



LEADERSHIP RHODE ISLAND

Leading LRI upward Michelle Carr takes the helm as Executive Director

By Christine McDermott LRI '11

Back in the spring of 2011, a young woman was chosen as an emerging leader to write an essay for the YWCA Northern Rhode Island's "She Shines" magazine.

"Leadership means serving others, and empowering them through partnerships that are established on the grounds of mutual respect for all," she wrote. "The day I began in the nonprofit sector I realized I became accountable to someone other than myself, to something larger than myself. On that day, I became accountable to my community and all the possibilities for the future."

At the time, she was Michelle DePlante and she was the legal education and community outreach coordinator at the International Institute of Rhode Island. Today, she is **Michelle Carr LRI '14** — having since married fellow alumnus **Jesse Carr LRI '16** — and the new Executive Director of Leadership Rhode Island.

Carr, who joined the organization in 2014 and became Deputy Director two years later, was chosen unanimously by the Board of Governors to succeed longtime Executive Director **Mike Ritz LRI '07**.

Ritz, who is now Executive Director of a new government leadership institute run by Gallup in Washington, D.C., says Carr had long been his planned successor.

"Michelle is absolutely the right person — better than me — to go forward in this next era of Leadership Rhode Island," he said. "She comes with a set of beliefs and experiences that she entered Leadership Rhode Island with, and that she's honed further while she's been here and moved into the deputy director role, that are going to make this organization flourish under her leadership."

Nicole Benjamin LRI '13, immediate past chair of LRI's Board of Governors, says Ritz's **Carr continued on page 7**



Moving onward Mike Ritz accepts new role at Gallup

By Christine McDermott LRI '11

The themes and hot-button issues may change every year but there are certain experiences shared by every Leadership Rhode Island alumnus, and the rope photo is among the most memorable.

Class members line up holding the famous yellow rope, signifying the forever bond between them and the support that will be there when one pulls on the rope.

When **Mike Ritz LRI '07** became Executive Director in November 2009, he noticed the pile of laminated rope photos stacked on the table behind his desk chair. They captured every class going back to 1984 — the year the tradition began — and they made a lasting impression on him.

"I would always think that I literally had the alumni looking over my shoulder," he says. "That was the sort of responsibility that I thought I had in

this job. For me, what that meant was that I needed to run the organization as the alumni would want it run. They were the shareholders, and I was their executor."

After steering LRI through a period of incredible growth — in staff size, budget and impact — Ritz left in July of 2022 to become Executive Director of a new government leadership institute run by Gallup in Washington, D.C.

"I have enjoyed every day of the past 12 years," he wrote to alumni. "Serving as the head of Leadership Rhode Island has been the highest honor and privilege I've yet to experience in my professional life. Recognizing the infinite possibilities that 2,900 leaders (our alumni) across every sector, industry, and five generations could make to benefit Rhode Island inspired my drive, challenged my capabilities, and ensured

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LEADERSHIP RHODE ISLAND

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Looking to the future

Last July, Leadership Rhode Island began the next chapter in its history under Michelle Carr's skilled leadership. As with any good story, this new chapter flows seamlessly from the last.

That is because for the past eight years, Michelle's artistry was behind nearly every aspect of LRI's work. As LRI's Deputy Director and, before that, its Director of Programs, she masterfully choreographed nearly every LRI move both internally and externally. In true LRI fashion, she did so by leveraging her top four strengths — input, maximizer, developer, and arranger.

But the magic in Michelle Carr's work lies in her fifth strength — belief. When her strength of belief combines with her strategic thinking strength (input), executing strength (arranger), her relationship strength (developer) and her influencing strength (maximizer), powerful, life changing work happens.

The confluence of Michelle's strengths and the impact of her work can be seen most directly in LRI's diversity, equity and inclusion work. Michelle's unyielding belief in the importance of inclusion and belonging underlies all of LRI's work and will shape the contours of its next chapter.

LRI, our community and the State of Rhode Island have so much to thank Mike Ritz for as we have grown stronger and grown together under his leadership. Among the many gifts that Mike has left us with is the gift of Michelle's leadership. It is a gift that is emblematic of Mike's own leadership, the gift of empowering and elevating others.

As I conclude my three years as Board Chair, I am especially grateful for Mike, Michelle, and all of LRI's past and present staff and board members. Through their vision and unrelenting



dedication to leveraging the leadership of others to strengthen our communities, our workplaces and our state, our alumni have never been stronger. And because LRI is only as successful as each of you, that means LRI has never been stronger.

Michelle has taken the helm at a time when LRI stands on exceptionally solid footing. As we move forward in our fourth decade, I invite each of you to play a starring role in LRI's next chapter. We want to hear your ideas, we want to reengage with you, we want to connect deeply with you and, above all, we want to support you in your work to make our communities better places.

I am infinitely grateful to have been a part of LRI's story and I look forward to witnessing the next chapter in LRI's history unfold.

Nicole J. Benjamin

Nicole J. Benjamin, Esq. LRI '13,
Immediate Past Board Chair

Board of Governors elects new chair

The Leadership Rhode Island Board of Governors elected **Pete Rumsey LRI '19** to serve as Chair of the board effective January 1st, 2023. He brings more than 30 years of experience in technology, building teams, and developing partnerships. He is the Chief Business Development Officer at the URI Research Foundation.

Rumsey says, "I am honored to serve during this incredibly exciting next chapter for LRI with the strong leadership of Michelle Carr. As a passionate supporter of servant leadership, I'm excited to do my part in working with the board, staff, alumni, and all of our support ecosystem



to continue bringing our 5-year strategic plan to life, while finding the fun along the way."

Welcome home: LRI's Leadership Hub



After 15 years at 1570 Westminister St (left), Leadership Rhode Island has made its new home at the Rising Sun Mills (right) which will serve as the Leadership Hub for alumni and the greater community.

By Christine McDermott LRI '11

After 15 years in a Victorian house on Westminister Street, Leadership Rhode Island has a new home in the Rising Sun Mills.

With twice the office space, the new headquarters features a coffee station, a lounge, and a courtyard. It can play host to social gatherings and community events and can even be a place where alumni drop in to say hello, work, or use a meeting room to collaborate.

The move from Providence's West Side to the Olneyville neighborhood is about more than the fact that the team had outgrown the old place — though that is certainly the case — but it also ties into the organization's strategic goal to be the Leadership Hub for the state of Rhode Island.

What is a Leadership Hub?

LRI's 2021 Impact Report explains: "Building off of 40 years of success and impact, LRI will serve as the go-to center for leadership and innovation across generations, communities, sectors and industries. As a trusted adviser, LRI will provide best practices and activate people to serve as a problem-solving engine that addresses workplace and community challenges of the present and future."

Reflecting on LRI's evolution over the decades, Mike Ritz LRI '07, who resigned in late July after 12 years as LRI's executive director, noted that today's organization is much more than the core program that began in 1981 and has a constituency that goes beyond the alumni network.

From enhancing the College Leadership Rhode Island program to partnering with Gallup

CliftonStrengths to establishing the National Leadership Network, LRI has been broadening its reach for the past decade-plus. "The idea of a hub was simply that there are all these ways in which you can plug into Leadership Rhode Island," he said.

"Once upon a time, you couldn't really do that unless you were an alumnus. Now we have leaders that are activists and artists and folks that have a following in the community but are not what in the '80s we considered a traditional leader to look like. We've grown in so many ways to serve not only our obvious constituents like class members and alumni, but also this greater community of Rhode Island."

Expanding the notion of "what a leader is today" is part of LRI's evolution. "Internally, we've redefined what a leader is and what a leader may act and make an impact, Ritz says. "We're continuing to go outside the norm to engage people who are clearly leaders but might feel like they don't belong."

There is no other leadership organization in the state that aims to serve the entire community like LRI does, Ritz says, explaining:

"LRI deliberately and strategically brings people together who are different from one another to expand knowledge, perception, and cross-sector networks that are transformative for the individual, their affiliated organizations, and for the overall benefit to Rhode Island society."

Part of the goal is to create a better sense of belonging and connectedness within the state.

Jen Silbert LRI '19, co-founder of Spartina

Consulting, which led LRI through its strategic planning process in 2021, was one of the first to envision the Leadership Hub concept.

"LRI is the place to come to cultivate a really fertile ground for growing exceptional leadership because we too are growing, we too are learning," she said.

"It's a balance. It's not just declaring ourselves the destination but modeling the journey to get there, and that means really holding a deep curiosity and commitment to inquiry all the way."

Pete Rumsey LRI '19, chair of LRI's Board of Governors, helped lead the creation of the Rhode Island Innovation Hub, which was founded in partnership with the likes of Brown University, the University of Rhode Island and IBM, to serve entrepreneurs. While participating in LRI's strategic planning process, he was intrigued by the concept of a Leadership Hub.

"We can create this image and reality that if you have a question about leadership or a need around leadership, LRI is a really great first call," he said.

"Why shouldn't Leadership Rhode Island be that connector, convener and resource? We have so much we can give of ourselves in that capacity. We have things we're really good at – not the least of which is CliftonStrengths, and looking into diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging."

Teresa DeFlicht, who joined LRI in 2021 as Director of Leadership Development, agrees that LRI is well-positioned to be the "true conveners of leadership development in the state."

"There is a whole ecosystem here of different organizations and businesses doing leadership

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Leveraging Strengths to foster belonging

By Ashley Rappa LRI '19

Leadership Rhode Island's current history of taking our state beyond — beyond its size and into its potential, beyond disengagement and into strength — will soon include taking us beyond a longtime commitment to diversity and into deep inclusion.

Expanding on the wildly successful Make RI Stronger initiative, launched in 2014, LRI is embarking on a journey to facilitate belonging in workplaces and communities across RI.

This new effort has two stages: the first, to conduct an internal audit of how diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) manifest within Leadership Rhode Island itself; and the second, strengths-based DEIB leadership training and consulting for community organizations, businesses, and public agencies across the state.

Both phases engage the partnership of Lift Every Voice (LEV), an institute, co-founded by **Donald King LRI '02**, that guides business, schools and cultural institutions to achieve deep inclusion.

Deep inclusion occurs when organizations express and reflect a genuine commitment towards equity and are willing to engage in structural change in order to align their aspirations, values and practice.

The need to foster a culture of deep inclusivity is an urgent and unrelenting one. The world isn't the



Sigma II classmates (from left to right) Donna Normand, Sean Fontes, Angela McCalla, Erin Herzog, Charise Wilson, and Victoria Zhu quickly developed bonds that contributed to a sense of belonging during their class experience.

same as it was a few years ago—a bright spotlight has been shone on myriad societal issues, a global pandemic has shifted workplace structures, and both tragedy and history have elevated DEIB as a cultural cornerstone and business imperative in today's society.

The concept of creating room for different voices has long been baked into LRI's mission and ethos under the leadership of **Mike Ritz LRI '07**.

"Mike was interested in making LRI more inclusive from the day I met him," says King. "As a leader and a convener, he has always championed the need to hold space for different views, perspectives and cultures."

Michelle Carr LRI '14, who took the helm as executive director in July, says that when she joined the LRI staff eight years ago she made it a goal to increase the representation and inclusion of leaders with diverse lived experiences.

LRI has made steady progress, but "there's still more work to do," she says. "I was thrilled to see the direction of the strategic plan, co-created with the community, with specific goals to nurture engagement and belonging."

"And not just within the organization, but also with broader Rhode Island to reach our vision of a flourishing state built upon strengths, inclusion and fully engaged communities."

To help reach that vision, LRI created a DEIB Working Group, which included Carr, King, **Sterling Clinton-Spellman LRI '19** and **Kerry Wilson LRI '19**, and sought feedback from alumni of LRI's programs and other leaders across the state who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Focusing on strengths-based deep inclusion

provides a viable pathway forward to the vision of an engaged workforce. According to Deloitte University's Leadership Center for Inclusion, millennials are 83% more likely to be engaged employees when working for inclusive companies. Deloitte research also shows that inclusivity is profitable. Organizations that foster inclusivity in the workplace are 1.7 times more likely to be innovative and also get 2.3 times more cash flow per employee.

Using strengths as a foundation for this work is a natural move for LRI, which has successfully used CliftonStrengths as a framework of its programs for the last eight years. Strengths show us not only what we're naturally talented at, but also fosters an inherent and deep appreciation for how individual contributions add to the greater whole.

"Humans are complex beings and how we define ourselves, as layered individuals, is a complicated process," Carr says. "We yearn to belong, to have purpose and be connected to others. Belonging is both being part of something bigger, and the ability to stand alone as our authentic selves and with our unique strengths."

The first stage of LRI's work — a robust, six-part deep inclusion training for LRI staff, board members, and key volunteers. Led by King and LEV co-founder **Kurt Wootten**, the training focused on recognizing bias, examining cultures of power, and identifying implementation gaps — is being paired with a comprehensive internal audit of the current landscape within the organization.

With that foundational work established, LRI and LEV will be well poised to begin partnering with the leaders of Rhode Island's organizations and

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What is DEIB?

Diversity refers to the demographic representation across your organization.

Equity gives employees equal access, opportunities, and advancement regardless of their background or lived experience.

Inclusion ensures everyone is welcome, visible, heard, and considered, celebrating their differences.

Belonging centers the employee experience of feeling accepted, valued and respected as a full member of the larger community and can thrive.

Workplaces that create a culture of belonging allow their employees to thrive simply by being who they are everyday.



A portion of the Papitto Opportunity Connection grant funding is allocated to ensuring the CLRI program remains tuition-free. This year's 2023 CLRI class (above) includes students from 12 colleges and universities across RI who otherwise may have never had the opportunity to connect.

Papitto Opportunity Connection invests in LRI's future

by Carol Young LRI '92

Bolstered by a \$1.75 million grant, Leadership Rhode Island has completed year one of a five-year commitment to ensure more people of color can participate in the organization's core and college leadership development programs, first as participants and then as engaged alumni.

The five-year grant, LRI's largest ever, was awarded in September 2021 by the Papitto Opportunity Connection, a private foundation determined to have "a tremendous, positive and measurable impact" on the lives of individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Specifically, the grant covers tuition assistance for LRI's 10-month Core Program for emerging and established leaders. It also provides sponsorship support for College Leadership Rhode Island, a tuition-free, academic year program for students.

The most recent class to graduating Core Program class, the Sigma IIs, were the most diverse in LRI's history. Of the 75 participants, 41% identify as people of color. Of the 31 BIPOC participants, 12 received tuition assistance through the Papitto Grant. 11 other Sigma IIs received tuition assistance through LRI's traditional tuition assistance program.

The 2023 CLRI class which began in September has 34 participants, 56% of whom identify as students of color. The class which graduated in May had 35 young people, 40% of whom identify as students of color.

CLRI offers students and recent graduates opportunities to learn their own unique combination of strengths, explore employment opportunities in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, participate in mock job interviews,



The Papitto Opportunity Connection's support of LRI creates opportunities for fellow grant recipients led by, or primarily serving, people of color to receive LRI Strengths-based training services at no cost.

and discover the value of networking, all activities designed to help graduates maneuver successfully in the post-college years.

A total of \$265,000 from the grant is being used to underwrite LRI's growing college-level program.

Meanwhile, LRI has provided grant-funded strengths development training for the staffs of four nonprofit organizations: the RI Black Business Association, Winners Circle XR, Justice Assistance RI, and the Financial Literacy Youth Initiative.

In a special partnership with the Papitto Opportunity Connection, all of the foundation's scholarship recipients and grantees, including BIPOC-owned businesses, are eligible for the

nationally recognized strengths training that LRI has been offering since 2014.

"At the very core of strengths-based development is building a culture of inclusion, where everyone can put their innate talents into practice every day to reach their highest potential," says **Michelle Carr LRI '14**, LRI's new Executive Director and primary author of the POC grant.

Rhode Island's increasingly diverse workforce is more likely to thrive, Carr says, if employers reimagine their workplaces to enable employees to use their identified strengths. "Ensuring that employers can advance BIPOC employees to senior leadership levels by leveraging their innate talents is a game changer," Carr says.

CLRI: Graduating from College to Core

By Linsey Covington CLRI '20

When she was a junior at Rhode Island College, **Stephanie Mandeville LRI '15 / CLRI '05** didn't hesitate to say yes when a trusted RIC advisor urged her to take part in a new off-campus program called College Leadership Rhode Island (CLRI). She says she didn't know what to expect, but she was eager to find out.

The program, then a series of four, half-day sessions with undergraduates from each of the colleges and universities in Rhode Island, widened her horizons. "I was born and raised in Rhode Island, but I would say I had a pretty narrow view of things. CLRI opened my eyes to not only what opportunities were out there, but also to people with different perspectives."

First offered in 2004, CLRI encourages students to become stewards of change on their campuses, in their communities and for Rhode Island. Much of the learning, then and now, comes from multiple opportunities to engage with local leaders in the nonprofit, business, philanthropic and government sectors.

Now an expanded, two-semester program, CLRI's 20th class began convening last fall.

Mandeville, who took part in 2005, says CLRI helped to solidify her plan to pursue a job in communications, possibly in the political arena. She also absorbed some important advice: Networking is helpful when job searching.

So, with a RIC degree in hand, she reached

out to Leadership Rhode Island alumni for guidance as she navigated the landscape for communications jobs. These coffee encounters bolstered her confidence and led to constructive suggestions. "CLRI opened that door for me," she says.

Mandeville, now communications director for the National Education Association RI, held a corporate communications job at Beacon Mutual Insurance for nearly four years. While there, Beacon nominated her for LRI's 2015 Core Program, an opportunity, until then, she had not thought possible.

Memories of her Lambda II experience tumble out easily: Building her network; the Basic Needs Day role-playing exercise that laid bare the ramifications of living in poverty, and discovering her "Top Five" strengths.

Mandeville enjoyed her Leadership in Action project which dispatched class members to the state's 39 cities and towns to identify activities, services and people worth celebrating. Assigned to Cranston, her hometown, Mandeville particularly savored "learning why other people love living there." The exercise led to a statewide convening for hundreds of everyday Rhode Islanders engaged in positive community organizations and activities.

The number of CLRI's 400-plus alumni who are also graduates of the 10-month Core Program remains small but growing. **Samantha**

Bergbauer, who oversaw the college program through 2022, says Mandeville is among the few in this exclusive club.

"It's been a goal to have at least one CLRI alumus in each core program cohort," says Bergbauer. "To see where their careers took them, that they still want to grow as leaders, that they stayed in RI and want to be part of lasting change... that's pretty amazing!"

Joshua Klemp LRI '13 / CLRI '04, director of SkillsUSA RI, was the first to double his leadership credentials. He was in the original CLRI class and, nine years later, graduated from LRI's advanced leadership development program in 2013.

"It helped me realize that I wanted to be in some form of public service. It also helped me make connections with peers who were also starting their journeys into a post-college career," Klemp says.

The core program is different, he says, explaining that many of the goals and topics are similar, but content is in much greater depth.

Julie Moura LRI '21 / CLRI '04, also a graduate of the pilot CLRI program, recalls that the sessions gave her "real world experiences" that students don't usually get in the classroom. Visiting Crossroads Rhode Island, which serves the homeless, and going to the State House to get a glimpse of statewide decision-making are experiences that have stuck.

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Turning a Teen's Million Dollar Idea into Reality

By Abby Burnep

What would you do if you had \$1 million to make RI's communities of color stronger?

In the summer of 2022, **Mariam Kaba**, a 16-year-old from Woonsocket, submitted the winning answer to that captivating question of how she would help Transform Rhode Island or, in her case, improve the lives of young people of color in Woonsocket.

Now, under the wings of Leadership Rhode Island, she is preparing to execute her ambitious plans for what she calls "restoring the village" while also making improvements in education, career exploration and job searching.

The \$1-million commitment to bring Mariam's vision to life is from the Papiito Opportunity Connection, a private foundation dedicated to using its resources to empower the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in Rhode Island.

Mariam was among nearly 100 high school students statewide who submitted plans for how they would spend \$1 million to improve the lives of people of color. She discovered that she won first prize during a ceremony at which the five finalists emerging from the highly competitive review process were invited to talk about their projects.

"At first, I was shocked," Mariam, the daughter of immigrants from the Ivory Coast, recalls. But once it all sunk in, she says, "I was really grateful and

excited that someone coming from a lower-income community or neighborhood, that their idea was chosen. It just gave me more hope. No matter where you come from, if you have dreams or aspirations or ideas, go for it."

Mariam is quick to list positive aspects of Woonsocket, the city where she has lived since birth. She says the city is a place "where people come from different backgrounds and different places, but are able to come together for the different things that we care about." There is, she says, "a sense of community."

Mariam calls Social Park, where she plays basketball in the summer, one of her favorite sites, and credits Woonsocket Middle School and the Harbour Youth Center for shaping her into the person she is today.

Many of the ideas in her winning plan come from her observations and experiences while participating in extracurricular community activities. She is a youth ambassador for the Watch Coalition, an organization formed to address violence and racism. She is also active in the Harbour Youth Center, a drop-in facility that offers career building, job readiness and academic enrichment programs for young people, 14 to 24 years old.

Along with \$1 million to make meaningful changes in the lives of others, Mariam also was awarded a \$25,000 scholarship to invest in her own education.

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belief in Carr and his partnership with the board on succession planning gave the board years to plan for this moment.

“Over those years, the board had an opportunity to work directly with Michelle to see firsthand her leadership,” Benjamin said. “Most recently, as a result of Michelle’s initiative and commitment to diversity, LRI secured the largest grant in its 40-year history to support leaders of color.”

The five-year, \$1.75 million grant from the Papiitto Opportunity Connection will expand access for people of color to Leadership Rhode Island’s core and college programs by providing tuition assistance and sponsorship support.

As a Cuban-American and first-generation college graduate, Carr has long had a passion for diversity, equity and inclusion. Her mother’s family moved to the United States from Cuba in 1969 and worked hard to achieve the American Dream, with Carr providing business management support from an early age at her mother’s salon and day spa in Connecticut.

“I grew up in a very strong Cuban culture and spent weekends at the Cuban Club, founded by my great uncle, as a place where we came together as a family and community to celebrate culture and help new arrivals,” Carr recalls.

“Those experiences have shaped so much of who I am, my values, and personal and professional paths. Growing up, I always befriended the newcomers - the immigrant and refugee students. It was just in my nature to be the welcome wagon.”

Carr, who is commonly referred to as “the heart and soul of LRI,” said she was eager to take on the Executive Director role.

“There is no organization more aligned and meaningful to me than Leadership Rhode Island,” she says. “As a graduate myself, I have experienced and witnessed the profound impact of LRI. It fuels my fire, my passion and purpose. The work doesn’t feel like work — it brings tremendous joy and fulfillment to my life. I run to LRI, a place where I found a sense of belonging, and am working alongside the people who have become my community.”

Carr said it is an exciting time for LRI, between new investments in technology, the implementation of a five-year strategic plan, and the recent move into spacious new offices



One of Michelle’s earliest accomplishments was leading the 2014 Greatest Lil’ State on Earth event alongside LRI’s former Strengths Expeditor, Kevin Cooper (left) and former Executive Director, Mike Ritz LRI ’07 (right).

in the Rising Sun Mills in Providence’s Olneyville neighborhood.

“We’ve built this incredible foundation in all areas – fundraising, staff growth, program growth, and there’s still an ocean of potential to grow, scale, and reach expanded audiences,” she says. “It feels like a milestone moment.”

Carr was still a member of the 2014 Kappa II class when she was recruited to LRI’s staff as Director of Programs. The day she went to the office to sign her offer letter, Ritz was brainstorming ideas for the statewide convening that would eventually become the Greatest Lil’ State on Earth event in October 2015.

Carr wound up playing a lead role in developing plans for a day that saw 800 people gather at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in a celebration of the Make Rhode Island Stronger initiative with Gallup CEO **Jim Clifton** as the keynote speaker.

“I was in my element,” she says. “That was a critical moment for Leadership Rhode Island because we were able to raise awareness and engage people that weren’t familiar with LRI. That day was really all about engagement, and we were able to change people’s perspectives about Rhode Island in a positive way.”

Leading that event is one of Carr’s proudest accomplishments, but it is far from the only one. She has contributed to the development of the organization’s mission, vision, values and strategic plan. She has worked on staff recruitment,

recognition, onboarding and employee engagement surveys. During the pandemic, she led the staff in mastering virtual programming to ensure that the pandemic did not cause LRI to miss a beat.

On the heels of the organization celebrating its 40th anniversary, Carr sees an abundance of potential for the future, both at the local and national levels, and her passion was obvious when she interviewed with the board, Benjamin says.

“Michelle’s presentation was made with equal parts of heart, dedication and conviction, attributes that she carries with her in all of her work,” Benjamin said. “Michelle is taking the helm at a time when LRI has never been stronger and the board is confident that Michelle is the right leader to move it forward.”

Carr, who lives in Rhode Island with her husband and 3-year-old twins, holds a bachelor’s degree in Global Studies and a business studies certificate from Providence College, where she is a Community Faculty Member in the Global Studies Department and Feinstein Institute for Public Service.

Prior to joining Leadership Rhode Island, she served as Director of Community Relations at Dorcas International Institute, where she founded Welcoming Rhode Island and was invited to share best practices at the White House for the first National Convening on Immigrant and Refugee Integration.

Sigma IIs engage Rhode Island's workforce

By Daniela Fairchild LRI '18

First, the good news: Rhode Island's unemployment rate hit a 30-year low of 2.7 percent in June of 2022.

Now for the not-so-good news: There are an estimated 16,000 working-age residents still looking for jobs. And, overall, the state has more than 22,000 fewer jobs than existed at the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, according to a Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council report released in the spring.

These statistics are markers of the sea of change in our labor market, manifestations of the shift toward remote or hybrid work, the exodus of older adults and those charged with family caregiving, and the "Great Resignation" writ large.

Emphasis in the news and general conversation of what this all means for the future prompted Leadership Rhode Island staff to select "The Workforce" as the theme for the 2022 Leadership in Action (LIA) projects, according to **Jane Nugent LRI '95**, longtime project coordinator.

The Sigma IIs have been digging into various aspects of employment and unemployment, seeking to understand and fill gaps in workforce support that hinder some Rhode Islanders, especially younger job seekers of color and those from marginalized communities, from accessing the job opportunities available.

At the mid-point review session in June of 2022, each of the ten LIA teams shared their progress and challenges with the class. Largely, the projects target issues of equitable access to today's labor market. Three projects are aimed at urban middle school and/or high school students, in the hope of creating a more diverse and better prepared workforce in the future.

Some have pragmatic projects, such as creating a guide for transportation to and from Newport where hospitality jobs are available, yet employers say out-of-town job seekers face problems getting to work.

The biggest and boldest project for 2022 sought to raise \$25,000 to support a manufacturing career-exploration and training program. Initially, the team's goal was to raise a whopping \$50,000, but even at \$25,000, it is one of the most ambitious fund-raising goals ever for an LIA project.

The team's project addresses the need to connect a diverse group of Rhode Islanders to good-paying jobs in an industry they may not have considered.

As **Kirtley Fisher**, one of the project team members, explained: "In many cases, manufacturing hasn't been accessible or even friendly to some underserved communities. We need to provide more opportunities for diverse individuals — like those who have been justice involved, those in



Sigma II classmates Christopher Raia, Lindsey Brickle, and Kirtly Fisher present at commencement their work assisting the Jane Addams Resource Corporation, a nationally recognized career pathway program.

the LGBTQIA+ community, BIPOC individuals, and recently resettled refugees — to join this important labor set."

Specifically, the team is supporting the launch of JARC RI, a new entity that will offer training in manufacturing and the trades. JARC RI is affiliated with a Chicago-based nonprofit called the Jane Addams Resource Corporation which has developed best practice manufacturing programs. JARC RI is partnering with Polaris MEP, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to growing and supporting the state's manufacturing industry through technical assistance and other forms of support.

"There are really incredible opportunities available in manufacturing and the trades, including high-growth career pathways in Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) machining and robotics, and you don't need a degree to do them," explains **Lindsey Brickle**, another Sigma II engaged in this LIA project and a senior workforce manager at Polaris MEP.

"Our project will solicit corporate partnerships and help directly connect local businesses with a more diverse, trained workforce. The funds will support JARC RI generally as well as a Manufacturing Career Exploration event slated for October 4th. JARC RI will be working closely with many community partners, to make sure we are building trust in underserved communities, and critically, not just duplicating services."

Each LIA team was encouraged to identify an implementation partner, such as a trade association, a nonprofit, or a business, that is interested in carrying on their LIA project work after their graduation. "Think about sustainability," teams were told.

"The key to sustainability is linkage with groups in Rhode Island who have similar goals to the LIA teams. This class has figured that out," says Nugent.



General Dynamics Electric Boat was one of 27 exhibitors present during the event held in October, which introduced more than 300 students from 11 high schools across Rhode Island to career opportunities in manufacturing.

Photo Courtesy: Polaris MEP

Ritz continued from page 1

that I never took you or my position for granted. I hope I strengthened your pride in LRI and Rhode Island."

Nicole Benjamin LRI '13, immediate past chair of LRI's Board of Governors, says the word "community" summarizes Ritz's contributions. Because of his community building efforts, LRI's reach has never been broader, and its impact has never been more widely felt.

"Community, for Mike, begins with LRI's staff," she says. "LRI's lean but close-knit and deeply engaged staff is at the heart of everything LRI has accomplished. Community, for Mike, means not just bringing together those in the Core Program and College Leadership Rhode Island or even our more than 2,900 alumni, but also supporting them and positioning them for individual success. Community, for Mike, extends from the most populated to the most remote parts of the state, ensuring that every voice is heard.

"The list of Mike's contributions goes on and on, but each item on that list ties back to a community of leaders that Mike has helped build, nurture and grow," she says.

A highlight reel of the Ritz Era includes:

Shoring up the Core Program by revamping the program committee, strengthening Leadership in Action projects, and introducing themes, often focusing on Rhode Island's positive attributes.

Partnering with the Providence Journal and Rhode Island College on Public Occurrences, an award-winning series of public discussions in which balanced viewpoints on current, often controversial, topics were presented.

Introducing Jeffersonian Dinners, in which small groups of alumni dine together, mostly in private homes, sharing personal stories, prompted by Ritz-created questions.

Reimagining College Leadership Rhode Island, which is now a robust, full-year program for 50 participants.

Launching the National Leadership Network, a collaboration between more than 800 Community Leadership Programs throughout the United States.

Navigating into a virtual world when Covid-19 hit, ensuring LRI did not lose momentum during the pandemic.

Ritz said he is most proud of the decision, in 2012, to send the Theta IIs, reinforced with alumni, to Central Falls, a city then in bankruptcy, to find out what the community's civic and nonprofit organizations and stakeholders most needed.

"It just was so complex in nature, and it involved a level of collaboration and mobilization of alumni that I don't think Leadership Rhode Island had ever done," he said. "It wasn't just new to me leading it, it was new to everybody."

At first, many questioned our motives, Ritz recalls. But eventually, the cynicism was overcome, and the many special projects and LRI's very presence have had lasting impact. Determined not to make an abrupt exit, LRI, in 2013, created a one-time Leadership Central Falls program, whose class members included **James Diosa LRI '12/LCF**, who went on to become the city's two-term mayor.

Another major initiative for Ritz was Make Rhode Island Stronger, introduced in 2014 in response to a Gallup report that Rhode Island had the highest percentage of "actively disengaged" workers in the nation.

Three years later, after LRI had coached workers and supervisors throughout the state about the value of strengths-based management, a follow-up Gallup survey found a dramatic and unprecedented improvement in the state's worker engagement. It has since been calculated that dramatic change brought at least \$112 million per year back into Rhode Island's economy, Ritz said.

Lisa D'Agostino LRI '07, who recently retired as Deputy Director for the state Department of Labor and Training, saw firsthand the impact of strengths training, which more than 200 employees went through several years ago. While government workers often feel they are stuck in a cycle of changing administrations and fluctuating budgets, the focus on strengths made employees feel personally and professionally important and better able to contribute to the department's goals, she says.

"So many people came up to me and said, 'This is the best thing I've done in a really long time.' It's amazing that the employees themselves and the department itself still feels that it made a significant change in how we do work on behalf of the customer. It allowed us to be better at what we do."

Rhode Island was still in the throes of the Great Recession with high unemployment when Ritz took the reins of the organization, which was itself in need of rebuilding. One of the first people he encountered was **Jane Nugent LRI '95**, who had just retired from the United Way and was stuffing envelopes as a volunteer in the LRI office.

Ritz was familiar with Nugent through his past nonprofit work and knew she could be an asset. "Jane had an impeccable reputation," he says. "She was known in the adult education field as brilliant, a complete genius and tough. She would measure nonprofits on impact - only the facts."

Ritz convinced her to serve as Program Committee co-chair for the 2010 class - and she has been by his side as a consultant and thought leader ever since.

"That was 'being Ritzed,'" Nugent laughs. "I didn't know it at the time."



LRI's former Executive Director, Mike Ritz LRI '07 'finding the fun' while channeling Mister Rogers at the Gallup Strengths Summit in 2017.

That year, they carried out the theme "Positively Rhode Island" and the following year, "Rhode Island: Center of the Universe." That period was about stabilizing LRI, with Ritz surveying the alumni to see what they thought of the state, its major issues and its deficits. The organization was on the path to change, Nugent says.

Make Rhode Island Stronger, along with a focus on hosting community oriented events like statewide block parties and the Greatest Lil' State on Earth gathering that brought 800 people together in 2015, broadened LRI's scope, she says.

She believes that Rhode Island's positive self-image has grown over the past decade right alongside LRI's.

"If we haven't been the impetus for it or we can't prove causality, I would say we were certainly leading the charge," she says. "Many thousands of Rhode Islanders have been affected by that push toward looking at Rhode Island — the people and the place — through a very positive lens."

At every step of the way, Ritz injected fun, whether it was dressing as Willy Wonka to promote a "Save Chocolateville" fundraiser for Central Falls or incorporating artists and live music into events.

"I don't like to be anywhere that's not fun," he says. "Fun is an important motivator to people, not just the followers but for the leaders."

Still, Ritz, who remains a Providence resident, took the weight of his position very seriously.

"I believe LRI can really accomplish anything because of the nature of its human capital," he says. "All these alumni can reach, affect and change anything. All of the expertise is there, all of the experience is there. The question, for me, was: Can I, leading LRI, pull them together in meaningful ways that drive change? That's always been my obsession, if you will, from Day One."



Norelys Consuegra LRI '22 utilizes a network map to explore the impact their class experience had on relationships between class members.

LRI's 2022 - 2026 Strategic Plan

Who was at the Table

- ❖ 80 People
- ❖ 5 Generations (Silent - Gen Z)
- ❖ Alumni from 1981-2021
- ❖ 19% Were Not Alumni
- ❖ 25% Identify as BIPOC
- ❖ 48% Female, 52% Male
- ❖ 20 RI cities / towns
- ❖ Sectors: 41% Private / 32% Nonprofit / 27% Public

How They Saw the Future of LRI

Fostering Belonging and Engagement

LRI will intentionally foster relationships and facilitate inclusive shared experiences that cultivate belonging for all Rhode Islanders. Weaving networks and activating strategic diverse partnerships, LRI will steward collaboration that paves the way for a thriving Ocean State.

The Leadership Hub

Building off of 40 years of success and impact, LRI will serve as the go-to center for leadership and innovation across generations, communities, sectors and industries. As a trusted advisor, LRI will provide best practices and activate people to serve as a problem-solving engine that addresses workplace and community challenges of the present and future.

Hub continued from page 3

development in different ways," she said. "We really could be bringing different sets of people together to map out what's going on in the state and identify where there are gaps and whether LRI fills in with additional programming."

In the area of innovation, DeFlicht has been experimenting with leadership concepts and how they might work with the college and core programs. One example is the idea of "dynamic tensions" in which people of varying backgrounds and perspectives are brought together to discuss challenging topics with the understanding that tensions will arise.

"In the naming of tensions, you can grow and learn from them – they're not necessarily bad," she said. "You are building awareness with the class around these tensions, so they can begin to really reflect on themselves and how they might be leading with those tensions in mind. Tension creates energy, and energy creates action and really good conversations."

Using the concept of "network mapping," DeFlicht is taking a look at how to strengthen the community that is built within each core program class and beyond to the wider alumni network.

"There's a real science to the way communities and networks build themselves," she said. "What we're trying to do right now is to better understand the science behind connecting people in thoughtful ways. There is interesting technology and tools and platforms you can use to track how the community is coming together and visualize that. We are in the very early process of understanding all that."

Silbert noted that more than 100 people participated in the overall strategic planning process and that many alumni were eager to re-engage with LRI. "The physical space may be a symbol of the Leadership Hub but it's the network that goes well beyond the brick and mortar that makes LRI what it is."

Rumsey adds: "More than ever, I think Leadership Rhode Island can serve as a common ground around leadership and community in Rhode Island. I'm really excited for the future, and I think it's brighter than ever. I think with the new office and with the team stronger and more energized than ever, the sky's the limit."

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To include your name on the list for 2023 please visit www.leadershipri.org/alumni

Belonging continued from page 4

businesses to build a more conscientious and prosperous tomorrow.

"It's crucial for LRI to be at the front of these kinds of conversations and be positioned to advise and challenge institutions throughout the state to be better at inclusivity. Because LRI is already so dedicated to leadership development around the state, now it can inject inclusivity into that work in a way that's attainable and sustainable," King says.

To meet a very large need, there has been no shortage of opportunities to engage in DEI training inside and outside the workplace in recent years. The LEV-LRI work is focused on going beyond the status quo.

Common approaches to DEI often focus on two areas: diversity representation and training, Carr says, cautioning that even with both areas



Specialized reports for teams seeking to understand their CliftonStrengths provides insight into pathways to foster belonging among all members of a team.

CLRI continued from page 6

After graduating from Providence College in 2005, Moura embarked on a whirlwind journey that included starting a family, earning an MBA, working at three major companies, and moving up the human resources ladder at Hasbro. She is now senior director of human resources, strategic planning and operations.

"I always knew I would do the Core Program one day," she says. "As a working mother, balancing the household, family, a demanding career, it was all about timing." The timing was right when Moura learned that the daylong monthly sessions in 2021 would likely be virtual, given the continuing pandemic.

"The best thing I've gotten from Leadership Rhode Island is perspective. When you're in a room with people who run non-profits or work in the private sector or have started their own company, you get a very different perspective on many different topics," she says.

The diversity of the participants is one of the reasons she has encouraged others, including her husband, to consider applying to the Core Program. Her husband, Jay Moura, recently graduated from the Sigma II class.

Alexander Jimenez LRI '22 / CLRI '16, who describes himself as both curious and open to new learning experiences, was a junior at

covered, organizations still may not progress.

"In order to make real gains, the focus needs to shift to fostering cultures of inclusion and equitable systems that create belonging. We will work with leaders and employers to understand implementation gaps, in particular as it relates to cultural barriers to engagement, and develop measurable indicators towards progress," she explains.

Leaning into strengths will only magnify these opportunities, providing a concrete approach to make these somewhat theoretical goals actionable.

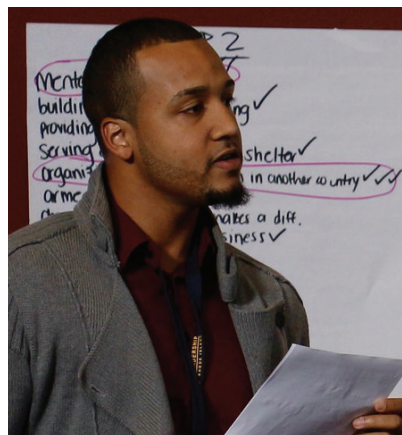
"Great managers coach and maximize human potential. Essentially, perhaps in simple terms, we will embed strengths as an accessible strategy for employees to understand how they do what they do best, and for managers and leaders to identify, sponsor and promote talent," Carr says, adding:

"Understanding employee's natural talents, beyond demographic representation, highlights opportunities for managers and senior leaders to unlock the upward mobility of BIPOC employees in a way that employees feel most fulfilled and can be of greatest value. We believe extraordinary things can happen when organizations use strengths as a foundation for engagement and performance to build a culture of belonging in the workplace."

Carr, whose mother arrived from Cuba in 1969, is personally invested and uniquely poised to lead this work.

She grew up welcoming and befriending people from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences, and, as a first-generation college student, she sought out mentors, resources, internships and relationships so she could build social capital that wasn't passed down generationally.

Carr says, "Along the journey, I navigated my own understanding of my identity and my perceived identity in various spaces and places. I have continually searched for belonging and found it at Leadership Rhode Island."



Six years after completing the College Leadership Rhode Island Program (left), Alexander Jimenez is now the 11th person to complete both the CLRI and Core program as a recent graduate of the Sigma II class (right).

the University of Rhode Island when he went through CLRI in 2016.

Jimenez, a first generation American, says CLRI provided him with resources he wouldn't have gotten otherwise. "I was learning about things such as civic engagement and financial literacy for the first time."

When he returned to serve as co-chair for the 2019 class, CLRI had expanded in length, increased class size to 50 and widened its reach to include young adults up to the age of 26.

Serving as co-chair was another growth

experience because he got a behind-the-scenes look at how the program is put together.

"While I learned a lot, I was also challenged."

Jimenez, who now works on communications and community engagement as support staff in the office of the state Commissioner of Education, was inspired to apply for the advanced leadership program by two of his mentors, **Ting Barnard LRI '15** and **Barry O'Connor LRI '16**.

Jimenez, now a graduate of the Sigma II class, is the 11th person to run both the sprint and the marathon at LRI.



LRI staff members (from left to right) Samantha Bergbauer, Abby Burnep, Jacklyn Xavier CLRI '20, Renzo Arteta CLRI '19 and Executive Director Michelle Carr LRI '14 join Mariam Kaba (center in gray) at the Woonsocket Public Library to meet and begin implementing Mariam's \$1 million dollar idea to positively transform Woonsocket.

Kaba continued from page 6

A junior at the Woonsocket High School, she is still deciding the direction of her own life. "I actually go through different career paths every single day . . . I'm always thinking about what I want to do!" She knows she wants to stay involved in nonprofit work in some capacity, and she's considering such disparate fields as dentistry or perhaps business teacher or counselor in an inner city school.

When asked why she was thinking of a career in education, Mariam said: "I know it's so important for students to have that one teacher who really cares about them and is able to provide them with advice and help, whether it's for schoolwork or outside problems . . . because I had that teacher and it was really important for me."

She singles out two educators who have impacted her life: Jeffrey Avallone, her 7th grade math teacher at Villanova Middle School, and Karen Barbosa, now assistant principal at her high school, the Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center.

The "Mrs. Barbosa" Mariam mentioned as being an exceptionally

carving influence turns out to be LRI alum, **Karen Barbosa LRI '14**.

The Papitto Opportunity Connection recently selected LRI to mentor Mariam over the next three years as her multi-pronged vision takes shape.

John A. Tarantino LRI '91, the foundation's managing trustee, says he is confident that LRI, with its long history of working with emerging and established leaders, will guide Mariam along a pathway to success.

"We will help make Mariam's bold ideas for Woonsocket a reality" pledges Executive Director **Michelle Carr LRI '14**. "LRI has more than 40 years' experience as a convener and manager of community engagement projects like Leadership Central Falls, and as a facilitator of youth workforce development programs such as College Leadership Rhode Island," she says.

Also, LRI "will harness the power of our diverse alumni network, especially those of whom are leaders who live and work in Woonsocket."

LRI's asset-based, human-centered approach to this new responsibility will be to convene vision meetings with Mariam, youth-

led design teams, and focus groups with Woonsocket partner agencies.

"What's really exciting about the Transform RI Scholarship is that Mariam has ownership over what happens and how it happens in her community and we are simply

here to help her see it through," says **Samantha Bergbauer**, LRI's Director of Community Engagement, who is leading the project.

Abby Burnep is LRI's Director of Operations & Strategic Initiatives.



Photo Courtesy: Papitto Opportunity Connection

Mariam Kaba pictured after winning the Transform Rhode Island Scholarship.

Who joined the board in 2022?



Hamza Chaudary LRI '17

Shareholder, Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C.

Achiever – Learner – Positivity – Individualization – Input

Hamza enjoys helping his community and is committed to providing excellence through his solid work ethic, combined with effective and efficient representation.

An attorney at Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C., he represents clients in a wide range of civil matters. Experienced in real estate issues, he has successfully litigated land use and zoning disputes in Superior Court and the state's Supreme Court.

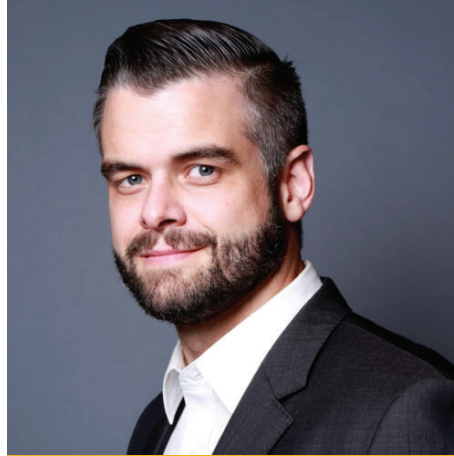
"I am proud to have assisted with the relocation of LRI to its new office at Rising Sun Mills and am looking forward to LRI utilizing that space to better serve the community," the new Board of Governors member says.

Hamza, who graduated from the Core Program in 2017, says he is excited to continue to offer strategic advice and counsel to assist in LRI's continued growth.

As an undergraduate, he majored in public policy and law at Trinity College, and he received a law degree from Washington and Lee University School of Law in 2010.

Hamza serves as the Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee for Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C. and serves on the Executive Committee and as Secretary for the Providence Country Day School's Board of Trustees.

During and even after his undergraduate years at Trinity College, Hamza served as an advisor and lecturer for the National Student Leadership Conference. In 2009, he coordinated a highly acclaimed symposium on violence on college campuses and appropriate institutional responses, an event prompted by the 2007 mass shooting at Virginia Tech.



Greg Garvin LRI '08

Senior Project Manager,
Gilbane Building Company

Learner – Harmony – Intellection – Individualization – Context

It's no wonder Greg is passionate about what he calls "rootedness" or the power of place. He grew up on a dairy and beef farm in rural New Hampshire that has been in his family for three generations.

He brings his belief in communitarianism — the ideology that individuals have a responsibility to the larger community — to his service on LRI's Board of Governors. "I'm excited to help LRI foster a sense of belonging and commitment to place among all Rhode Islanders," he says. To Greg, ensuring that everyone has a voice is a way to bridge "the political and cultural divide between urban and rural communities."

Greg, who majored in construction management, with a minor in business, graduated from Roger Williams University in 2006. Eager to invest in his alma mater, he has served on the university's CM Professional Advisory Board, for nearly a decade. He is now the board's vice chair and co-chair of the academic committee.

He has been a pre-construction manager and purchasing team leader for Gilbane Building Company since 2007. In that role, he has helped plan large construction projects in elementary, secondary and higher education, sports, healthcare and business in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

In 2008, a year after joining Gilbane, Greg participated in LRI's Core Program.

Greg is a member of Strong Towns, an advocacy organization, and the Southside Community Land Trust. He also serves on the Board of Governors for Saha Global, a nonprofit that helps entrepreneurial women provide clean drinking water to rural villages in Ghana.



Priscilla Gonzalez-Santos LRI '17

Human Resource Business Partner, Hasbro

Harmony – Relator – Discipline – Focus – Restorative

Priscilla says she has always been committed to nurturing inclusion, a point of view she brought with her when she joined LRI's Board of Governors.

First aware of LRI in 2015 and a participant in the Core Program as a member of the Nu II class two years later, Priscilla says she has seen diversity representation become more of an LRI priority over time. But inclusion goes beyond diversifying the headcount.

"I want to ensure that we continue to strive to create a way for people to feel included and involved," she says. That can be done by "creating more opportunities for people of color in leadership roles, and including diversity in all leadership discussions we are having."

A Rhode Island College student, who majored in communications and had a minor in women's studies, she graduated in 2008. Priscilla also earned a certification in Human Resources Management from Bryant University in 2014.

Now on the staff at Hasbro, Priscilla is the Human Resources Business Partner for the Global Consumer Products teams. In this role, she assesses and facilitates organizational and people-related strategies that drive business.

Before Hasbro, she served as the Director of Human Resources at Edesia, a non-profit social enterprise that treats and prevents malnutrition in developing countries worldwide.

She has prior experience in marketing, public relations and event planning. She is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management of Rhode Island and the Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce.

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

Lisa Ranglin LRI '13, the founder of the Rhode Island Black Business Association in 2011, was named the organization's President and CEO.

Heather Hermanowski Brown CLRI '14 has started a new position as Senior Marketing Manager at Fidelity Investments.

After 12 years as CEO, **Marie Ghazal LRI '95** has retired from the Rhode Island Free Clinic.

LRI board member **Sharon Conard-Wells LRI '91** received the 2022 Joseph A. Caffey Award from the Housing Network of Rhode Island. She was executive director of West Elmwood Housing Development for nearly 28 years.

Vincent McAteer LRI '15 has graduated from the 282nd Session of the FBI National Academy at Quantico, Virginia.

After 17 years at the helm, **Bob DiMuccio LRI '01**, CEO and President of Amica Mutual Insurance Co., has retired, wrapping up a 31-year career at Amica. The board has named **Ted Shallcross LRI '11**, who joined Amica in 2007, to succeed him. Ted became CEO and President Oct. 1.

Jessica McCarthy LRI '22 was inducted into the Hospital Marketing National Hall of Fame for extraordinary achievements in marketing for Care New England.

Which RI baseball team won the first World Series in 1884? **Roberta Mudge Humble LRI '01** knows. The answer is in one of her 15 entertaining books, quizzes and games crowing about Rhode Island's historical firsts and its uniqueness. Roberta was inducted into the RI Heritage Hall of Fame earlier this year.

Scott Fraser LRI '98 is now the Senior Director of Communications and External Affairs with Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O'Gara Strategies.

Night Jean Muhingabo CLRI '19, who grew up in a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was appointed to the Providence School Board. At 15, he and his mother resettled in Providence, where he graduated from high school and also from Rhode Island College.

Robert Walsh LRI '92 retired Aug. 1 after nearly 30 years at the National Education Association Rhode Island, serving 21 years as the labor organization's executive director.

Eva-Marie Mancuso LRI '18 accepted a full time position as Special Advisor to Governor Dan McKee.

Deb Imondi LRI '88 received the Ram Award from the University of Rhode Island Foundation and Alumni Engagement in recognition of her many years of volunteer service to the university and its students.

Planning ahead: **Neil Steinberg LRI '91**, CEO and president of the Rhode Island Foundation, says he will retire in May, 2023.

Pam Heffernan LRI '95 has joined the Rhode Island Zoological Society Board of Directors for Roger Williams Park Zoo & Carousel Village.



**Lisa Ranglin
LRI '13**



**Michael Friedman
LRI '16**



**Vincent McAteer
LRI '15**



**Hannah Ung
CLRI '20**



**Roberta Mudge Humble
LRI '01**



**Lorne Adrain
LRI '94**



**Night Jean Muhingabo
CLRI '19**



**Gloria Greenfield
LRI '21**



**Pam Heffernan
LRI '95**



**Seema Dixit
LRI '19**

Gillian Hodge CLRI '22, a University of Rhode Island senior, has won a David L. Boren Award, a study abroad scholarship. She is majoring in Chinese and also international relations and diplomacy. In exchange for the \$25,000 scholarship, recipients commit to working in the federal government for at least one year.

Michael Friedman LRI '16 is now board chair for Grow Smart Rhode Island.

Ana Novais LRI '04 is the acting Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the administrative structure overseeing several state departments and agencies.

Hannah Ung CLRI '20 won second place prize in the 2022 "Women Who Empower" Innovator Awards for her crowd-sourced local storage solution, Boxy.

Tina Marie Sullivan LRI '14 / LCF has been inducted, posthumously, into the Central Falls Women's Hall of Fame in recognition of many accomplishments, especially as executive director of the Central Falls Housing Authority.

Elisabeth Sudbey CLRI '21 has been awarded the Fulbright Program's US Cultural Ambassadorship to teach English in South Korea as a multilingual teacher.

Three LRI alumni responded quickly to Russia's horrifying invasion of Ukraine. **Lorne Adrain LRI '94** flew to Poland where he provided money and transportation to families crossing the border in search of a safe place to live. **Erik Brine LRI '21** raised money to fly a Ukrainian mother and two children to Rhode Island and help them settle in Jamestown. And, a welcoming ground mural painted in bright blue and yellow, the colors of the Ukrainian flag, appeared off Bridge Street in Providence. The street art was commissioned by the Avenue Concept, founded by **Yarrow Thorne LRI '17/CLRI '10**.

Dana Borrelli-Murray LRI '12 is the new CEO of the Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England. New members of the Board of Directors include **David Blair LRI '21**, **Akhil Gupta LRI '07**, and **Imanah Mahmoud LRI '22**. They join existing board members: **Joanne Daly LRI '12**, **Mario Hilario LRI '05**, **Carrie Majewski LRI '20**, and **Jen Silbert LRI '19**. Wait! There's More! **Mike Ritz LRI '07** is the new chair of the board's development committee.

Gloria Greenfield LRI '21 has been promoted to Chief Of Staff, a new position at Sojourner House.

Kevin Tracy LRI '04 and **Bruce Messier LRI '22** have been elected to the board of Crossroads Rhode Island.

Marsella Development Corporation, led by **Christopher Marsella '13**, is planning a \$23.5-million food hall in the lower level of the historic Union Station building on Exchange Street in Providence. It is scheduled to open in the spring of 2023.

Seema Dixit LRI '19, who has held several positions during 19 years at the state Department of Health, was recently promoted to deputy director.

Kim Bright LRI '21 has a new position as Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives at Rhode Island College.



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Inspiring Leaders Luncheon

Wednesday, March 22



401Gives
Saturday, April 1



Statewide Scavenger Hunt

Saturday, August 26 & Sunday, August 27



Tau II Graduation Party

Wednesday, October 18



End of Year Cheer

Wednesday, December 6