizations have expressed interest in becoming founding partners of Leadership United States.

The organizations on board are located in all four time zones and represent both urban and rural communities in red and blue states, Ritz said. Some are independent leadership programs; some operate as affiliates of Chambers of Commerce.

Approximately 300 Community Leadership Programs are affiliated with ALP. Ritz estimates that there are as many as 500 other community-based programs in the United States that could be drawn into Leadership United States.

After a presentation on the concept of Leadership United States at the ALP conference,

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LEADERSHIP

RHODE ISLAND

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Letter from the Chair

Greetings!

As I write to you, we are well into the season where everything is pumpkin-spice flavored. I'll leave it for you to decide whether that's good or bad.

As always, there is much going on at your LRI:

- Members of the 2018 Xi II class graduated in October and have joined the ranks of our alumni.
- Applications are in and being considered for the 2019 Core Program Class, Omicron II. Once again the applicant pool looks great, with many new organizations represented.
- The 2019 College Leadership RI program, the first to run for two semesters, is underway with 49 of Rhode Island's best and brightest future leaders participating. It's the largest class in CLRI history.
- Thanks to a grant from the Champlin Foundation, LRI has a snazzy new 15-passenger van for conducting Strengths Tours. You, too, can go on our first-ever Strengths Tour by reading the story that starts on the cover of this newsletter.
- Executive Director Mike Ritz '07 moderated this fall's Public Occurrences, a community forum co-hosted by LRI, The Providence Journal and Rhode Island College. The topic: Political Polarization.

Your LRI continues to evolve in new and exciting ways as it strives to achieve its mission of engaging and connecting people through shared experiences that positively transform individuals, organizations, and communities.

As part of this continuing need to evolve, we have created a 60-member Advisory Cabinet to address LRI's Top Five organizational competencies: Leadership Development, Alumni & Community Engagement, Social, Enterprise & Innovation, Advancing the Field, and Capacity Building.

Cabinet members, who began meeting



in May, are exploring strategic alternatives for each competency, while simultaneously casting a wider net for more alumni with skills, connections, experience and passion who are willing to help advance our mission.

Each board member also has been assigned to an organizational competency, allowing us to explore and co-create strategies with participating staff and cabinet members. Addressing all competencies in the same manner and at the same time allows us to grow the organization in a balanced manner, recognizing through past success that the accomplishments in one area lead to success in others.

I look forward to sharing the fruits of these efforts in future newsletters. We're moving with urgency because we have a lot to get done to maintain our financial stability and intended growth, while taking advantage of the extraordinary momentum that LRI staff and alumni have created. To quote a former board colleague, Baldev Seekri, "If we're not growing, we're dying." Your LRI is alive and thriving!

I look forward to seeing you at future Leadership Rhode Island gatherings.

Paul Oliveira '07, Board Chair

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.



Bipartisan co-chairs led with respect

By Christine McDermott '11

The idea was pitched as "a lively experiment."

Could a Leadership Rhode Island program committee led by one staunch Republican and one staunch Democrat – with six members from each party – get past their ideological differences and work together? Could they find compromise, common ground, innovation and ideas to create the curriculum for the Xi II class?

Answers to those questions emerged during a recent celebratory planning committee wrap-up session at LRI headquarters.

The consensus from the program Co-Chairs, Republican **John Harpootian '88** and Democrat **Myrth York '92**, was yes – with one qualifier. For the most part, partisanship stayed out of the discussions.

"In terms of the program committee, we didn't talk politics," said York, a former state senator and three-time candidate for governor. "We're an incredibly civil group."

Harpootian, former vice chairman of the Rhode Island GOP, said he initially was reluctant to participate in the BiPartisan Program Committee when approached by Executive Director **Mike Ritz '07**.

"I said, 'I don't think I can do this because I'm going to be shoveling against the tide here, and it's going to look bad,'" recalled Harpootian. Well aware that Democrats outnumber Republicans in Rhode Island, he said he didn't want to leave himself open to ambush.

His concern that the class would be dominated by Democrats was borne out at the Xi II opening retreat when **Barnaby Evans '95**, executive artistic director of WaterFire, conducted an impromptu poll on how the 76 class members had voted in 2016.

In remarks before staging a moving outdoor torch ceremony, Evans invited the Xi IIs to privately divulge their presidential choices by putting a mini Reese's peanut butter cup in a vase if they voted for Donald Trump and a Hershey's Kiss if they voted for Hillary Clinton.

Just 12 peanut butter cups were dropped in the vase.

While the focus of the experiment was on decision-making, there were signs that the very existence of deliberately enlisting bipartisan co-chairs and committee members had a positive impact on class discussions.

Just knowing that Harpootian had a role in planning the monthly sessions may have made it easier for the Trump voters to share their opinions throughout the year, said **Kristin Zosa Puleo**, LRI Programs Manager.

"I would like to think it made people more comfortable to speak their minds," she said. "I saw a little bit of that, especially on immigration day, where people spoke up and were posing questions from a differing point of view."

Ritz agreed. "Some people who wouldn't call themselves Republican wanted to hear from John. They respected John and wanted to hear his point of view."

As expected, the co-chairs were models of civility. When York and Harpootian spoke to the class, they did so together, Ritz said. "They were not arguing; each would say their truth."

While the committee had recipes from previous years to guide their program planning, a session day on immigration was new this year. And there was some debate.

"It was so completely unstructured, we didn't have anything to go on," York said. "Do we talk about Dreamers, refugees, the normal process for citizenship, E-Verify? It was so broad. How do you narrow that to talk to immigration for a day?"

Harpootian wanted to focus on immigration law, one of the many times throughout the year that he stressed "learning outcomes." "The class needs to know what the law is," he said. "I remember saying it three times."

That's why Carl Krueger, staff attorney for Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, was asked to participate. He conducted a two-hour workshop, and "it was by far a highlight," said Ritz. "We were worried about it because we dedicated a ton of time to it. Policy can be boring. But they loved it."

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Co-chairs Myrth York (D) and John Harpootian (R) congratulate the 2018 Xi II Class on their graduation day.



Sneaker David Graziano

Learning at the eleventh-hour that the overnight retreat for the Xi IIs could not be held at URI's Alton Jones campus led, almost miraculously, to accommodations at the tony Gurney's Resort on Goat Island in Newport. Class members quickly dubbed themselves GOATS and created a new boast: They are not just the "best class ever," they are the "Greatest Of All Time."

Ten months later the GOATS elected **David Graziano**, Sr. Marketing Manager at CVS Health, class speaker. He had plenty to say at the Xi II commencement and he did it all with wit and a deep understanding of "Leaders as Hosts," the theme for the 2018 class.

Here are excerpts from his speech:

Listen. Learn. Lead. These three words — in that order — summarize the voyage of discovery we've been on these past 10 months.

Each time we came together, it was to LISTEN to a broad new topic; to LEARN from the experts and from each other; and then to decide how these experiences informed and transformed our ability to LEAD.

Who did we LISTEN to? At Jeffersonian Dinners we heard alumni speak of times they weren't the leader they expected of themselves. At monthly sessions, we heard from representatives of the business, non-profit and government sectors who helped us unearth challenges facing the state. And, working in teams, we engaged hundreds of stakeholders in discussions both inside the state and all across America.

What did we LEARN? A basic needs simulation opened our eyes to the grinding, soul-wrenching effects of poverty. A ride-along with Meals on Wheels turned me sideways as I met a 101-year-old woman, living on her own, not only in need of a daily meal, but also for the comfort of a friendly voice.

Many of us were deeply touched by conversations with immigrants who came in search of a better life for their families. While many have succeeded, the path for so many others is fraught with bureaucracy, and ever moving goal lines.

We found our inspiration for how to LEAD in Margaret Wheatley's essay "Leadership in the Age of Complexity – from Hero to Host." She challenges the "heroic" monopoly on leadership, suggesting it is time for the "heroes" to go home. In an age of complexity and interconnectedness, she writes, a new leadership model is needed, one in which the "host leader" brings together those with differing viewpoints and experiences to engage in an informed and respectful dialogue, one that ensures a more complete picture on which to base inclusive action.

One way is to generate ideas over a meal or some beverages. Any good Italian knows that! And, boy, did we ever eat and drink this year!

Many of us frequently sought each other out between session days. We met in our sub-groups to work and to socialize. We supported each other's professional and personal events. These touch points, and the bonds they forged, became regular occurrences.

Such discussions, it seems, are evaporating as tribalism takes hold. We seek out those with similar points of view. We embrace opinions without the supporting facts or coherent arguments. We follow media sources which present hardened positions we support and we disparage those who do not share them.

In short, our society has stopped listening, learning, and leading.

So, how did we, the Xi II class, meet the challenge of being "leaders as hosts?"

We listened and we learned throughout the ten months, especially when working on

our team projects. We conducted research, spent energy and time examining diverse perspectives, defined the issues, scoped out opportunities and identified pathways to a better way. We came to understand the power of connections. We "hosted."

One might ask: Why didn't we just produce action plans to bring our solutions instantly to life?

I would posit that pushing hard to make the first idea the new reality would be the "hero's" route, one that is not well "hosted."

As host leaders we realize we don't have all the answers, but the work we've done can serve as prologue. Next year's cohort, the Omicron IIs, can take the information we've gathered, test possible solutions and ultimately deliver improvements to vital areas of concern in Rhode Island.

That is what I hope will endure beyond our 10 months together to make us truly the "GREATEST OF ALL TIME."



Xi II outreach to inform new class's projects

By Christine McDermott '11

In a presidential election year, about 60 percent of Rhode Island's registered voters come out to the polls. In a mid-term election, the percentage falls into the 40s. Compare that to Colorado, which experienced voter turnouts of 72 percent in the 2016 election and 55 percent in 2014.

Looking to improve voter engagement in the Ocean State, a team of Xi II class members connected with Denver Director of Elections Amber McReynolds to find out how they've achieved such stellar results.

"Some things she talks about are having the elections team look at voters as customers – to improve the customer experience and make it easier," said **Mike Thomas '18**, Director of Supply Chain for Amgen. "They have drive-through voting; they're leveraging technology to advance all of the years-old voting processes. You can vote through electronic tablets placed throughout the city."

Thomas and his teammates will hand off their research and recommendations to the incoming Omicron II class, as will nine other Leadership Rhode Island teams that focused on topics like

Arts, Health and Education. The goal will be for the Omicron IIs to connect with Rhode Island leaders in each subject area and take steps to put the work of the Xi IIs into practice.

"You've created for the state of Rhode Island a fantastic needs assessment," Leadership Rhode Island Project Advisor **Jane Nugent '95** told the class after they presented their projects at the October commencement.

From New York to Oregon and Texas to California, members of the Xi II class spent the past year reaching out to leaders around the country to identify change-making practices and present these opportunities to stakeholders in Rhode Island.

The Children/Youth team homed in on mentoring, noting that the need in Rhode Island is great.

"Think back to when you were young, someone who had a positive influence on your life," said **Stefani Gallagher '18**, Area Assistant Vice President for Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. "What would your life be like if you never met that person?"

Mentor Rhode Island and its partner organizations serve 5,000 children in the state,

with a waiting list of 1,000. Noting that more than 40,000 Rhode Island children live below the poverty line, she said, "Imagine if they had access to a mentor."

For a model, the team looked to New York State Mentoring, whose success can be partly credited to the fact that it is championed by the governor and "had the political backing that engaged leaders in the community to rally around it," Gallagher said.

In a similar vein, the Legal/Criminal Justice/ Crime/Incarceration team studied prison apprenticeships and found that support is needed from the private sector.

Laura Pisaturo '18, Chairperson of the Rhode Island Parole Board, said her team spoke to many stakeholders within Rhode Island: judges, the deputy chief of the attorney general's office, a public defender, folks at the prison and community groups that work with formerly incarcerated offenders on the outside.

They chose to focus on apprenticeships because "idle hands make for idle minds," she said. "We know that involvement in professional and social activities reduces delinquency and recidivism."

Projects continued on page 12



Jamey Herzog and Deb Cornish



Shaun St. Laurent, Shannon O'Brien, Madeline Burke, and Tekla Moquin



Michael Riordan, Christina Rouse, Chad McFarlane, and Oliver Tutt



Jeff Spratt and Flavia Baker

Shaping Rhode Island's future, one student leader at a time

By Holly Jensen '08

Launched in 2004, College Leadership Rhode Island (CLRI) continues to grow to meet the evolving needs of participants and the larger community. At its start, the program offered just four half-day sessions for fewer than a dozen students. This fall, CLRI launched its first full academic-year program for 49 participants, the biggest class ever.

To celebrate CLRI's 15th anniversary, here are two stories of recent alumni whose experience with the program helped shape their future.

If you are interested in learning more about CLRI, please visit www.leadershipri.org/college-program for more information. If you are interested in having a CLRI student shadow you, please contact Kristin Zosa Puleo at kzosapuleo@leadershipri.org

Erica Brant, CLRI '16: Finding and Listening to Your Strengths

When **Erica Brant** walked into her first CLRI session two years ago, she had no idea what to expect. "I'd heard it was a great program, but I didn't know much about it. So I was ready for whatever," she said.

Little did the West Palm Beach, Fla. native know that CLRI would be instrumental in influencing her future, inspiring her to shift from pursuing a career as a baker to a public interest lawyer.

Brant, who lives in Bristol, and is a second-year law student at the Roger Williams University School of Law, came to the state to attend Johnson & Wales University (JWU) as a baking and pastry arts major. She started CLRI in the fall of 2016, a few months prior to her graduation.

At first, Brant didn't put a lot of value in the CliftonStrengths Assessment, a benefit offered to CLRI participants, until she received the results. Her top five strengths were identified as Intellection – Input – Futuristic – Learner – Harmony.

"It was a wake-up call and I started to question whether I should consider a career

that was a better fit, something more intellectually stimulating and less physically demanding," she said.

Brant, who is 25 years old, was born with a physical disability, which made it hard, though not impossible, to keep up with her classes at JWU and various bakery jobs.

"I asked myself some tough questions, like 'Why was I pushing my body to the brink every day when physical strength wasn't my best attribute?' " That's when she realized that "you have to work with your strengths and not against them. CliftonStrengths solidified this for me."

Soon after, Brant enrolled in law school and she hasn't looked back.

She also credits getting to know other CLRI participants as a reason for choosing to stay in Rhode Island and pursue a career that gives back. "Being around a network of people who wanted to make a difference motivated me to want to help others. In the future, my hope is to encourage more people to value different cultures and embrace different perspectives," she said.





Chad McFarlane, CLRI '14: Taking the Roads Less Traveled

Right before **Chad McFarlane** moved to Rhode Island, he was a homeless teen in the rural town of Washington, Conn. He arrived here after reconnecting with his sister in Providence and he went on to complete an alternative diploma program and serve in the U.S. Army from 2002-2007, including two deployments in Iraq.

"I made some mistakes when I was younger and my life wasn't together. But I made a decision to step forth on my own ... and if I can do it, then others can do it," said McFarlane, now 35 years old and living in Providence.

His unique journey is something he willingly shares, whether it's part of the commencement speech he gave during his graduation from the Community College of Rhode Island in 2014 or during casual conversations with fellow classmates.

"Sometimes we're told that we won't amount to much or that we probably shouldn't try. But you don't get just one shot to get it right," he said. "There's more than one chance to be a good person and live a good life."

McFarlane works as a veterans affairs coordinator at Electric Boat and is a year away from a bachelor's degree in applied

economics at the University of Rhode Island. This year he participated in LRI's core program, one of the few to hold both CLRI and LRI alumni credentials. He is quick to acknowledge that his experiences have helped him succeed in his career.

"I was a nontraditional student, so I was a bit older than others in my [CLRI] class. And when you live long enough, you start going through the world with a certain amount of caution. Or you become jaded because of prior setbacks," he said. "But the other CLRI students looked at the world as though nothing was impossible and I really appreciated that."

He also thanks both programs for greatly improving his professional networking. "Now, when I walk into a room, I'm able to take a step back and assess the situation. I'll consider how to approach the different personality traits vs. making snap judgements," he said.

McFarlane plans to keep Rhode Island his home because, he says, there's still a lot of work to do. "I want to be a connector, a bridge builder and give people a voice, so that we can all move forward to make the state, and the world, a better place."

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What were the takeaways from the experiment?

Some committee members suggested that it helped to have a clear-cut assignment. "You asked us to serve on this committee . . . to put on an effective program for this class. You don't have much choice, you have to do this job," Harpootian said.

Program committee members also seemed to think that reaching consensus was possible because, in spite of wearing different political labels, they all had something important in common: They were LRI alumni.

"We've all had that common experience together," said **Jerauld Adams '14**, a Republican.



Democrat **Jacob Brier '14**, said that although committee members had different ways of looking at issues, "we're all here for the same reason: to create a program for the interest of advancing Rhode Island."

Some members agreed that reaching compromise is probably more likely when participants are able to debate and discuss in private; political stances tend to become hardened under the glare of the public spotlight.

While the BiPartisan Program Committee was a one-year experiment, Ritz hopes that other leadership programs will try a similar approach and potentially change the tone of political conversation in their communities.

"My concern on a personal level is if the politics are going to get nastier and nastier and nastier – which they seem to be – are you burning bridges and cutting such deep wounds that you can't ever heal them when it's time to govern?"

"I wanted to get this dialogue going. I want other states to try it," he said. "Perhaps we could change the dynamic a little bit."

Strengths by the numbers

15,000-plus

Rhode Islanders have discovered their strengths through LRI.

200-plus

Student leaders from 16 colleges and universities, including all 11 in Rhode Island, trained in strengths by LRI.

350-plus

Influential leaders from more than 250 organizations (private, public and non-profit) trained in strengths by LRI.

70-plus

Companies, organizations and agencies trained in strengths by LRI.

1st Place

Rhode Island's national ranking in 2016 for workers who say they got to use strengths on the job, up from 49th place, in 2015.

15th Place

Rhode Island's national ranking for actively disengaged workers in 2016; it was at rock bottom, 50th place, in 2013.

\$112-\$234 million

Returned to the Rhode Island economy. According to Gallup

Strengths continued from page 1

Managers use the employee results to better align job responsibilities with strengths or to create teams with complementary talents to study workplace issues. Studies show that workers are more engaged when they get to use their talents.

The launching of strengths tours represents a new phase in LRI's multi-year initiative, Make RI Stronger.

Mike Ritz '07, LRI executive director, explained that a 2013 survey conducted by Gallup found that Rhode Island had the highest percentage of "actively disengaged" workers in the nation. That meant they were unhappy, often called in sick or quit, spread a negative attitude to co-workers and drove customers to competitors.

The survey results prompted LRI to try to change work culture by encouraging people to discover their strengths and by training coaches to help employers incorporate strengths-management practices in the workplace.

The four sites on the tour were selected to show examples of how the statewide strengths effort is working, said **Kevin Cooper**, LRI's strengths expeditor.

At the first stop, **Steve Duvel '12**, vice president and operations manager at Gilbane Building Company, said the Providence-based construction company began emphasizing strengths-thinking in 2014. After the employees took the strengths assessment, LRI coaches helped them develop their individual strengths and understand how they fit on various teams at the company.

Duvel gave two examples. One employee whose top strengths included Individualization, meaning she had an affinity for working with and understanding people, was invited to sit in on job interviews. His evaluations have helped the company build a stronger workforce. Another worker, with dominant strategic thinking strengths, now participates in long-term strategic planning sessions.

Within a year and a half, worker engagement increased by 18 percent, helping Gilbane retrieve its place among Fortune's 100 Best Places to Work. The company also has experienced increased productivity and revenues, Duvel said.

The tour participants learned of a different challenge at the state Department of Health, which began introducing strengths last year. Because the workforce is unionized, the assessment created tensions and some fears about whether the results would be used to evaluate or promote workers.

Steven Boudreau, DOH's chief administrative officer and a member of the executive leadership team, said the agency decided to move slowly to address the workers' concerns. Gradually 400 of the department's 500 employees agreed to take the assessment and related training.

With 12 senior leaders and managers functioning as strengths champions, a system is now in place to roll out strengths-management practices throughout the department. "If Rhode Island is the first strengths-based state, we wanted to be the first strengths-based state agency," Boudreau said.

Hearing that some employees were skeptical of the strengths assessment prompted one visitor, Travis Guse, executive life coach and Gallup strengths coach in Richmond, Virginia, to observe that "The goal of the strengths assessment is not to label or pigeonhole a worker, but to start a conversation about the worker's talents to increase his engagement."

The tour also stopped at NAIL Communications, a Providence-based advertising agency, that works with the state Commerce Corporation on economic development plans.

Lara Salamano, chief marketing officer at RICC, said her staffers and the workers at NAIL completed the strengths assessment and training. She said that helped communication when they developed Rhode



Dave Bragonier, a machinist at VIBCO, shares how he uses his Top 5 CliftonStrengths in his role.



Tour participants visit VIBCO

Island's new tourism campaign, tagged with the "Fun-Sized" slogan.

"Understanding what people are good at was a key to strengthening our organization and to move people to jobs in which they can do their best," said Salamano.

Lizzi Weinberg '16, head of production at NAIL, said, "We are only as good as our people and we want engaged workers who understand their strengths to do their best. That makes a stronger workplace with people with skills to work better with clients."

NAIL and the state workers developed the tourism campaign by listening to 1,000 Rhode Islanders to understand what they found unique and what they are proud of in their state.

Ritz said one benefit of more engaged workers is more positive citizens who can change Rhode Islanders' self-image which is often negative or pessimistic.

"Workers who like their jobs promote a more positive culture overall," he said.

At a stop at Edesia, a nonprofit company in North Kingstown, tour participants heard how the 70 managers and workers are using strengths-based management practices to improve the production of nutritious foods exported to treat child malnutrition around the world.

The visitors had lunch provided by the Hudson Street Deli in Providence, where staff is using strengths to provide better service to its customers. In small groups, the guests also met with a representative of the state Department of Labor and Training, where at least half of the employees have taken the strengths assessment and strengths trainers are at work.

Also, **Nina Pande '12**, executive director of Skills for Rhode Island's Future, described a pilot program in which 170 high school students discovered their own strengths. Before embarking on summer internships, the students learned how to use their strengths in job interviews and in the workplace.

The final stop on the tour was VIBCO Vibrators, an industrial manufacturer in Richmond. All workers take the strengths assessment pre-employment and have placards with their five strengths tacked up at their work stations.

Dave Bragonier, a machinist, explained that knowing and understanding

his teammates strengths helps fix problems that crop up in the production of machined parts.

Joanne Pelchat, an assembler, said an employee team redesigned the workflow of the assembly and packaging process. "The job makes more sense now and we had a hand in changing it," she said.

Karl Wadensten '17, VIBCO's president and chief executive officer, said the company uses strengths management and other best-practice tools to create worker engagement in factory-floor production.

"It was encouraging to see people take part in their work and feel actively empowered to make changes," said Rachel Brewer, a tour participant who is associated with a nonprofit dedicated to systematic racial, gender and social equity.

"I saw so many people exploring their strengths," she said, "That's what I'll take back to Boston."

After Guse, the consultant, returned to his home in Virginia, he said his son, Kendall, was so excited about what he experienced on the Rhode Island tour that he talked with his high school principal about starting a strengths empowering program.

Also, Guse said he is pursuing an effort to duplicate the Make RI Stronger campaign in Richmond through Leadership Metro Richmond.

Other Rhode Islanders on the day-long tour included **Kate Porter '18**, communications manager for the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and **Laura Jaworski '18**, executive director of the House of Hope Community Development Corporation.

Ritz said LRI plans more statewide tours, perhaps once a month, to introduce Rhode Islanders and out-of-state visitors to the benefits of adopting strengths-based practices. He said LRI may start charging a fee to help the organization expand its services, train more coaches and extend the program to more businesses, nonprofits and government agencies.

Jim Clifton, chairman and chief executive of Gallup, participated in LRI's second Strengths tour Nov. 9. Visitors from Massachusetts, North Carolina and the District of Columbia were also on the tour.

Ting Barnard joins LRI board

Ting Barnard '15, program co-chair for the 2016 Mu IIs and strengths coach, has been elected to Leadership Rhode Island's Board of Governors. Barnard, who owns a woman's fashion line, also works as a marketing consultant and brand ambassador promoting local artists and non-profit organizations at Ting Barnard's Studio.

A Boston University graduate, she started her career as a relationship officer for several investment firms. A philanthropist, she is involved in a several nonprofits and community organizations, including Year Up Rhode Island, Amos House, Children's Friend, the Summit Neighborhood Association, and Styleweek Northeast. Her motto: "Love where you live."

What excites you most about LRI?

I am excited to participate within a network of highly competent and connected individuals whose mission is to continue to strengthen Rhode Island, broaden community engagement and create positive impact.

The mission of LRI is intentional and driven towards a greater purpose that begins with a

collaborative Core Program, and is sustainable from the deep connections created and nurtured.

The real work begins after graduation. LRI provides you with the tools, resources and individuals to champion your cause, whatever that may be, because good leadership is guided by core values and a strong sense of self-awareness.

What do you want the 2,400-plus alumni to know about you?

I am honored to be part of the LRI family. And, as a family member, I feel a sense of responsibility to continue to stay engaged.

Do you have an inspiring message to CLRI graduates?

Trust your struggle. When you face adversity, you learn what makes you uncomfortable and develop your authentic self. Your struggle will enable you to identify your strengths because you will depend on them to overcome the challenges that come your way. Welcome the challenges and try to conquer them with a combination of being strong and being vulnerable.

Your strength will give you confidence to take



the next step in your journey. Your vulnerability will encourage you to surround yourself with others whose strengths you lack. Strong leaders admit their struggle because they trust it will bring them to that next level.

#LeaderAsHost

If you are a leader who engages the larger community in problem-solving pursuits, watch out. Leadership Rhode Island is coming for you!

LRI staff members or a member of the Board of Governors may show up unexpectedly at your workplace or in a public venue, and they will be armed with LRI's new commemorative coin.

So far, 108 individuals, including the recently graduated Xi IIs, have been surprised with coin presentations. The search is on for more recipients.

The medallion recognizes three leadership

traits — Engage, Connect, Transform — and carries the motto: "In Rhode Island We Trust."

The coins debuted at LRI's spring luncheon which highlighted "Leaders as Hosts," a concept drawn from the work of organizational consultant Margaret Wheatley who believes that all change begins when people talk to one another about something they care about, and when people listen to differences of opinion.

Commemorative medallions have been popular within the military for decades, and have emerged more recently as symbols of friendship and community within civilian organizations.

LRI adopted the idea to honor those who are Leaders as Hosts and urges alumni to recommend more recipients. The state has many inspirational leaders worthy of recognition for their sometimes public, sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts, to engage others.

Designed by **Ray Nunez, CLRI '15**, LRI's communications and engagement specialist, the ornate medallion sports 13 stars to represent the original colonies and an anchor, a symbol of hope since Rhode Island's founding in 1636.

To nominate recipients: bit.ly/LRICoins

2018 Coin Recipients

Lorne Adrain LRI '94

CHOW

Hilina Ajakaiye

RISE Women's Leadership

Paul Allen

Soar.com

Shameem Awam LRI '15

Amica Mutual Insurance

Sierra Barter

The Lady Project

Sandra Cano LCF

Navigant Credit Union

Jim Collison

Gallup's Called to Coach

Kevin DeJesus

Johnson & Wales University

Ginnie Dunleavy LRI '16

National Association of College

& University Food Services

John Gregory LRI '94

Northern RI Chamber of Commerce

John Harpootian LRI '88

2018 Xi II Program Co Chair

John Hill

Providence Newspaper Guild Follies

Emily Joseph

LRI Strengths Coach

Maria Kasparian LRI '15

Edesia

John Kerry

Senator & Secretary of State

Donald King LRI '02

Black Rep/Sound Session/POEI

Rhonda Knight Boyle

Strengths Activation

Maika Leibbrandt

Gallup's Called to Coach

Jim Ludes

The Pell Center at Salve Regina

Story in the Public Square

Karima Mariama-Arthur

Author and Strategic

Leadership Manager

Marta Martinez

RI Latino Arts

G. Wayne Miller

The Pell Center at Salve Regina

Story in the Public Square

George Nee LRI '81

AFL-CIO

Clay Rockefeller

Steel Yard

John Roney LRI '90

Senate Parliamentarian

Baldev Seekri

Texas Instruments

Cynthia Spalding Knapik

Leadership Louisville Center

John Taraborelli LRI '10

Pecha Kucha

Karl Wadensten LRI '17

VIBCO

Dean Weinberg LRI '15

Carl, Weinberg & Co., LLP

Myrth York LRI '92

2018 Xi II Program Co Chair

Carol Young LRI '92

Providence Newspaper Guild Follies



LRI is a worthwhile investment

By Ernie Almonte '88

Years ago, **Bill O'Hara**, then president of Bryant University, invited me to lunch to urge me to apply to Leadership Rhode Island. Though I was active in alumni activities at Bryant, my priorities at the time were career — I had my own accounting firm — and my growing family. Still, I listened intently to Dr. O'Hara, an LRI founder and '86 alum. His pitch: LRI would be a transformative experience, one that would expand my horizons. I trusted him so much that I agreed to seek admission to the Theta class.

It was 1988, the start of a renaissance of sorts for me.

The LRI program connected me to people I did not normally encounter and opened my mind to issues and problems that I had never thought of or figured they were someone else's responsibility to resolve. The experience changed me for the better. I became a better listener, better

community member, better board member and better collaborator.

I graduated with a heightened curiosity about the greater community, a determination to always seek the truth, and an evolving belief that positive change comes when people of differing opinions and perspectives seek solutions together.

That belief is the reason I enthusiastically embraced the concept of Jeffersonian Dinners, one of LRI's innovative ways to get diverse alumni together around the dining table to discuss state and community problems. So far, I've hosted three dinners and attended two others! These shared experiences strengthen human bonds, countering the tribalism that divides us. These bonds create a sense of community and the will to seek long-term solutions for the greater good.

That belief is also the reason I respond to LRI's annual appeal. To me, investing in LRI is investing in the core program which produces new leaders, year after year, dedicated to making positive changes. Investing in LRI also is investing in its "post-graduate" activities that leverage the talent and treasure of more than 2,400 alumni. Contributing to LRI helps to amplify the voices of engaged leaders.

As a fellow alum, I urge those who have never invested in LRI to consider doing so, and I challenge those of you who are already contributors to con-



sider increasing your donations to a higher level.

It took LRI to help me to see the big picture. I sincerely hope you will enable LRI to expand the lenses people normally use to make decisions, a change that will advance the cause of community-conceived solutions. Working together we can make Rhode Island a center of excellence.

To join our annual membership drive, visit: www.leadershipri.org/alumni

National continued from page 1

Carr and Ritz asked the participants from 22 community programs in 12 states to imagine how LUS could help both their local organizations and the nation. Their thoughts were jotted down on post-it notes.

On the impact of LUS on their respective local organizations, attendees envisioned increased revenue, growing membership rolls, developing prestige, and having the opportunity for feedback and coaching to develop better programs. One saw LUS as giving community organizations relevance and a stronger sense of purpose.

On the impact of LUS on the nation, the executive directors had several ways of saying that it would promote civil civic discourse, "get good stuff done," develop new connections, mobilize change and motivate action. One person saw the start of a movement that reaches the "tipping point of people who care" and who are equipped with skills "to do something about it."

To test the viability of inter-state alumni cooperation, this year's LRI Xi II teams followed a two-step process for their Leadership in Action projects. First, they talked with local stakeholders to determine pressing issues in such areas as economic development, criminal justice, education and health, in Rhode Island. Second, they talked with leadership organization executive directors and alumni in 15 other states to find out how that need was being addressed elsewhere.

The most effective project teams hosted the internal (Rhode Island) and external (out-of-state) stakeholders together in a single meeting, connecting and building new relationships through the use of video conferencing technology, Ritz said.

"In nearly every case, executive directors knew exactly who our class members should talk to. Many of them were alumni elsewhere, and gave

warm introductions to make the meetings happen in short order," said Ritz.

"The busiest of the busiest made time for what they viewed as their sisters and brothers of the community leadership movement from Rhode Island. We're all one big family that would benefit greatly from spending more time and sharing best practices with one another regularly.

"That's what Leadership United States is all about!"



Left to right: David Williams, Leadership Memphis, Wendy Thomas, Leadership Tulsa, Harriet Harral, Leadership Forth Worth, Tammy White, Leadership Knoxville, Leadership Middle Tennessee, Lynn Tucker, Leadership Brentwood, Sarah Rhea, Leadership Montgomery County, Lura Hammond, ALP

A 'life-changing experience'

By Christine McDermott '11

Before the call that she will never forget came over the radio, **Tammi Barlow '18** was caught in conversation with the Providence police officer who had taken her for a ride-along on the over-night shift.

As they drove around the South Side, alive and vibrant in the final hours of PrideFest, they compared notes on her native Chicago, where murder is all too common, and Providence, where they expected a night dealing with noise violations and intoxication.

Barlow, Manager of Responsible Gaming and Corporate Social Responsibility for IGT, was on the ride-along as an enhancement to the Leadership Rhode Island Core Program, a time-honored tradition for all LRI participants. She had just asked the officer how he would know if an emergency was happening – like gunshots – and he was explaining how a special siren would sound, when that very thing happened.

It was 1:30 a.m. June 17, and a man had been shot multiple times on Garnet Street. Barlow described her experience in a gripping Facebook post later that morning:

"I was a part of this from the time the special alarm went off in the police SUV to them putting up the crime scene tape, pulling his lifeless body out of the car, rushing him to the ER in crowded streets, waiting for him at RI Hospital which is a trauma one hospital, watching them try to pump life into him, hearing the paramedics say, there's 1% chance he'll survive, to hearing them call time of death."

Because I am black and he was unidentified, the hospital personnel assumed I knew him, and because I was with a cop they let me see more than my mind should have. But then I witnessed the loneliness of death as they cut off his clothing, bagged up all the evidence for the homicide detectives, pulled his bloody, lifeless body onto the stretcher to take him to the morgue. Alone. No family. No friends. Situation unknown.

There's so much more to my ride along and about this situation, but since I saw this make headlines I had to post. RIP to the young man I came in contact with for the last hour of his life. My prayers go out on this Father's Day to him and his family."

Barlow recounted the experience months later, following the Xi II commencement.

After she returned home the morning of the shooting, she took her children – a 14-year-old boy and 10-year-old girl – to the crime scene.

"I took a piece of the crime tape," she said. "I wanted them to know that you're never, ever just safe, and someone died here. My message to them was: Life is short, and of this person, the only thing that remains is this tape."

For Barlow, the worst part was seeing Jacorey Sanders, a 25-year-old father of two from New Bedford, die alone.

"The paramedics brought in his gym shoes, they put all his stuff in a little brown paper bag," she said. "His whole life comes down to one little brown paper bag."

That day, Barlow resolved that she would turn her experience into positive action. She con-



Tammi Barlow '18 speaks during the 2018 Xi II Economic Development Session Day

nected with **Angie Ankoma '14**, Executive Vice President at the United Way of Rhode Island, whom she sees as a positive community leader.

"I just wanted to talk to her about where the leadership is in the black community," Barlow said. "Even though this guy wasn't from Rhode Island, I just felt like, where's the leadership? Who is beating the drum to say we've got to save our kids?"

On her LRI commencement day, Barlow and her classmates were asked to write down a pledge.

"I said I wanted to somehow become more involved in the juvenile justice system," she said. "I have no clue how to do it, but I feel very inspired to."

While she figures it out, the single mother will focus on her own children, whom she adopted from a group home.

Having moved to Rhode Island in January 2015, she is grateful for her LRI experience.

"It just made me more aware, and it pushed me to think about things I've never thought about before," she said. "To experience what I did, it was just that much more life-changing . . . For someone not from here, I think it made me invested even more in this state."

One regret that Barlow has is that she doesn't remember the name of the officer she was riding with. "He is the best person," she said. "I really want to thank him."

Projects continued from page 5

The team studied a program in Washington state that has had "a tremendous success rate of employment," Pisaturo said. Rhode Island currently offers one apprenticeship program inside prison – barber training – but the cost of building out space and hiring instructors creates an obstacle to adding more. "Creating or supporting more of these programs on the outside seems more doable," she said.

The team's conversations included the Department of Corrections, Department of Labor, the nonprofit Man Up and New England Tech. "We've put a lot of people together, and the next step is to focus on private sector business," Pisaturo said.

The other Xi II projects were:

- **Arts/Design** – Connect apprentices with people engaged in historic preservation and restoration, and identify available partnerships to catalyze new projects in the arts, design and historic preservation community.

- **Civic/Community/Neighborhood** – Improve civic, community and neighborhood engagement for all Rhode Islanders.

- **Economic Development** – Use placemaking as a concept to spark economic development.

- **Education/Literacy** – Launch the pilot of a literacy program for pre-kindergarten students in Providence.

- **Health/Wellness/Medicine** – Do a needs assessment to determine the feasibility of creating a mobile wellness unit for youth in the state.

- **Poverty/Hunger/Basic Needs/Quality of Life/Housing/Homelessness** – Identify a leadership position or office in the state to focus on innovative solutions for affordable housing.

- **Workforce Development** – Bridge the gap between employees and employers, focusing on partnerships with private companies to develop math and technology skills training for 12- to 30-year-olds.



LRI Women's Networking Group

By Margie O'Brien Reed '16

After finishing a small, bistro-style meal... you often crave more. This was the feeling among the women of MU II (best class ever!) after completing our yearlong adventure with Leadership Rhode Island in 2016.

We were intrigued with the topics, inspired by the causes and impressed with the people already making a difference in our beloved state. We wanted to learn more and explore how we, too, could help make a difference.

So, a group of MU II class members formed the Women's Network arm of LRI and developed LRIWN's mission: To connect a network of women to empower, support and inspire one another to create meaningful and positive change.

Our goal is to continue the LRI experience by discussing the important subjects and showcasing the relevant speakers and activists in Rhode Island in a setting that would not only bring women together, but also empower them.

To date, LRIWN has taken on the controversial subjects of "Dreamers" and immigration in a panel discussion that spurred a lively and emotional conversation. In another event, **Kelly Nevins '06**, executive director of the The Women's Fund of Rhode Island, presented salary information showing disparities in what men and women earn in Rhode Island. The pay data

troubled the standing room-only crowd, many of whom were fired up to achieve pay equity.

A third event, facilitated by former LRIWN Chair **Fran Loosen '16**, offered a private screening of the documentary 13th. This is a powerful film that chronicles imprisonment and the rise of mass incarceration, particularly of African-Americans, from slavery to modern-day sentencing practices. This film and the subsequent conversation dovetailed beautifully with discussions during Crime and Incarceration day, a staple of LRI's core program.

We are currently brainstorming for new events in 2019 that will be in line with the interests and passions of the LRI alumnae.

LRIWN encourages more alumnae to get involved with our events, not only to be informed but also to reconnect to their LRI roots. In time, we hope to open this forum up to all women in Rhode Island so they may benefit from the networking, activism and voice that is Leadership Rhode Island Women's Network.

If you are interested in learning more about the LRI Women's Networking Group, contact us to be added to the LRIWN mailing list: office@leadershipri.org

5TH ANNUAL END-OF-YEAR CHEER!

DECEMBER 13, 2018 | 6-8:30PM | TWIN RIVER CASINO

Thank you to our 2018 supporting alumni!

Your support is greatly appreciated; we're lucky to have you on our team.

Steward \$1000

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Bob Ferreira '11
Kevin Kazarian '16
Paul Oliveira '07
Mike Ritz '07
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Carol Young '92

Michael Kosiver '16
Linda Lulli '02
Darlene Major '17
Katie McDonald '16
Norbert Mongeon '02
John Mulattieri '09
Dan Murphy '17
Cynthia Parker '08
Scott Seaback '14
Lynn Singleton '84

Lisa Carcieri '15
Laura Carlisle '16
Angela Carr '15
Michelle Carr '14
Julie Casimiro '08
Frank Champi '82
Sarah Channing '16
Jason Chapoorian '17
Arlene Chorney '00
Krystina Clarke '17
Brenda Clement '97
Kyla Cobourn '14
Sharon Conard-Wells '91

Rafaelina Gomez '16
Priscilla Gonzalez-Santos '17
Christine Goulette '13
Richard Graefe '82
Anne Grant '90
Joan Gray '86
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John Gregory '94
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Carol Hamilton '11
Barbara Hart '11
Gilda Hernandez '17

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Rajani Mahadevan '10
Sharon Marable '01
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Chris Marsella '13
Ron Martel '06
Glen Martin '15
Bob McCann '15
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Elizabeth Messier '01
Carrie Miranda '08
Robert Monnes '12
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Vanessa Toledo-Vickers '01
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Amy Vitale '17
Tracy Walsh '17
Bill Warburton '88
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Lizzi Weinberg '16
Herb Weiss '12
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Akhil Gupta '07
Michael Lester '13
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Kim McCauley '14
Tricia O'Neil '09

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Rachael Dotson '17
Kevin Gaw '07
Brett Gerstenblatt '17
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Tim Horan '01
Sharon Kennedy '12

Note: This list only includes alumni who renewed their dues between Jan. 1 - Nov. 1, 2018

To join our annual membership drive, visit: www.leadershipri.org/alumni



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Save the Date!

2019 Inspiring Leaders Awards Luncheon

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

Robert W. Edwards Jr. '83, retired from practicing law, is the new chairman of the Providence Public Library's board of directors.



Edwards '83

Deb DeBare '95 recently received the Legacy of Change Award from the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless. DeBare, the longtime executive director of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, is now Senior Deputy Director at the National Network to End Domestic Violence.



Tolbert '16

2018 Women of Achievement awards were presented by the YWCA Rhode Island to **Karen Santilli '10**, president and CEO of Crossroads; **Tina-Marie Sullivan '14**, executive director the Central Falls Housing Authority; Capt. **Victoria Tolbert '16** of the RI National Guard, **Nondas Hurst Voll '85**, former executive director of the Fund for Community Progress, and **Sharon Conard-Wells '91**, executive director of the West Elmwood Housing Development Corp.

Three alumni made the list of the "50 Greatest Living Rhode Islanders" selected by GoLocal Prov. They are **Phil West '91**, former executive director of Common Cause, **Barnaby Evans '95**, creator of WaterFire, and author **Ann Hood '95**.



Marable '01



Sanford '10

Dr. Sharon Marable '01 has joined Southcoast Health as Physician Leader.

Dana Alexander Nolfe '03 has been named chief marketing officer for Rhode Island Medical Imaging.



Hood '95



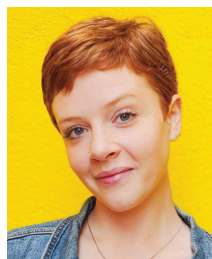
Diossa '12/LCF

At its annual meeting last month, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council presented a public service award to Providence Police Chief Col. **Hugh Clements '05**.

Six alumni were among the #40UnderForty honorees named by the Providence Business News. They are **Michelle Carr '14**, deputy director of LRI; **Rafaelina Gomez '16**, senior compliance adviser, Fidelity Investments; **Junior Jabbie '10**, president and CEO, Banneker Industries; **Christina Rouse '18**, director of marketing, Sweeney Real Estate; **George Tager Jr. '17**, director of employer segment sales, Blue Cross & Blue Shield, and **Jeff Wilhelm '13**, chief technology officer, Envision Technology Advisors.



Jabbie '10



Hann CLRI '17

Shana Murrell '06 is now major gifts officer at Becker College.

Anthony DiPietro '07 is the new associate director of administration and operations of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University.

Michelle Saunders '09 is now the manager of learning solutions at IGT.



Saunders '09



Regan CLRI '15

Chris Sanford '10 was appointed Rhode Island State Chairman of Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve.

Central Falls Mayor **James A. Diossa '12** was elected President of Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns.

Sue Carmody '18 was elected chairman of Junior Achievement of Rhode Island's board of directors.

Kate Kennedy '18 is now vice president of employee benefits at USI Insurance Services. She also was elected vice president of the Providence College National Alumni Association Council.

Ashley Gingerella O'Shea CLRI '06 was recently named director of community investments at the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

Amanda Clarke CLRI '09 is Chief of Staff at the RI Department of Administration.

Taryn Hann CLRI '17 is now a Brand Designer at Hasbro Toys.

Alexander Jimenez CLRI '16 and **Paige Zuber CLRI '18** were selected as Co-Chairs for the 2019 CLRI Class.

Matthew Regan CLRI '15 is events coordinator for the Department of Brain & Cognitive Sciences at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Jean Yves Knight CLRI '19 received the Exemplary Youth Service Award from the Refugee Dream Center.

Do you have news you want to share with your fellow LRI Alumni? Let us know!

Email Ray Nuñez (CLRI '15), LRI's Communications and Engagement Specialist at rnunez@leadershipri.org



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