

Rhode Island Foundation

2024 New Funds

The generosity of countless Rhode Islanders has built the foundation we stand on. Because of them, we have state-wide reach and the financial strength to give progress a platform to leap. Every act of giving makes an impact, collectively, they're a force that shapes our state.

We are grateful to our philanthropic partners who created new funds with us in 2024. In this book you will find a variety of stories that capture the inspiration behind their generosity.

As Rhode Island's community foundation, we mobilize generosity and motivate change that makes a difference. Because separately, we can have impact; but only together, on a solid foundation, can we build the future we all hope for.

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2024 New Fund Stories

Anthony Lyceum Library Association Fund



In the heart of Coventry, Rhode Island, a remarkable story of a community's dedication to knowledge and literacy has unfolded over nearly 150 years. The Anthony Lyceum Library Association Fund stands as a testament to this enduring commitment through its perpetual support of the Coventry Public Library Foundation.

James Hopkins, whose connection to the library began as a young boy, reflects on his early memories: "My mom and dad took us to the Anthony Library as small children. My dad became involved with the library and eventually came on board as President."

A native Rhode Islander descended from Stephen Hopkins, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Jim grew up in Washington Village near the historic Anthony Mill, built in 1873 by the Coventry Company for textile manufacturing. Now a retired operations executive, Jim also followed in his dad's footsteps, becoming President and then Treasurer of the Anthony Lyceum Library Association.

Several years ago, the Association came under the leadership of Jim's late sister-in-law, Andrea Hopkins. As president, she worked tirelessly to gather the organization's assets to create this new endowment, despite becoming severely ill. Reflects Jim, "Andrea was the one who led the next steps to move the funds. Inspired by her leadership, we created something that keeps Anthony's name alive."

The Association's story begins in 1874, when the Coventry Company established the Anthony Lyceum Library Association for the education of its employees. Like many mill owners of the era, Richard and William Anthony created a mill village, including stores and housing, that allowed workers and their

families to function and thrive. In 1902, the Coventry Company donated the land for the construction of a permanent library, completed in 1903, and ownership of the building was transferred to the Association.

Through the decades, the library evolved. By 1972, Coventry had established a townwide library system. Ultimately, in 1979, a new Library-Town Hall complex opened, and the Lyceum building was sold, although the Association continued its work of supporting Coventry's libraries.

In 2022, after many years of providing funding for computers, subscriptions, and other resources, the group was faced with a pivotal decision. "All the board members are getting older," Jim explains. "We had a conversation, and it became apparent...are we going to perpetuate the Anthony Lyceum Library Association or do something else?"

The answer came clearly: "We picked up the phone and called the Rhode Island Foundation. We've known about the Foundation forever, and there was no question in my mind that this was the way to go."

Leroy Archibald Basketball Memorial Scholarship Fund



When Leroy "Sassy" Archibald stepped onto a basketball court as a referee, players knew they were in the presence of someone special. For over five decades, Leroy officiated countless games across Rhode Island, a familiar and respected figure to generations of young athletes.

Growing up in Fox Point, Leroy learned very early the value of community support. "He came from a place where everyone looked out for one another, where families helped their neighbors," his daughter, Roxanne, explains. "He witnessed generosity from a young age."

After playing basketball at Hope High School and Fox Point Recreational Center, Leroy went on to build a multifaceted career that included over 50 years as a real estate broker and worked for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation. But it was his half-century as a basketball referee that seemed to define him.

His dedication to youth sports and the young people who play them earned him multiple honors, including induction into the Rhode Island Interscholastic League Athletic Hall of Fame, North Providence Sports Hall of Fame, IAABO Board 84 Hall of Fame, and the Fox Point Boys Club Hall of Fame.

Roxanne also remembers her father as someone who managed to turn his personal challenges into opportunities to help others. "When my dad was going through the process necessary to become a referee, it took many attempts because he had no one helping him through the process," Roxanne shares. "Once he became certified, he would always offer to mentor other candidates who were applying to referee by helping them along with the process."

At home, Leroy was the loving husband of his wife MaryAnn for nearly 60 years. They first met when MaryAnn was just 15 at the John Hope Settlement House. Together, they raised their two daughters who also dedicated their professional lives to educating young people: Roxanne Archibald, an administrator for Providence Public Schools committed to connecting students with scholarships, and Dr. Mary Archibald, a long-time social worker for Providence Public Schools, now a professor of social work at Rhode Island College.

When Leroy passed away in 2023, his family was inspired to honor his extraordinary legacy and chose the Rhode Island Foundation to steward the Leroy Archibald Basketball Memorial Scholarship Fund, supporting post-secondary education for students who played basketball during high school.

"Everywhere we went, kids and their parents would remember my dad as a referee; we always got stopped by somebody who knew him," Roxanne recalls. "He touched the lives of a lot of kids."

Dr. Jacqueline E. Ash Scholarship



For Dr. Jacqueline “Jackie” Ash, education has always been more than just a career – it’s a calling. Born and raised in Pawtucket, Jackie’s journey from aspiring teacher to dedicated administrator reflects her deep commitment to empowering young people in her community.

“I only ever wanted to be a teacher when I was a kid,” Jackie recalls. After attending Catholic schools and graduating from Manhattanville University in New York, she returned to her roots in Rhode Island, where she discovered a passion for public education. Starting as a social studies teacher at Samuel Slater Middle School, Jackie’s path took an unexpected turn when a principal saw leadership potential in her that she hadn’t yet recognized in herself. “He saw something in me that I didn’t even see,” she reflects. “This was a tipping point in my life – to have someone believe in me and see me as a leader.”

That moment of recognition sparked a remarkable administrative career spanning the entire K-12 spectrum, from Nathanael Greene Elementary School to Samuel Slater Middle School to Charles E. Shea Senior High School. “I saw a gap in the opportunities available to graduating seniors in Pawtucket,” Jackie explains. “Many bright and hardworking students face significant challenges when it comes to pursuing higher education or career training. Whether it’s the rising costs of education, a lack of resources, or limited access to guidance, I wanted to make a tangible difference.”

Now retired, Jackie’s commitment to education remains unwavering. “I’m leaving a profession, but I can never leave the kids. I want to continue to pay it forward...community, opportunity, and love.” One

of the ways Jackie is ‘paying it forward’ is through the newly created Dr. Jacqueline E. Ash Scholarship fund, supporting graduating seniors from Shea High School who demonstrate the tenets of S.H.E.A. – Skilled, Honorable, Empowered, Achievers.

Jackie chose to partner with the Rhode Island Foundation because of its strong reputation for fostering educational opportunities and effectively managing community funds. “The Foundation has a great reputation, built on integrity,” she explains. “Education is supposed to be the equalizer, but educational opportunities aren’t equal,” she notes. “That’s why I give.”

Roger J. Bertrand Scholarship Fund



The Roger J. Bertrand Scholarship Fund represents a visionary gift that helps open doors for students seeking a Catholic education in Rhode Island. Established through a trust created by the late Roger Bertrand, the fund began assisting K-12 students and their families to afford parochial school tuition after Roger’s passing in 2015. Now, this important legacy continues under the stewardship of the Rhode Island Foundation, ensuring that Roger’s commitment to supporting young learners will continue to benefit future generations.

Roger Bertrand was a self-made businessman who owned a small paint and hardware store in West Warwick. Though he never married or had children of his own, Roger had a profound desire to help young people access the Catholic education he had received in his youth.

“He was a quiet philanthropist,” recalls Normand Plante, trustee of Roger’s estate and longtime friend since their school days together. “He was the kind of guy who would never sit in the front row at church – he was the one in the back row.”

Roger’s life was marked by curiosity and adventure. An avid traveler, he explored France, China, Turkey, Greece, and even mined for gold in South Africa. Rather than luxury hotels, he preferred to stay with local families, forging lasting friendships through these cultural connections. He often shared his travel adventures with grade school children, inspiring their own curiosity about the world.

The transition to the Rhode Island Foundation marks a new chapter for the fund. As both stockbroker and friend, Normand faithfully managed the scholarship

from its inception. “Administering a scholarship fund is a lot of work,” explains Normand, who found great personal satisfaction in his role. However, as time passed, he recognized the need to ensure the fund’s long-term sustainability. To that end, the trust identified the Rhode Island Foundation, known for its expertise in managing scholarships for Rhode Islanders, as an alternative home for Roger’s legacy.

“Now it’s time to pack it in,” says Normand. “The Rhode Island Foundation is well positioned to help. It will live on in perpetuity, where I don’t!”

Karen Borger Holocaust Education Fund



Growing up in the close-knit Jewish community of York, Pennsylvania, Karen Borger learned early lessons about standing up against prejudice and hatred. These formative experiences, coupled with the haunting testimony of her childhood cantor and Holocaust survivor Alex Hirsch, shaped her lifelong dedication to Holocaust education and fighting antisemitism.

“Cantor Hirsch sometimes put aside our Hebrew school lessons to share his unimaginable experiences,” Karen recalls. His most devastating story—of seeing his fatigued young son gunned down during a forced march between concentration camps and his wife at the designation’s gas chamber—left a lasting mark on Karen’s consciousness. “He was the first survivor I ever met, and he is largely responsible for my commitment to Holocaust education.”

Reinforced by her own experiences confronting antisemitism, Karen’s commitment has found permanent expression through the Karen Borger Holocaust Education Fund, designated to support the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center’s mission to teach Holocaust history, promote human dignity, and confront all forms of hate.

Karen’s passion for social justice was nurtured by her family’s example. When her father, who owned his own business, declined an invitation to a golf outing at a country club that excluded Jewish members, his status as the sponsor’s largest customer prompted a change of venue. Similarly, Karen and her friends successfully advocated moving their senior prom from the same discriminatory club. “Activism was part of my life—being exposed to prejudice and antisemitism taught me to speak up.”

On the recommendation of her professional advisor, Karen approached the Rhode Island Foundation to establish her fund. She recognized the Foundation as an “amazing organization” that would responsibly steward her legacy and shepherd her fund, from generation to generation. The Foundation’s long history of experienced and expert philanthropic management aligned perfectly with Karen’s vision for enduring, sustainable impact.

With fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors remaining, Karen recognizes the urgent need to preserve and share their experiences. “When they can’t tell their stories anymore, we need to continue to speak up against the dangers of antisemitism and hate and be committed to promoting acceptance and understanding through education,” she explains. Through her fund, Karen aims to ensure the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center has the resources to expand its outreach and educational initiatives.

Recently, Karen celebrated her birthday by requesting contributions to the fund instead of gifts, introducing her guests to the Center’s vital work. Through this fund, Karen has transformed her personal mission into a lasting catalyst for education, understanding, and social change. Says Karen, “We owe it to our ancestors, survivors, and future generations to try.”

The Choir School of Newport County Endowment Fund



Founded in 2014 as a soprano line of children for an adult church choir, the Choir School of Newport County provides rigorous musical training while forming lives of character and service through the joy and discipline of intergenerational choral music.

In singing classical music, children learn about teamwork and things that go well beyond music, according to Peter Berton, the founding executive director of the Choir School of Newport County who also serves as chapel organist of St. George’s School. “There is a theory called the ‘Mozart effect’—that classical music such as Mozart and Bach in its contrapuntal integrity activates the brain and fosters deeper learning, particularly in mathematics. A neural phenomenon occurs when you sing quality complicated music well. Learning the skills, the notes, the breathing, the pitch, the vocal demands, and the complexity of your part. It’s not passive—you’re in it.”

The choristers start at age 7; the Choir School also has a training division for ages four to seven that gets them started before they need to read words—rhythm, music notation, and teamwork. Rehearsals are three hours per week, including a dinner.

Every four years, the choir conducts a major educational tour—they have performed in England and in Argentina. “This is life changing—they love taking their show on the road to a totally new audience. Performer reaction to the audience reaction is powerful.”

Messiah at the Mansion is performed in December every year at Rosecliff, to a sell-out audience. They also sing at the Newport Folk Festival—last year they collaborated with Allison Russell. “It was amazing, like singing backup for a rock band.”

“We have a strong base of generous supporters, but we want to have the means to flourish and sustain this vision. Only an endowment can do this. We had a “friendraising” tea one year ago with Dr. Barry Rose OBE, where Daniel Kertzner, senior philanthropic advisor at the Rhode Island Foundation, spoke about endowment possibilities at the Foundation.” Their goal was to raise \$100,000 to begin an endowment fund and they achieved that; their ultimate aim for sustainability for this Fund is to reach \$2 million. Reflecting on the communal aspect of the choir, Peter concluded, “Singing together is a powerful experience that puts you in a positive state of mind and strengthens connections.”

Cicilline Family Fund



The seeds of philanthropy were planted early for Rhode Island Foundation President and CEO David Cicilline. As a young student at St. Dunstan's Day School in Providence, he was deeply affected by a photo that appeared in the newspaper depicting the devastation that occurred after an earthquake in Nicaragua. That singular photo compelled David to organize a collection to help, setting the stage for what would go on to become a lifelong dedication to service, and demonstrating the power of giving to make a difference in people's lives.

"I grew up in a family whose parents instilled the values of service and helping your neighbors," David reflects. "While we didn't formally call it 'philanthropy,' our family naturally gave their time and resources to help each other, our friends, and our community. It was simply part of who we were."

Building on those early lessons in service, David has now established the Cicilline Family Fund, a donor-advised fund at the Foundation. Through this type of fund, family members can also recommend grants to support causes they care about. While many families give to various organizations throughout the year, a donor-advised fund offers an organized, effective way to make impactful gifts, and a meaningful pathway to making lasting change.

The Foundation's 109-year history brings unparalleled expertise and deep Rhode Island roots to the partnership, as well as an experienced, knowledgeable staff offering guidance, recommendations, and comprehensive understanding of need. "It's hard to know everything about every organization," explains David. "The Foundation's team has extensive insight into nonprofits doing good work in the community."

When asked about his goals for the fund, David is focused on making a difference for those often overlooked by society. "I know the fund will grow over time to support the most forgotten members of the community—for those who need help the most, for those who have no other place to turn."

The process of establishing and maintaining his fund at the Foundation has also been straightforward and efficient. Explains David, "I'd like to emphasize how easy this is to do—it makes giving and philanthropy accessible. The endowment is so well-managed, and your opportunity to make an impact grows over time because of this expertise."

For David, this commitment to giving reflects his deepest values and beliefs. "Part of our responsibility as human beings on this earth is to take care of one another. It's part of my religious tradition of healing the world. It is incumbent on us to do as much as we can to help others, and philanthropy is the manifestation of that."

Leslee J. Clement Scholarship Fund



The Leslee J. Clement Scholarship Fund, established by her daughter Nicole, honors a mother's legacy of kindness, generosity, and service. The fund provides scholarships to Hope High School seniors with financial need, prioritizing support to African American students pursuing higher education.

"She was amazing, a bright light dimmed before its time," reflects Nicole about her mother, who passed away from lung cancer in 2010 at the age of 62. "She loved her family and friends. She was both nurturing and empathetic. The one with the gentle demeanor in our family, the one who held everyone together."

Leslee's story is one of dedication and service. She was born into a family of 13 children of Cape Verdean descent, grew up in the Fox Point and Smith Hill sections of Providence. After her father died, she helped her mother, Marion, a nurse's assistant, care for her younger siblings tapping into her innate ability to provide emotional support, guidance, and encouragement. She graduated from Hope High School and earned an associate's degree from CCRI. She married her high school sweetheart, Michael, and had two children, Regina and Nicole. With her nurturing spirit, she supported her husband's success as the first African American City Clerk for the City of Providence and encouraged her daughters to lead with kindness while reaching for the stars.

Throughout her career, Leslee demonstrated a commitment to serving others. She served as a Head Teller and Mortgage Specialist at Bank of New England-Old Colony and Chief Hearing Officer at the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission, where she skillfully resolved customer issues and concerns

before retiring in 2010. After her passing, a hearing room was named in her honor for her dedication and exceptional service.

"She was a loving person," Nicole says. "Everyone who knew her thought she was sweet, kind and considerate." One of Nicole's fondest memories is of her mother offering a ride to an elderly stranger. When asked by her daughters if she knew the woman, Leslee replied, "No, but she needed my help." Leslee's altruism continues to influence Nicole in her own community work, as she serves on the Board of Commissioners of the Providence Housing Authority, and as President of the Greater Providence (RI) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. "It was my mother who first taught me how fulfilling it could be assisting people find solutions to their problems," says Nicole.

This year will mark the 15th anniversary of Leslee's passing, making it a meaningful moment to establish the scholarship fund. Nicole always intended to honor her mother with a scholarship but did not know where to start. "The Foundation provided the perfect opportunity and working with the Development team made my experience both rewarding and stress-free," she reflects.

Leslee's legacy continues to shine brightly through her children and family. "My mom was my biggest supporter and my source of inspiration," shares Nicole, General Counsel at Beacon Communities LLC, a real estate firm. "She always allowed me to discover solutions on my own, gently encouraging me to find answers independently. It made her not only the best mom but also an incredible mentor."

Community Libraries of Providence Endowment Fund



"When the Internet came along, many thought we were done with libraries—that is absolutely not true and people are seeing that," says Library Director of the Community Libraries of Providence Cheryl Space. "I have been a librarian for almost 30 years and we have become a cultural center, a hub, a trusted and free information resource—people know they can trust the answers they get from the staff. And programming has always been important, but much more so now."

"We're a building with resources—continually evolving. Libraries are here to stay, and this endowment is a strong signal we're stable and we plan to be here for the community."

"Establishing this endowment with the Rhode Island Foundation is a huge goal for us. It doesn't take away the annual gifts but we need to become more independent. We are accountable to the City but by having an endowment we can grow out our potential for what we can do."

- The network of community libraries must ensure that they have adequate classroom and community space. They offer GED and ESL classes, maker space studios, and host 6,000 meetings per year for community groups as well as for congressional leaders, local city councils and mayoral forums.
- The Knight Memorial Entrepreneurship Center offers Rhode Island-based entrepreneurs and artists the knowledge they require to be successful, including access to financial and intellectual resources. It also serves as a space for making business cards, holding maker marketplaces, seminars on how to fund your business, manage social media presence, and a new program for Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs.

- Community-based artists are invited to make presentations that engage the community—Spanish language theatre, mural-making, podcast-making, etc.
- Concerts, sewing classes, Latin dance classes, gardening and composting workshops are all held regularly.
- Partnering with Providence Public Schools on creating a summer reading program.
- Serve as warming centers, offer free meals at 7 libraries, open all day, aid unhoused people with mental health issues.

"This is why we are always going to be here," says Michael Bordonaro, director of philanthropy. "We are resilient and respond with the information each community wants and needs. So much of what we do is in partnership." Each library has neighborhood-based partnerships. There are system-wide initiatives (GED, ESL, summer-reading program) but each library is a microcosm of its own neighborhood and receives funding to implement specific programs. "We're a small city but we're a city of neighborhoods and we have to meet them where they are. We did a project once in a laundromat in Olneyville!"

All are excited about the endowment. "We wanted the integrity and respect of the Rhode Island Foundation name behind it. We are going to let it grow, keep reinvesting until we reach \$100K. If the endowment could pay for the director position and library managers and support staff raises, the money that comes from the city can go into programming."

"This isn't for us today; this is for the future. Planned giving, bequests, legacy gifts all support time-honored traditions of a library plus the future."

Computer Science Career Pathways Fund



When the Academy for Career Exploration ("ACE") closed its doors in June 2020, it marked not an end, but a transformation in supporting technology education in Providence. Joe Devine, former Chair of ACE's Board, saw an opportunity to continue the school's mission through an innovative approach to educational funding.

The story began fifteen years earlier when Joe, then working in the information technology staffing field, noticed a critical gap in Rhode Island's tech sector. "Local companies were struggling to fill IT roles due to a lack of qualified candidates in the employment pool – some had to take their business outside of Rhode Island," he recalls. This observation led him to collaborate with local colleges that offered computer science programs and eventually, form an academic advisory committee.

Says Joe, "What became obvious was that we were missing over half of the potential employment pool. Women and minorities were woefully underrepresented, and the education systems didn't have computer science career pathways in our poorest districts."

Originally established in 1997 as the Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy, ACE evolved into a public charter school serving Providence students in grades 9-12. The school featured career and technical engineering programs, offering pathways in computer networking, cybersecurity, programming, web development, and data science. Students could graduate with industry credentials and college credits, positioning them for immediate career opportunities.

After ACE's closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, Joe recommended creating a donor advised fund at the Rhode Island Foundation using the school's residual assets, with a focus on creating sustainable computer science and IT career pathways for women and communities of color in Rhode Island.

"This is where we wanted the money to go to develop the next generation of talent in the tech field," explains Joe. "I knew there wasn't any other organization that could do this type of work."

Through careful collaboration between the Providence Public School Department and the Rhode Island Department of Education, this creative use of public funds will continue ACE's mission. The newly established Computer Science Career Pathways Fund will provide grant funding to Rhode Island nonprofits with similar goals to the now-shuttered charter school, supporting curriculum development, technology tools and equipment, after-school and summer programming, internships, and scholarships.

Today, an advisory committee comprised of educators, computer science leaders, and industry representatives will guide the fund's grant recommendations, ensuring its impact aligns with ACE's original vision of expanding access to technology careers for Rhode Island's women and minority youth.

Downtown Providence Park Network Endowment Fund



Nora Barré has certainly been doing her homework. As executive director of the Downtown Providence Park Network (DPPN), she's bringing renewed vibrancy to public spaces running from the Point Street Bridge through Waterplace Park to the Greater Kennedy Plaza, Burnside Park, Biltmore Park and the skating rink. "I'm obsessed with mid-sized cities that get it right," she explains. "Tulsa, for instance, has dynamic public parks where everyone can gather. In Baltimore, Mr. Trash Wheel collects trash and floating oyster beds engage citizens in cleaning the harbor. It's all about civic spaces belonging to the people."

DPPN formed right after the COVID pandemic with a vision for parks and waterways that foster a flourishing, inclusive, and democratic downtown community. "We see downtown parks that stimulate economic vitality through free programming while providing vibrant hubs for recreation, culture, and connection," Barré says. "It doesn't always have to be a big spectacle, but people should be able to count on something happening regularly."

Already, DPPN has presented the Lumina Festival featuring illuminated interactive artwork, organized public clean-up days, led boat tours of the hurricane barrier, and hosted a free Burnside Summer Concert Series. This spirit of experimentation also extends to larger initiatives. The Rhode Island Foundation recently awarded DPPN a \$70,000 grant to fund a two-year action plan for expanded programming. "We stay nimble and opportunistic," Barré says. "We just applied for a three-year NOAA grant to reduce marine debris and keep trash out of the bay—we've passed the first round nationally and are awaiting final approval."

Key partnerships support DPPN's mission. The Downtown Improvement District offers office space and programming support. Collaborations with the Woonasquatucket Watershed Council and Save the Bay enhance waterway stewardship. Together, they're connecting public spaces and spotlighting the importance of clean rivers and bays. "I cherish partnerships," Barré adds. "We need active, engaged collaborators—not just five-year plans that are never accomplished."

The next big initiative is the "You Belong Here Wayfinding" project, backed by Commerce RI and the City of Providence. Colorful banners will adorn downtown parks, offering navigational guidance and celebrating Providence's cultural and historical heritage. QR codes will connect visitors to interactive maps, event listings, and local businesses. Pop-up programming and art murals will further unify the theme, reflecting the city's diverse cultures.

To ensure these efforts endure, DPPN is launching an endowment fund. "We need to diversify our funding and build a financially healthy, sustainable organization," Barré explains. "Our board is working on a plan to allocate a portion of every donation to this endowment, with the Rhode Island Foundation's expertise guiding us. Civic pride in public space is crucial, and we want to protect it for generations to come."

Michael B. Dupré Charitable Fund



"We have both been supporting lots of different organizations for a very long time," says Michael Dupré of he and his partner Donald Occaso. "We do these little projects everywhere, sometimes off the beaten path."

Now they are planning to focus their philanthropy locally. Michael was a private chef for 45 years, taught adult cooking classes at RISD, owned and operated an inn in Newport; Donald is a retired dentist. They make their home in Jamestown where they support community projects. They are particularly fond of Out of the Box, a studio and gallery founded by one of Donald's former patients. Its primary purpose is to integrate mentally handicapped artists into the creative community. About one of their recent openings, Donald says, "It was unbelievable. Places like this have a multiplier effect in the community—a real asset to the community."

They, along with many other people, also supported the restoration of the beautiful 19th century Romanesque Belmont Chapel. Michael and Donald were fascinated with the project. The chapel was built in 1886, and over time, the building had seriously deteriorated. "Everyone thought it was a tear-down," says Donald, but everything was restored, including magnificent stained-glass windows, and today it is used for cultural and historical events.

Their interests extend beyond the arts and historic preservation. For instance, suicide prevention in Newport County is another issue they plan to support.

"My philanthropy started in the eighties with the Make A Wish Foundation—what a wonderful way to bring kids joy, to change someone's life," says Michael. "That's what we're all about—we want to bring joy to everyone—at the Senior Center, the Community Center." Donald adds, "The whole thing for us is community because that's what makes life fun. It's an antidote to depression—whether young or old dealing with loneliness."

"As we get older, and think about our own demise," Michael says, "we would like to have everything set up in one place, with guidelines and a sense of focus. We know that the Foundation is a great resource for things that people need."

"I was taught that you feel good when you give, even more than when you get. It can be the smallest thing that makes a difference," confirms Donald.

Fiorenzano Family Save The Bay Fund



For JoEllen and Arthur Fiorenzano, protecting Narragansett Bay isn't just an environmental cause—it's a family mission. As owners of Fashion Accessories First (FAF), a fashion accessories company in Greenville, Rhode Island, celebrating its 50th year, they've experienced firsthand how business success and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

"Over the years, our family has spent countless hours on and around Narragansett Bay – boating, swimming, fishing, and simply enjoying all the Bay has to offer," shares JoEllen, reflecting on their deep connection to one of Rhode Island's most beautiful natural resources. This personal relationship to Narragansett Bay led the Fiorenzanos to establish the first-ever designated fund supporting Save The Bay.

The timing is particularly meaningful. When FAF began manufacturing operations in 1975, it was during a pivotal era for environmental protection. The Environmental Protection Agency had just been established in 1970, the same year Save The Bay began its mission to protect and improve Narragansett Bay. "We learned a lot about the environment while working with the EPA," Arthur notes, describing how environmental consciousness became integrated into their business practices from the start. Today, they continue to work closely with their vendors and customers to reduce their environmental impact and promote sustainable practices.

JoEllen and Arthur created this designated fund to ensure consistent, automatic support for Save The Bay's vision of a fully swimmable, fishable, healthy

Narragansett Bay, accessible to all. The Fiorenzanos' commitment to philanthropy also extends beyond their personal giving. They've cultivated a culture of giving at FAF, encouraging their employees to participate in community support.

"The benefit of a designated fund is that it will continue in perpetuity, making an impact long after we're gone," Arthur explains. Before establishing the fund, the couple met with Save The Bay to understand their needs. This thoughtful approach to giving characterizes their relationship with the Foundation, which began in 2008 with their first donor advised fund.

"If you have organizations that you regularly support, a designated fund is a great way to give—it provides consistent support where it's needed most," JoEllen shares. "It's been a great approach for us. Giving is a large part of our core values; it's integral to both our lives and our business."

JoEllen and Arthur also hope to encourage others to support Save The Bay's crucial mission. Their pioneering fund is an inspiring example of how local business leaders can create lasting positive impact, combining a passion for protecting the environment with philanthropic innovation to preserve Rhode Island's natural heritage for years to come.

David S. Francazio, Esq. Memorial Fund



"We started this memorial fund because David's life story exemplifies courage, perseverance, determination, and compassion for others in the face of great adversity," says Steven Francazio of his son David. "We hope the way he chose to live his life will inspire others that face similar challenges to focus on the positive and make the best of their situation."

Growing up in Smithfield, David was known for his sharp mind, voracious reading, and eagerness to help others. His early passion for animal welfare and justice led him from the Wheeler School's mock trial program to the Honors Program at Boston College, where he excelled while pursuing both his interests in law and animal studies. He went on to earn his Juris Doctor with honors from Duke University School of Law, where he served as President of the Duke Student Chapter of the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Returning to Rhode Island, David distinguished himself in the Rhode Island Supreme Court Trial Court Law Clerk Department, quickly becoming the most requested law clerk for his academic insight and exemplary judicial writing. He later joined McKinnon & Harwood, practicing in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and in federal court. Throughout his career, he generously mentored students and young lawyers.

Despite being born with a serious heart condition, David refused to let health challenges define him. He lived his thirty years with remarkable determination, focusing on helping others rather than dwelling on his own difficulties. His warm smile, infectious laugh, and genuine nature touched people of all ages and walks of life. He was known for standing by friends through good times and bad, always ready to lend a helping hand.

In seeking a permanent way to honor David's memory, his parents partnered with the Rhode Island Foundation to establish the David S. Francazio, Esq. Memorial Fund, supporting two causes that reflect their son's spirit of justice and love for animals: the Rhode Island Bar Foundation and Animal Rescue Rhode Island, where David adopted his beloved dogs, Rosie and Pedro.

"We feel this fund is the perfect vehicle to continue David's story and the values he lived by, well into the future," explains Steven. "David's two passions were the protection of all living things and the use of the legal system to help those in need. David's story is far from over; it will live on through all those he helped, touched, changed, and inspired. This fund is a lasting example of David's immeasurable impact."

FSRI Go Team Endowment Fund



On a cold winter evening, a police officer responds to a distress call about a domestic incident. Amid the chaos, a young child sits quietly in the corner, clutching a worn-out teddy bear, eyes wide with fear. These are the moments where Family Service of Rhode Island's (FSRI) Go Team makes an immeasurable difference. With a trauma-trained advocate arriving on scene alongside the officer, the child receives immediate comfort and support. This advocate, focused solely on the child's emotional well-being, gently helps them begin to process the trauma they've just endured. It's in these critical first moments that the cycle of trauma can be broken, providing a pathway toward healing and hope.

FSRI is a behavioral health and social service organization supporting Rhode Islanders across the state from infancy to adulthood with the mission "to advance equity, opportunity, and hope in our communities." Founded in 1892, FSRI's long history of non-profit service has always been tailored to meet the unique and ever-changing needs of the diverse Rhode Island communities which they serve.

The Go Team program is built around the core belief that no victim of crime should navigate their trauma alone. Co-locating trauma-trained police liaisons within local departments, the Go Team ensures that victims receive 24/7 on-scene response. These advocates accompany officers on ride-alongs, ready to step in and provide immediate support, help access basic needs, assist in navigating the complex criminal justice system, connect victims to essential community resources, and offer ongoing advocacy. This unique model has proven highly successful in mitigating the long-term impacts of trauma and helping victims begin their journey to recovery and

has been recognized nationally for its innovative approach to trauma-informed care.

Launched in 2003 through a visionary collaboration between then Providence Mayor David Cicilline, Providence Police Chief Dean Esserman, FSRI CEO Margaret Holland McDuff, and former Vice President Dr. Susan Erstling, the Go Team has grown to now serve seven police departments across Rhode Island: Barrington, Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Woonsocket, and the Rhode Island State Police. Each year, the program touches countless lives, offering critical support during some of life's most challenging moments.

"Every time the Go Team steps onto a scene, they bring more than just support—they bring hope. It's about showing victims, especially children, that they are not alone in their darkest moments," states Holland McDuff.

To ensure the sustainability and continued expansion of this vital program, FSRI has established the Go Team Endowment Fund, enabling it to continue its life-saving work and reach even more communities in need. By contributing to the Go Team Endowment, donors can play an active role. Together, we can ensure that no child, no family, and no community member stands alone in the face of trauma.

Evelyn and Harold Golden Dance Fund for Ballet Education



The romance began on the Narragansett Town Beach boardwalk in 1938. When Harold Golden offered his future wife, Evelyn, a ride home, she politely declined. Undeterred, he returned moments later with a clever response: "It isn't very often that someone refuses a date!" Evelyn looked at him and replied, "Well, you didn't say you were asking me for a date!" That chance encounter sparked what would become 72 years of marriage and a family legacy of dance.

For Evelyn, one of Harold's most captivating qualities was his natural grace. When her mother once asked what she saw in Harold, Evelyn exclaimed, "Ma, he is such a fabulous dancer!" Her mother retorted, "Well Evie, you can't dance your way through life." Yet in many ways, that's exactly what Evelyn and Harold did—dancing together through the good times and pulling together through the challenges, raising three children: Arlene, Robert, and Alan.

Their daughter Arlene Golden Gilbert inherited her parents' passion for dance. Beginning classical ballet at age six, she pursued her love of dance through high school and went on to study at the Boston Conservatory of Music as a dance major. What started as a small group of twelve students in her parents' basement in 1965 blossomed into the eventual founding of The Jasper School of Dance in Cumberland, and The JASPER Ballet (Just for AIDS Support, Perpetual care, Education and Research), a nonprofit organization which continues to thrive.

"Ballet is what I love the most," Arlene reflects. "It has a place all its own—so disciplined, so beautiful." This deep appreciation for classical ballet led her to establish the Evelyn and Harold Golden Dance Fund for Ballet Education at the Rhode Island Foundation,

supporting scholarships for young dancers to study at the Ocean State Ballet School.

The fund honors not only the Golden's love of dance, but their devotion to helping others achieve their dreams. Through the Foundation, Arlene can ensure this legacy continues. "You start thinking as you age, 'I know that I won't be here forever,'" she says. "My relationship with the Rhode Island Foundation gave me trust—and this fund is in loving memory of my mom and dad. I'm able to see the success of the fund and the work of the school in my lifetime."

Throughout her career, Arlene's dedication extended beyond teaching dance steps. "My students were the most unbelievable kids," she says with pride. She was not only their teacher, but also their advocate, helping them find additional opportunities to advance their training. Arlene's commitment to nurturing young talent has created a widening circle of encouragement—one that will continue to grow through her thoughtful investment and inspired generosity.

Laurie H. Gouveia Scholarship Fund



When Judith Higgins, CPA, established the Laurie H. Gouveia Scholarship Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation, she created more than just a scholarship—she ensured that her friend’s name and legacy would be remembered through the support of young women pursuing the field of accounting.

After graduating from Bryant University, Judy opened her own accounting practice in 1990, where she first met Laurie Gouveia, a young bookkeeper, through one of the firm’s clients. “Laurie was so efficient, so sweet,” Judy recalls. “I had the opportunity to hire her.” Their professional relationship soon blossomed into a friendship, and Laurie eventually went on to launch her own thriving bookkeeping service.

Tragically, Laurie passed away unexpectedly in August 2001, leaving behind her husband and young family. Within months, Judy and friend Kathy Messenger channeled their grief into action, working with Laurie’s friends and family who generously contributed funds towards a scholarship in her memory for students at Shea High School in Pawtucket, where Laurie was a 1977 graduate.

For over two decades, Laurie’s scholarship has supported female students pursuing post-secondary education in accounting. Judy worked closely with Shea High School’s guidance department for many years, awarding thousands of dollars to aspiring accountants, creating opportunities that would have made Laurie proud.

Recently, Judy learned about the Rhode Island Foundation through a Shea High School guidance counselor who was familiar with other Foundation-

managed scholarships, and she was particularly drawn to the accessible entry point for establishing a designated scholarship fund. As Judy contemplates scaling back her own accounting practice in preparation for retirement, she has entrusted the scholarship’s administration to the Foundation, ensuring that Laurie’s legacy will continue to grow, inspire, and support young accountants for generations to come.

“I initially thought that we would not have enough to start the fund, but the lower entry point was so accessible,” Judy explains. “This allowed me to establish the scholarship fund in Laurie’s name, and I’m glad that her name will live on.”

Guillette Family Legacy Fund



“This fund is so personal for me. It’s a reflection of my way of life, a reflection of the people who raised me,” says Lisa Guillette, executive director of Foster Forward.

Her father was the founding director of the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, which grew into a great program for students with disabilities over its three-decades long existence—1987–2023. “It made me think about Foster Forward, and our board established the Foster Forward Endowment Fund in 2021 at the Rhode Island Foundation to promote its success in perpetuity.”

When the idea for the family fund came up, Lisa’s mother said she would like to match her funds. And she suggested that it be called the Guillette Family Legacy Fund.

“She noted how much she was influenced by her mother-in-law, my grandmother Rosella Farrell Guillette. Rosella and my grandfather, Louis, had nine children, including my father, and 42 grandchildren.” Of the nine children, two became doctors, two nurses, one social worker, one administrative assistant, an educational administrator, and one was a noted scientific researcher, author, and businesswoman. (One child did not survive into adulthood.)

Lisa’s dad was a great connector of people. “Every day he would reach out to people—what he called the importance of ‘touching people soul to soul.’ He just always saw people; it was in the DNA of our family.

“We need to find our way back to this ‘soul to soul’ connection within families and communities. It goes

beyond foster care and adoption; it relates to the connections of all families. What do parents need to activate this kind of care for their own children, to help them thrive? What do we need to do to support families who are on the brink of having their children removed from them?

“My father used to say ‘there’s never a traffic jam on the extra mile.’ When I was honored with the Murray Prize for Foster Forward in 2024, which provided me with the money to start this fund, it felt like the right thing to do.”

The entire Guillette family always inspired Lisa to do her best, to pay it forward, to look out for others—to go the extra mile. “They are humble but civic-minded people and they focused on family and community. This is the sentiment that we want our Family Legacy Fund to convey.”

Roger and E. Patricia Messier Family Fund



Growing up in Pawtucket during the 1930s, Roger Messier knew firsthand the challenges of poverty. Those early experiences shaped his lifelong commitment to hard work and to helping others in need. Today, through the Roger and E. Patricia Messier Family Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation, the Messier family continues to make a difference in their community.

Roger's professional success story began with Butler & Messier, the family's insurance brokerage that has served residents of Rhode Island and Massachusetts for many years. While Roger still works at the office twice weekly, his son Bruce now manages the agency, carrying forward not only the family business, but also a dedication to community service.

"How my dad grew up had an impact—and highlighted the important role that community partners have on young people," explains Bruce. The family's commitment to supporting youth manifests in their ongoing contributions to organizations like the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket, where Bruce now serves on the Board of Directors.

The Messier family's philanthropy reflects their deep roots in the community. Roger, who also served in the army, remembers times when resources were scarce, and his wife, Patricia, was instrumental in supporting her family's success. As Bruce notes, "My dad worked hard for us at the office, and my mom was the one that held down the fort."

When the time came to create their estate plan, the Messiers turned to a trusted professional advisor, someone who recognized the family's commitment to philanthropy, and who recommended the Rhode

Island Foundation as the ideal partner to help achieve their charitable goals.

Through this collaboration, Roger established a donor advised fund, ensuring his family's philanthropic legacy would continue, along with their primary focus of creating better options and outcomes for young people. "They are the future," explains Bruce. "The more opportunities that are available to them, the better the future will be."

The Roger and E. Patricia Messier Family Fund represents more than just charitable giving—it illustrates a family's journey from hardship to success, and their commitment to helping others along the way. Through this fund, the Messier family's tradition of giving will live on, supporting their community and creating opportunities for many years to come.

Pamelee McFarland Murphy Fund



Pamelee Murphy has dedicated her life to creating access for those who need it most. A retired attorney whose career broke barriers during a time when women were rarely welcome in the practice of law, Pamelee has established a donor-advised fund at the Rhode Island Foundation. Its purpose represents a passionate commitment to equity.

"Access—that's my story," Pamelee says with conviction. "I have been and will be committed to access and justice, focused on those who don't have opportunity or advantage."

The Pamelee McFarland Murphy Fund reflects the values of philanthropy and generosity that she and her late husband, Ray, cultivated together. "He was a giver, not a taker. He was a rare human being," she shares. "Ray was dedicated to finding wonderful ways to do good with what he had."

Drawing from her experiences as a parent of two children with learning differences, Pamelee is working to make quality education possible for everyone. "I had the resources to take care of my kids," she acknowledges, "but no child should sit in a classroom thinking they are stupid or odd...they should not be passed on and passed by without the learning and services that they need."

Pamelee's advocacy extends beyond her family. After attending college and studying abroad in Thailand, she forged a remarkable legal career working as a poverty lawyer and as volunteer counsel for the ACLU, both in Rhode Island and Florida. She also travelled across the country to assist the American Bar Association in studying access to legal counsel for death row defendants. As a volunteer lawyer for

the arts, she represented artists who couldn't afford legal services.

Meaningful arts and literacy initiatives are also central to Pamelee's philanthropy. At the Rhode Island Philharmonic Music School and at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, she supports music education and its performance. Meanwhile, at the Palm Beach County Literacy Coalition, she tutors first graders, to inspire a love for reading. "To encourage them and praise them...it's so rewarding."

Working with the Rhode Island Foundation gives Pamelee confidence in her giving. "I know that I'll have expert guidance from the Foundation on these issues," she notes.

Goals for the fund include educational access for children and adults, music instruction, support for those with learning challenges, literacy initiatives, financial education, and access to the judicial system. Through this fund, Pamelee continues a lifelong journey to share intellectual and financial resources to open closed doors.

Jacqueline and Simon Nemzow Neurodegenerative Caregivers Support Endowments (S.A.E. & M.A.N.)



While Simon Nemzow cared for his beloved wife Jacqueline during her battle with dementia, he experienced firsthand the profound challenges faced by caregivers. Through Jacqueline's illness, Simon learned valuable lessons about the demanding nature of providing care for a loved one with a neurodegenerative disease. While he was fortunate to have excellent support by his side, he also recognized that many caregivers face these challenges alone.

This deeply personal journey inspired the creation of two significant endowments: the Jacqueline and Simon Nemzow Neurodegenerative Caregivers Support Endowment (S.A.E.) and the Jacqueline and Simon Nemzow Neurodegenerative Caregivers Support Endowment (M.A.N.). Named for the Nemzows' children, Sally and Martin, these donor-advised funds were established at the Rhode Island Foundation through the Simon Nemzow Living Trust at the recommendation of the family's professional advisor.

Reflecting the Nemzows' lifelong dedication to helping others, these endowed funds continue the couple's legacy of kindness and compassion in perpetuity, with a focus on providing crucial care for those who are primary caregivers to individuals suffering from various forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's and Lewy Body Dementia.

At-home caregivers are often confronted with responsibilities, tasks, and decisions that are immense and multifaceted. They must navigate complex medical appointments, manage financial pressures, and cope with unpredictable behavioral changes—all while dealing with their own emotions of

guilt, anger, and grief. Many become socially isolated and often postpone their own medical care, leading to increased risks of serious health issues including heart disease, compromised immunity, and stroke.

Through these funds, the Nemzow family hopes to offer vital support to caregivers who find themselves on this difficult path. By providing resources for respite care and other essential services, the endowments aim to help caregivers maintain their own well-being while caring for their loved ones.

Rhode Island Community Food Bank Endowment Fund



Since its founding in 1982, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank has evolved dramatically to meet the growing needs of Rhode Islanders facing food insecurity. What began as a food rescue operation now distributes millions of pounds of food annually through a network of member agencies, with approximately one-third of that food purchased directly by the organization.

"A lot has changed since we started," reflects Lisa Roth Blackman, Chief Philanthropy Officer. "We were initially focused on rescuing food from grocery stores and manufacturers and receiving donations from individuals. However, the need has become so great—and has changed significantly. To keep up, we also purchase food by the truckload from distributors. We rely on generous donors to help fund this, allowing us to bring in nutritious, culturally relevant foods to respond most effectively to those in the community that need us."

As the organization has matured, so has its approach to sustainable funding. The Food Bank has partnered with the Rhode Island Foundation to establish an endowment fund, creating new opportunities for donors to make a lasting impact through legacy giving.

"We have very committed donors who give annually to help alleviate hunger, and some were looking for a more permanent way to address food insecurity in the community," Lisa explains. "This endowment fund creates a pathway for donors to make larger gifts in perpetuity now or through their estate plans, while fitting into our larger goal of meeting donors where they are."

The decision to work with the Foundation was natural for the organization. "The Foundation has been a terrific partner of ours for many years, supporting us through grants for food distribution and strategic planning," says Lisa. "Their strong track record of investment management and financial accountability gave our board members confidence and provides welcome support to our finance team."

This endowment fund adds another meaningful way for supporters to fulfill the Food Bank's mission to advance solutions to the problem of hunger in Rhode Island, in partnership with the community. "As food insecurity in the community grows, Rhode Islanders have responded generously to support our work," Lisa notes. "Whether giving annual support or to the endowment, donors make it possible to provide the food people need today, and the food they will need tomorrow."

Rhode Island Yacht Club Educational Foundation Endowment Fund



The Rhode Island Yacht Club Educational Foundation took a significant step forward in 2023 when it began exploring how to maximize the impact of a generous legacy gift from long-time club member, Susan Quackenbush. Under the leadership of its president, Dr. Linford Fisher, the organization saw an opportunity to transform this meaningful bequest into a sustainable resource for maritime education and community outreach.

As an Associate Professor of History at Brown University and an advocate for accessibility, Fisher, together with his board, envisioned the creation of an endowment to break down traditional barriers to sailing education and invite broader community participation. “The community connection is what we want to focus on, to move beyond the reputation of exclusivity that yacht clubs have,” explains Fisher.

Susan’s bequest reflects her lifetime passions for sailing and education. As a member of Cranston’s Rhode Island Yacht Club for over 30 years alongside her husband, Peter, a past commodore of the RIYC, she embodied the transformative power of early exposure to sailing—having introduced her own son to the water when he was just two months old. This intentional gift following her passing was an investment in ensuring others would experience the joy and growth that comes from connecting with the water.

Established in 1998, the Rhode Yacht Club Educational Foundation’s mission is to encourage and further boating through education and training. The Foundation’s programs include free public events and seminars on topics ranging from Narragansett Bay’s environmental health to Rhode Island’s

lighthouses to ocean racing. In partnership with the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, they offer classes on navigation, GPS usage, and VHF radio operation, as well as boater safety certification.

“We view this fund as a way to raise awareness for our organization; a way to educate and invite people into the amazing community of sailing and enjoying the water,” Fisher notes. While the Rhode Island Yacht Club Educational Foundation also offers scholarships for sailing and boating-related classes annually to club members and their families, they’re working to extend these opportunities throughout the Edgewood community, particularly to those who might not otherwise have access to sailing experiences.

The decision to establish this organizational endowment with the Rhode Island Foundation provided Fisher and his board with both security and growth potential. “The permanence attracted me,” says Fisher. “This wonderful gift is honored, protected, and respected. It’s not getting lost, and we’ll continue to grow this investment for future sailors.”

Roger Williams Park 1871 Legacy Fund



In 1871, Betsey Williams, the third great-granddaughter of Roger Williams, made an inspired gift that would impact the quality of life for generations of Rhode Islanders: she bequeathed 102 acres of farmland to the City of Providence for what would become Roger Williams Park. Today, the Roger Williams Park Conservancy is building upon this remarkable example of generosity through the newly established Roger Williams Park 1871 Legacy Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation.

“We wanted to create a fund to ensure the Park remains an enduring, vibrant place for generations to come, while engaging our community in this long legacy of giving,” explains Joe Pari, the Conservancy’s Board Chair.

Founded in 2016 as part of the Rhode Island Foundation’s Campaign for Roger Williams Park, the Conservancy works in partnership with the City of Providence Parks Department to steward this beloved space. The organization’s mission encompasses community programming, resource development, marketing coordination, and long-term planning for the Park’s sustainability.

“Roger Williams Park holds a special place in the hearts of Rhode Islanders,” shares Bonnie Nickerson, Executive Director of the Conservancy. “Many of us have special memories and stories associated with the Park; we want to maintain this special place for those that come after us to cherish.”

The creation of this organizational endowment fund marks an important milestone in the Conservancy’s evolution. “As part of our growth, it makes sense for us to have our own fund which will assist us with

charitable giving, larger gifts, and bequests,” Bonnie explains. “The fund will help us steer growth for the next phase of our organization; to steward and position Roger Williams Park as a strong partner and active participant for its future.”

The decision to establish the fund at the Rhode Island Foundation builds upon an already strong partnership. “We don’t have the expertise in house—it’s wonderful to have access to the Foundation as a partner and a resource—which also gives donors a sense of confidence,” notes Bonnie. “It’s incredibly meaningful to have the Foundation team to help round out our thinking and trajectory of growth.”

Gina Russo Fund



Out of one of Rhode Island's darkest moments, there emerged a beacon of hope and healing. The Station Nightclub fire, which claimed 100 lives and left countless others forever changed, could have ended as a tragedy. Instead, it became a catalyst for national and international fire code reforms, and a testament to the human spirit's capacity for resilience and forgiveness.

At the heart of this transformation stands Gina Russo. A survivor of the fire who lost her fiancé that night, Gina sustained life-threatening burns and emerged, after months in a coma, to become a driving force for healing and remembrance. Her unwavering energy and dedication would lead to the creation of a memorial park at the former nightclub site, ensuring that those who perished would never be forgotten.

"What we are doing now—it's all about Gina, and what she's done for all of us," says Jody King, who lost his younger brother, Tracy, in the fire. "She is the inspiration. What an amazing person, who came through this tragedy more beautiful than before. We never want anyone to forget what a special woman Gina Russo is."

The Gina Russo Fund represents an extraordinary collaboration between unlikely partners. When Jody King joined forces with Jeffrey and Michael Derderian, former Station Nightclub owners and Jody's childhood friends, they channeled their shared grief into positive action. Their initial effort, the Station Education Fund, supported the 76 children who lost parents in the February 2003 fire, providing everything from school supplies to college scholarships.

"We asked ourselves 'What can we do to help?'" reflects Jody. "When something like this happens, you find your meaning in life."

As these children grew into adults, the mission evolved. A portion of the remaining funds have now been entrusted to the Rhode Island Foundation by Jody and the Derderian brothers to establish the Gina Russo Fund, supporting burn survivors, their families, first responders, and medical professionals affected by burn-related injuries and trauma. The decision to partner with the Foundation was a carefully considered one. "The Rhode Island Foundation can grow the Fund in ways that we can't... no matter how many fundraising events we organize," explains Jody.

Through the Foundation's stewardship, the fund will continue its vital work in perpetuity, transforming tragedy into lasting, positive change. As Michael Derderian notes, "The strength and courage of Gina Russo—how many lives she has touched because of her choices and dedication...we can't go back in time and change it, but people like Gina and Jody—they help us to heal. It's remarkable."

Melissa M. Saccoccio Memorial Scholarship



When Melissa Saccoccio shared her fear of being forgotten with her husband Bruce during a second battle with metastatic breast cancer, she couldn't have known how her legacy would continue to touch lives for generations to come. A dedicated physical therapist and beloved teacher, Melissa's commitment to healing and education has now been permanently honored through a scholarship that reflects these lifelong passions.

Melissa and Bruce's love story began at Cranston High School West, where they were high school sweethearts, "fixed up" at their junior prom, and together from the very first date. Their 33-year journey together, including 24 years of marriage, blessed them with three daughters—Adriana, Sophia, and Olivia. "Melissa was an amazing, loving mom that would always plan special events, movie nights, and dinners with friends," says Bruce of his wife. "She was such an engaged, vibrant person."

Throughout her career, Melissa made an indelible impact as both a physical therapist and an educator at CCRI's Physical Therapy Assistant program. She built lasting bonds with countless students, becoming a mentor and inspiration to many aspiring caregivers. Her influence was evident in the outpouring of support from former students who came to pay their respects after her passing in 2019.

When Bruce initially considered establishing a memorial fund independently, a close friend advised him against creating a 501(c)(3) nonprofit on his own, pointing him instead to the Rhode Island Foundation. The Foundation offered a streamlined solution, eliminating the need for complex reporting and administration, while providing an enduring,

professional partnership to help honor Melissa's memory in perpetuity.

The Melissa M. Saccoccio Memorial Scholarship fund supports graduating seniors from Cranston High School West who pursue studies in physical therapy or healthcare-related fields. The scholarship's timing proves particularly meaningful as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a critical need for medical professionals.

"Melissa was a bright light in the lives of so many people, personally, professionally, and spiritually," Bruce reflects. Through this scholarship, her light continues to shine, inspiring future generations of healthcare providers. The fund ensures that Melissa's legacy lives on through the achievements of young people who, like her, will dedicate their lives to helping others heal.

Jerrold Salmanson Hope High School Endowed Scholarship Fund



Extended family of the late Jerrold “Jerry” Salmanson (Hope High School Class of 1959) have established a scholarship fund in his name for Hope High School seniors.

Philanthropy was important to Jerry and he was extremely generous within the Jewish community—the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Community Center, Miriam Hospital, and Temple Emanu-El, serving on boards as well as being a donor. Other organizations he supported included the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, Brigham and Woman’s Hospital, and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Jerry’s loyalty and devotion encompassed Rhode Island, and while none of his children remain here, he wanted his money put to good use right here in the state, which led to the formation of this scholarship as organized by his cousins, Deborah “Debbie” Blitz (Kushner), on his maternal side, and Rosalind “Roz” Hill, Jerry’s cousin on his paternal side.

Jerry’s father and uncles founded Adams Drug Co. in Rhode Island in the 1930s. When Jerry joined the company, he was part of the expansion and acquisitions which made Adams one of the largest drugstore chains in the country, with over 500 stores in 14 states employing more than 5,000 people. Jerry was an officer in the family business until its sale in 1984, after which he oversaw family investments as well as his own jewelry manufacturing business.

Jerry, who died last year, was particularly close with Debbie and Roz, who also were Hope High School alumni.

“Almost my entire family went to Hope, including me and my father,” says Roz. “We all lived within several blocks of each other on the East Side so we saw each other daily or had frequent family gatherings.”

“And on the Kushner side, all the cousins also went to Hope,” adds Debbie. “Jerry’s late sister was my best friend.”

As a lifelong resident of the state, Jerry was known for holding on to friendships for decades. His best friend from kindergarten was still one of his closest friends, who stood graveside at Jerry’s funeral.

Jerry’s intentions were always giving, not thinking twice about treating family and friends to expensive dinners, but also insisting on clipping coupons for Adams Drugs’ one time competitor CVS, in order to save a few dollars.

With this fund they hope they can support Hope High students reach their potential.

Scituate Ambulance and Rescue Corps Scholarship Fund



For over half a century, the Scituate Ambulance and Rescue Corps provided critical emergency medical transportation to the residents of Scituate. Established after World War II to meet the town’s growing need for ambulance services, independent from the local fire department, the Corps became known for its dedication to public safety, also offering first aid and CPR training alongside emergency response.

When the town began consolidating its emergency medical services under a paid model approximately seven years ago, the Corps faced a significant transition. Though their direct service operations ceased, their commitment to supporting emergency medical care in Scituate has not wavered.

Philip DeSimone, the last President of the Corps, began his journey with the organization in 2012, after taking medical courses and signing up as a volunteer. Under his leadership and as a result of the consolidation of services, the organization closed its operational chapter, and the building that housed its headquarters was sold.

“When the Corps ceased operations as a nonprofit organization and the building was sold, it was important to us to put the money in a place that honored its origins, history, and purpose,” explains Phil.

In 2024, the proceeds from the sale were used to establish the Scituate Ambulance and Rescue Corps Scholarship Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation. This field of interest fund provides scholarships for Scituate residents enrolled in accredited training courses related to medical services, covering all levels of emergency medical training.

The Corps was referred to the Foundation by a professional advisor who recognized the Foundation’s proven track record of establishing and administering scholarship funds. This partnership ensures that the funds will be professionally managed and continue to grow in perpetuity.

“By partnering with the Foundation, we know that the money will grow over time, even if another dime isn’t invested, and it will maintain its original intention,” Phil notes. “It’s the lasting legacy of our volunteers and their families, whose heart and soul went into keeping the Scituate Ambulance and Rescue Corps together.”

Joan M. Senna Memorial Scholarship Fund



When Donald Senna recalls meeting his future wife, Joan, at a track meet in 1958, his eyes still light up. “She got me with her smile,” he says, remembering the pretty lady in blue shorts and a straw hat who would become his wife of 62 years. “The stars must have aligned that day.”

That chance meeting—where Joan helped pin Don’s number to his jersey—began a love story that would span six decades and eventually create opportunities for generations of students at East Providence High School.

Joan “Joanie” Senna’s own educational journey exemplified her grit and determination. A 1959 graduate of East Providence High School, she worked while attending Johnson & Wales University, paying her tuition weekly to earn a secretarial degree, with a dream of someday furthering her education to become a teacher.

Joan went on to work at Textron, where she was named Employee of the Year, while supporting her husband Don through his studies at Bryant University. “If it wasn’t for her, I’d still be a freshman,” Don reflects. “I would write my papers, and she would proofread and type them.”

Throughout her life, Joan was known for her selfless giving, the one who made all the sacrifices. She volunteered with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the East Providence Senior Center. Her son-in-law, Reverend Clarence Hill, Jr., called Joan his “mom-in-love” rather than “mom-in-law,” noting that she was “the repository of all kinds of information—there was no situation that she couldn’t help with.”

The Joan M. Senna Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation now carries forward Joan’s legacy of compassionate care for others. The scholarship supports East Providence High School students accepted to Johnson & Wales University, with a preference for African American, Native American, and students of color—opening doors to education that for so many remain closed.

Don’s deep respect for the Foundation’s leadership led him to explore creating the fund. After meeting with the Development team, he knew he had found the right partner to honor Joan’s memory. “I was impressed with the level of professionalism,” Don shares.

The partnership has already begun making an impact, as Joan’s children, Lori and Donald Jr., recently presented the first scholarship award. It’s a fitting tribute to their mother, a woman whose legacy of giving will now help students achieve their educational dreams.

James K. and Anne F. Sunshine Scholarship Fund



James K. Sunshine, a retired Providence Journal editor and longtime supporter of the Rhode Island Foundation, died on December 27, 2023. His bequest to the Foundation creates the James K. and Anne F. Sunshine Scholarship Fund, to assist “college-bound students with strong academic backgrounds who are Rhode Island residents and who have emigrated, or whose parents have emigrated, to this country, with preference given to those students whose parents have not attended college.”

To understand why Jim so valued education, you have to begin with where he came from. His father, Bela Sonnenschein, or William Sunshine, immigrated from Hungary in 1902 at the age of 14. Joining the family firm in Cleveland, William was a traveling salesman who took men’s clothing samples to department stores around the Midwest. During the Depression, to make ends meet, Jim’s mother sold dresses out of their home and later opened her own shop. Neither parent went beyond high school. Jim respected his parents, but he never forgot that he too could have been on the road with a trunk of samples rather than running a newsroom had it not been for education.

Jim attended Cleveland Heights public schools, always serving on the school newspapers. He graduated in 1942, and knowing little of college, asked a friend where he might apply. His friend had just returned from a visit to nearby Oberlin College and gave a favorable report. Jim applied and was accepted. His family had no money, so he borrowed the \$800 tuition from his Aunt Mildred, a prosperous merchant in Michigan, and entered college in the fall of 1942.

By the spring of 1943, the war was heating up, and Jim left Oberlin in the middle of his freshman year to enlist. He served in Europe as a surgical technician in the 42nd Field Hospital from the Utah Beach D-Day landing to the end of the war. Afterward he returned to Oberlin, on the GI bill this time, and worked on the college newspaper, the Oberlin Review. Jim married Anne Fassett in the campus chapel in 1948 and graduated in 1949. He went on to the Columbia School of Journalism, graduating in 1951.

Wilbur Bromage, at the Providence Journal, interviewed Jim but told a dean at Columbia that he could not hire someone who wanted to be an editor rather than a reporter. The dean advised Jim to write a letter proclaiming his great desire to cover school board meetings and auto accidents. Swallowing his pride, Jim did as advised, and Bromage hired him at \$65 a week.

After more than a year in the South County bureau, Jim moved to the city staff in 1953. He became an education writer in 1955, winning awards for his coverage of the field. After a few more years of reporting, he achieved the goal he had set during his job-search days: he became an editor. Over the decades, he moved up the ladder to deputy executive editor, retiring in 1995. After his death, messages came in from younger colleagues who remembered his patient mentoring.

Anne Sunshine worked for the state of Rhode Island as a social worker with Child Protective Services. She was also an editor for William McLoughlin, professor of history at Brown University, who was publishing the papers of Isaac Backus, an early Rhode Island Baptist clergyman. For the last decade of her life Anne was a staff member at the Providence Athenaeum. The Sunshines lived first at the corner of Williams and Thayer Streets on the East Side. Later, they bought a house on Bowen Street and raised their two children there, and in 1989 they built a retirement home in Tiverton. Anne died in 1999. Six years later Jim moved back to Ohio, to the Kendal retirement community at the edge of the Oberlin College campus.

Jim’s life was marked by his steadfast belief in education as a path to betterment. “College, and particularly a liberal education, is essential. It changed my life. This country has been good to my father and my mother, and it has been good to me. I think you have to give something back for that. I can’t think of anything I’d rather leave behind me than a fund to help people get a good education. Where would I have been if it hadn’t been for Aunt Mildred’s \$800?”

Jill and Jim Tobak Family Fund



Fourth generation Rhode Islanders Jill Fox Tobak and James Werner Tobak have deep and enduring ties to the State. Jill grew up in Providence and Jim in Newport.

Jill's grandfather, C. Joseph Fox, founded The C. J. Fox Company, a print manufacturing company, in 1895 when he was 17 years old. Jill's father, Charles J. Fox, and uncle, Robert Fox, were partners in the business until 1996 when Charles died, at which point, Jill and her brother-in-law, Bob Starr, took over running the business until its sale in 2008.

Jim's family had retail businesses in Newport where he grew up. The oldest of these establishments was Potter & Company, a men's haberdashery located on Thames Street and established in 1907 when his grandfather, Herman Werner, entered into a partnership with Louis Potter. After Herman Werner's death in 1941, his sons, Jack and Harold, ran the business. Following Jack Werner's death in 1968, Harold transformed the business from a staid men's store into one of the most dynamic, cutting edge, retail clothing businesses in Newport. Potter & Company was sold by the family in 2010, two years after Harold Werner's death.

Jill and Jim's great grandparents, grandparents, and parents were active civically in their communities and Jill's family has strong ties to Temple Beth-El which, Jill (a former president) and now, Jim, have maintained. Jim's family had multi-generational ties to Newport's Jewish Congregations; Jesuit Israel (1881) and Ahavas Achim (1915).

Jill and Jim were in part inspired by Harold Werner's lifelong philanthropy, including his having established two funds at the Rhode Island Foundation.

Jill and Jim can think of no better way of honoring their forbears and continuing the longstanding family tradition of supporting the Rhode Island community than to establish their fund at the Rhode Island Foundation.

The Village Common of Rhode Island Fund



"We believe that a better experience of aging is possible when we support and rely on one another," says Caroline Dillon, executive director of The Village Common of Rhode Island. "Every day our members and volunteers come together to provide mutual support and create purposeful and powerful opportunities for what's next as we grow older."

Roughly one in three people older than 65 live alone in the United States, and half of those over 85 live alone. Most spend at least ten hours of their waking hours alone. Studies show the prevalence of loneliness among people older than 60 ranging from 10% to 46%. This is where the 'village model' comes in.

Villages are community-based, nonprofit, grassroots organizations formed through a corps of caring neighbors who want to change the paradigm of aging.

Local Villages connect members to a wide array of practical services and social connections that enable older adults to enjoy a rich and healthy quality of life when they choose to age in their homes and communities. Villages offer resources, services, programs and activities, including social and educational programs, health and wellness activities, and volunteer assistance with transportation, light home maintenance, and technology coaching.

"The concept of a village has taken off like wildfire," notes Caroline. The concept started 25 years ago and there are approximately 350 villages now across the United States.

"The need for a village has never been greater," claims Caroline. The organization does not go into a community and tell them they need a village—they

come to them. Then they go in and look at data to find out what services they currently have. Does a village make sense for the landscape of their particular community? "Rhode Island is a wonderful tapestry of communities—each distinct." The organization is set up as 'hub and spoke' allowing each village to reflect a community's distinct personality." The clients and the volunteers are all home-grown—hyperlocal.

Each village has the same mission supporting older adults to age at home through volunteers. Reset that router, change a lightbulb, pick up a prescription or groceries. "But it is never just providing a service; it's personal." The volunteers (most of whom are elderly) are also connecting from this interaction. Someone may go into a home to change a lightbulb, but they don't climb a ladder and go away—they stay and have a chat—they reduce social isolation and loneliness. The Village Common of Rhode Island currently has villages in Aquidneck Island, Barrington, Burrillville, Edgewood, Glocester, Jamestown, Providence, Warwick, and Westerly, with three more locations in the works.

When asked 'why this fund at the Foundation,' Caroline replies: "One of our village members suggested we open an endowment, surprised that we didn't have one for our future sustainability. The Board agreed it was a wise decision."

They are currently receiving grants from funds managed by the Rhode Island Foundation—June Rockwell Levy, Newport County Fund, and direct grants from the Foundation. They handle all grant writing at the hub, and manage the distributions to the spokes of various villages, allowing them to focus on their members, their needs, and their volunteers.

Paula Ann Vital Entrepreneur Memorial Scholarships



I met Paula when I was on leave from the Marines—at a party for Paula's 19th birthday," says Gary Vital. "Two months later, I asked her to marry me." That was in 1975, and they were married for 46 years when Paula died very suddenly and unexpectedly in April 2024.

In the beginning of their married life, Gary juggled two jobs—one was pool construction and maintenance—and Paula balanced part-time work as a teacher's aide along with managing their household with three children—a daughter and twin boys. But that meant spending a lot of time apart, so Paula started working on pool jobs with Gary.

To start out, they ran Aquidneck Pool & Spas out of their home. Paula envisioned something bigger and better: a storefront. Paula and Gary invested their entire savings of \$6000 and opened Aquidneck Pools & Spas store in Portsmouth in 1995. "Early on there were some days that no customers came in the store," recalls Gary, "and we would wonder if we had done the right thing."

Neither had formal college training or knowledge of business management. But, undaunted, over the course of 30 years created a multimillion-dollar business. Paula and Gary made the most of every situation, even spending one anniversary installing an above-ground pool in the rain, laughing all the way. Their children, as well as their children's friends, were all involved in the business—building and cleaning pools, working in the store.

The family lived in Tiverton since the year after they got married. Paula grew up four houses up the street. Two of the kids now live within blocks of the family

home. "We were always a close family," says Ali, the oldest. "We took road trips to Florida. Our friends came too. My mother was always so generous—our house was always welcoming." They went on cruises together, sometimes a couple dozen friends and family. In fact, Paula died the day after they returned from one such cruise."

"She would have been so proud that we've set up these two funds at the Rhode Island Foundation," says Gary. The two funds—for Tiverton and Portsmouth high schools—will offer \$6,000 each to a high school senior who wants to start their own business. "\$6,000 is significant because it is what we started our business with—everything we had at the time."

When Gary retired early from the military, taking a leap of faith that the pool company would support them, he had no way of knowing that their investment and efforts would pay back many times over. "It gave us the opportunity to do so many things as a family," says Gary. "We would not change a thing."

Michael Washor Scholarship Fund



When Michael Washor passed away in 2017 at the young age of 32, those who knew him wanted to ensure his musical talent and generous spirit would live on through the support of young musicians who share his passion and natural abilities. After Michael's passing, his family established a scholarship in his honor at the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center ("the Met School") in Providence, where Michael was a 2002 graduate.

For several years, the scholarship was funded through donations from family and friends and administered by the Met School, with recipients carefully selected by Michael's family. Now, to ensure the fund's growth and longevity, the Met School, with the blessing of Michael's parents, Jill Diehl and Elliot Washor, has established the Michael Washor Scholarship Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation as an endowed scholarship.

Michael's musical journey began in an unexpected way. His older brother Nate recalls, "I received a guitar for my birthday, and while I was away at college, Mike 'borrowed' my guitar and started playing it. He watched MTV, including lots of Jimi Hendrix music videos; he learned to play 'Little Wing' just by watching Jimi Hendrix." This natural talent was later nurtured by a well-known Rhode Island guitarist, Lou Xifaris, who recognized Michael's gift.

Despite his remarkable abilities, Michael battled to break into the competitive music industry. Throughout his life, he continued to study and play guitar. He attended Wheaton College and URI and went on to work as a computer engineer. His musical pursuits also took him to California, where he recorded as a studio musician and played with notable names in the industry.

"Mike had a true gift with the guitar," says Nate. "But I think there's something that a lot of musicians struggle with—they want to be appreciated. It's a type of genius that we don't really value in our society, aside from the few people that break through."

Beyond his musical talents, Michael is remembered for his warmth and generosity. "He had a big heart; he cared about people...and he'd light up a room. Everybody wanted to be Mike's friend," Nate shares. "He gave love first; he didn't expect it in return. But people loved him...they loved my brother."

Youth In Action Endowment Fund



In a vibrant community center on Providence's South Side, the voices of young leaders are heard, acknowledged, and amplified. At Youth In Action (YIA), nearly 200 young people gather weekly to share their stories, develop leadership skills, and create meaningful change.

"We want to make sure we have youth at the table," explains Stephanie Nunes, the organization's executive director. "We want them to understand that their work is valued and paid; we honor them for their voice and contributions."

Born in Cape Verde and raised in Pawtucket, Stephanie brings both professional expertise from her background in social work and a personal commitment to serving the communities she grew up in. Under her leadership, youth aren't just participants—they're partners.

Founded in 1997 by a group of motivated youth, YIA has stayed true to its roots while expanding its impact. The organization's innovative "Action Groups" model provides structured pathways for youth development—from self-reflection and emotional growth, to identifying community needs, and then working to implement solutions.

What makes YIA truly unique is its organizational structure: every adult staff position has a youth counterpart, creating an intergenerational workplace where young Rhode Islanders, ages 14-20, are seen as peers, not subordinates. This approach addresses power imbalances that often stifle the potential of youth, especially young people of color.

YIA also breaks barriers through its outdoor equity work, providing Black and Brown youth with greater access to natural environments—camping, hiking, and retreats—along with essential safety training. These opportunities open doors to experiences from which many have been historically excluded.

Through the Youth In Action Endowment Fund, the organization can continue empowering diverse young people for years to come—building leadership skills and working toward a more equitable and safer world for all.

"We were referred to the Foundation by a community partner," Stephanie shares. "We're grateful for the support we receive that goes far beyond investment advice. It's great to be working with a local community foundation that cares about the city, the state, and what we are doing."

Nee Zambrano Family Fund



Katie Nee Zambrano's journey follows a familiar pattern for natives of the Ocean State—leaving to explore new horizons, only to feel the inevitable pull back home. After completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia, Katie worked on political campaigns for a decade before returning to attend law school at Roger Williams University. "As many of us do, I found my way back," she reflects, acknowledging the homecoming story shared by so many Rhode Islanders.

Katie's return for law school proved life-changing, as it led her to meet her future husband, Carlos Zambrano. Born in Ecuador and raised in Connecticut, Carlos made his own journey to Rhode Island to study information technology at Johnson & Wales University. Today, the couple calls the Edgewood section of Cranston home, where they're bringing up their three young daughters.

The decision to establish the Nee Zambrano Family Fund, a donor-advised fund at the Rhode Island Foundation, reflects a dedication to the place they've chosen to build their lives. "We're raising our children in Rhode Island and feel a deep commitment to the community," Katie explains.

The couple brings complementary professional expertise to their philanthropic vision. Katie, who has managed several political campaigns and practiced as a criminal defense lawyer, now serves as CEO of a Washington, DC based nonprofit. Carlos applies his technical expertise as Information Technology Director for East Providence, overseeing the city's IT Department and infrastructure.

For Katie and Carlos, philanthropy is a value to be nurtured across generations. "We grew up in families that instilled in us the importance of giving back," shares Katie. Their daughters will eventually become grant advisors for the fund—a thoughtful approach to teaching their children about the significance of giving and community from an early age.

The fund's support will focus on areas with great meaning for Katie and Carlos: economic opportunity, education, job training, and social justice, particularly criminal justice re-entry programs, highlighting their interest in supporting opportunities for those seeking to build or rebuild their lives. "We are all more than the worst thing we've ever done. Everyone needs a second chance," emphasizes Katie.

Reputation and shared values were key factors in the family's decision to partner with the Foundation. As they continue their philanthropic journey together, Katie and Carlos look forward to deepening their knowledge of the state's nonprofit landscape, grateful for the Foundation's expertise in connecting donors with organizations that align with their vision.

"The Rhode Island Foundation is a well-run, responsible organization," Katie says. "It's important to us to be part of an organization with the ability to harness the impact of so many people."

How to work
with us

Only together can we create progress that lasts.

Separately, we can have impact, but only together, can we build the future we all hope for.

As a nonpartisan public charity, we accept charitable gifts of all shapes and sizes, and we pool and invest those gifts in financial markets so that they grow over time.

We use a responsible portion of the proceeds from those investments to make grants, provide scholarships, and support organizations and efforts focused on strengthening our communities and enhancing the quality of life in our state.

Giving to the Foundation is much more than a financial transaction. You're able to work with experts in charitable giving and grantmaking professionals who are working daily with the state's nonprofit sector.

No matter how much you give, you are part of a powerful force for good in our community, helping to address community priorities essential for a thriving state.



Partner with Us

Flexibility

There are many ways to give. We'll work with you, or your advisor, to determine the simplest—and best—way to make your philanthropic hopes a reality.

Sound Investments

Charitable gifts become part of one of three highly-diversified investment pools. We'll work with you to choose a pool that fits. Our scale allows access to some of the top-performing money managers in the country.

Expertise

We know Rhode Island. Our team of grant makers and philanthropic advisors will work to ensure that your charitable gift has impact. We have the resources, relationships, and expertise to offer guidance and to perform necessary due diligence.

Permanence

Through the Rhode Island Foundation, your charitable dollars create a permanent legacy in, and for, Rhode Island.

Tax Benefits

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity as classified by the Internal Revenue Service. Your contributions qualify for the maximum allowable deduction for income, gift, and estate tax purposes.

How to Get Involved

Partner with us today by making a gift to the Fund for Rhode Island, which enables us to address community priorities essential for a thriving Rhode Island. Every act of giving makes an impact; collectively, they're a force that shapes our state.

Connect with a member of our development team at FundforRhodeIsland@rifoundation.org or by calling (401) 427-4040 to learn more.

